



The University of Bradford Institutional Repository

<http://bradscholars.brad.ac.uk>

This work is made available online in accordance with publisher policies. Please refer to the repository record for this item and our Policy Document available from the repository home page for further information.

To see the final version of this work please visit the publisher's website. Access to the published online version may require a subscription.

Copyright statement: © 2014 Wiley. This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Mavin S, Grandy G and Williams J (2014) Experiences of Women Elite Leaders Doing Gender: Intra-gender Micro-violence between Women. *British Journal of Management*. 25(3): 439-455, which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12057>. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving.

Experiences of Women Elite Leaders Doing Gender: Intra-gender Micro-violence between Women

Sharon Mavin, Gina Grandy¹ and Jannine Williams²

Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University, City Campus East, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 2SW, UK, ¹Faculty of Business Administration, University of Regina, 3737 Wascana Parkway, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada S4S 0A2, and ²Bradford University School of Management, University of Bradford, Emm Lane, Bradford BD9 4JL, UK

Corresponding author email: sharon.mavin@northumbria.ac.uk

This paper responds to the dearth of research into women's negative intra-gender relations and lack of understanding as to why and how these relations manifest. Through a qualitative study of women elite leaders' experiences in UK organizations, the research considers how gendered contexts, women doing gender well and differently simultaneously, intra-gender competition and female misogyny may explain negative intra-gender social relations between women. We consider micro-aggression research and women's abjection and offer a unique conceptualization of intra-gender micro-violence with themes of disassociating, suppression of opportunity and abject appearance. The themes illustrate how the masculine symbolic order shapes and constrains women elite leaders' social relations with other women. We conclude that raising consciousness to intra-gender micro-violence between women is important as a means of disruption; to facilitate women and men's acceptance of intra-gender differences between women; and to open up opportunities and possibilities for women in organizations.

Introduction

Women elite leaders are argued to have broken through the glass ceiling and achieved a 'masculine strategic situation' (M. Tyler, 2005, p. 569); however, their under-representation continues and there remains a lack of research into their experiences (Terjesen, Sealy and Singh, 2009). The societal context and saliency for research into women elite leaders is evident in the lack of women at the pinnacle of UK organizational hierarchies. In the FTSE 100 women hold 18 directorships versus 292 men and the FTSE 250 has 32 women in directorships versus 558 men (Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2013). The Sex and Power (2013) report *Who Runs Britain?* notes that in a population of 51% women, women hold only 36.4% of public appointments. This lack of women in elite positions is now subject to governmental reports,

quota debates and policy interventions (e.g. Davies, 2011).

Further, relationships between women in organizations are complex, contradictory and under-researched; they take place within gendered contexts and can constrain and undermine women's progress. Here we set out to provide an explanation for women's negative intra-gender relations; to better understand women elite leaders' experiences of negative intra-gender relations through a lens of gender micro-aggression; and to raise consciousness to possibilities for women within organizational gendered contexts.

Through a qualitative study of 81 women elite leaders in UK organizations our contribution is three-fold. First, we offer a unique conceptualization of *intra-gender micro-violence* and themes of *disassociating*, *suppression of opportunity* and *abject appearance*, to support understandings of

women's negative intra-gender social relations. In conceptualizing intra-gender micro-violence between women as psychosocial and non-physical, we build upon Kelan and Mah's (2012) research into women's social psychological admiration of other women and Fotaki's (2011) use of psychosocial violence to describe the way women's bodies are silenced. Second, we advance the concept of female misogyny (Mavin, 2006, 2008) as part of the gendered contexts within which women leaders operate. In doing so, we extend the work of Doldor, Anderson and Vinnicombe (2012) who argue that studies of gender cannot be separated from context. Third, we offer an empirical contribution. Following Ellemers *et al.* (2012) and Chesterman, Ross-Smith and Peters (2005), we explore experiences of women in 'high places' who have overcome gendered barriers to achieve elite leader positions, and therefore address Terjesen, Sealy and Singh's (2009) call for 'truly innovative research into the female directors' experiences' (p. 332) lacking in the literature. We also progress Kelan and Mah's (2012) call for broader research engaging those in senior positions and offer further insight into how gendered power impresses upon frames of understanding and impacts upon women's advancement (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011).

We begin by outlining the gendered contexts in which women leaders are marked by their 'doing gender well and differently' (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013), intra-gender competition and female misogyny ideology (Mavin, 2006), before introducing interpersonal mistreatment literature and exploring research into gender micro-aggression. We then present our research approach and findings, offering a conceptualization of intra-gender micro-violence and supporting themes. We conclude with our suggestions for future research.

Women elite leaders doing gender well and differently in gendered contexts

In a foundational text, Kanter (1977) outlined a theory of tokenism which claimed that group size is connected to social experiences and, when the size of the group changes, so do the experiences of the individuals and the group. Rather than a focus on the changing numbers of women in elite leader positions, our specific interest is to explore women elite leaders' (a minority) experiences of social

relations with other women. We understand 'elite leader' to include women who hold significant positions of power and influence at the top of organizations (e.g. CEO, COO, CFO, MD, Head of HR, Director/Non-Executive Director, Chair/Vice Chair, Company Secretary, Head/Teacher of School, General Manager). Our focus is on women's experiences of intra-gender relations while achieving and holding these positions, rather than the skills, attributes and activities of leaders and managers.

The gendered nature of organizational life serves both to exclude women from the male inner circles of power and influence and to obscure from them and other outsiders the complex details of how these work (Ledwith and Colgan, 1996, p. 12). Progress has been made in that (a few) women now hold elite positions within these inner circles of power; however, it is well established that these positions are 'masculinized' and constructed around male norms. As such, women elite leaders find themselves in a context marked by masculine rationality with control at its centre: an extreme version of competitive masculinity (Chesterman, Ross-Smith and Peters, 2005) which influences experiences (Ross-Smith and Chesterman, 2009). There has been much interest in understanding how these gendered contexts shape women's organizational experiences (Connell, 1987; Gherardi, 1994; Marshall, 1984). Work itself is gendering whereby social processes of gender construction and familiarities of gender differences, learned by men and women at an early age, continue into working lives (Cockburn, 1985). Our interest is at the top of organizational hierarchies, where we argue that relationships between women and the gendered nature of their social contexts are 'a fundamental element in organizing leadership learning' (Stead and Elliott, 2012, p. 3).

At the interpersonal level patriarchy is a complementary social process between men and women. Smith (1987) notes that women are somehow complicit in patriarchy through the social practices of their silence, while Cockburn (1991, p. 8) argues that within this context 'a woman cannot escape patriarchy, even by climbing to elite status by marriage or career promotion, as she will modify her own subordination only at the expense of that of other women'. We propose that negative intra-gender relations between women are one way through which

women's subordination and marginalization within gendered contexts is apparent.

We recognize that women's negative intra-gender relations take place within, not separated from, gendered contexts (Doldor, Anderson and Vinnicombe, 2012). Patriarchy as socio-structural practices (Walby, 1989) provides the backcloth to gendered relations as it operates at macro (societal), meso (organizational) and micro (everyday interactions) levels (Billing, 2011; Connell, 1987), expressed through hegemonic masculinity which maintains the masculine symbolic order. This symbolic order constructs a hierarchy of masculinities, where some remain more 'socially central, or more associated with authority and social power' (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846), and continues to shape gender relations.

Engaging with patriarchy limits the femininities deemed appropriate for women to gendered stereotypes, e.g. caring, empathic, compliant (Spencer and Podmore, 1987), which Connell (1987) suggests are 'emphasized femininities' (p. 228). Within these contexts, women elites learn to manoeuvre the gendered double bind through various strategies, whereby they are expected to perform femininities associated with being a 'woman' whilst also demonstrating masculinities expected of those in elite positions (Gherardi, 1994; Maddock and Parkin, 1994).

Women elite leaders may therefore enact femininities and masculinities simultaneously, doing gender well and differently against the gender binary (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013), and may also ventriloquize patriarchal attitudes (Brown, 1998). Mavin and Grandy (2013, pp. 234–235) explain doing gender well and differently in this way:

For a woman to do gender well or appropriately, as evaluated against and accountable to her sex category, she performs expected feminine behaviour through a body that is socially perceived to be female. For a man to do gender well or appropriately . . . he performs expected masculine behaviour, through a body that is socially perceived to be male. In that way there is congruence and balance between the perceived sex category and gender behaviour, and femininity (or masculinity) is validated . . . while a woman may do gender well, she may also enact multiplicity, including doing gender differently, against perceived sex category and expected gender behaviour.

Women may therefore challenge the femininities deemed appropriate by simultaneously doing gender well (e.g. engaging in stereotypical femininities) and differently (e.g. by engaging in competition and ambition) (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, 2013). Bosak and Sczesny (2011) contend that there is 'convergence of people's beliefs about masculine traits in women and leaders' (p. 264) and that over time people's belief that there are more women with 'masculine leadership-relevant traits might actually undermine the status quo' (p. 266). At the same time, a doing of gender well and differently continues to conflict with embedded and socially shared gendered norms and prejudices (Camussi and Leccardi, 2005). While the modern, professional, career-oriented woman is a legitimate social identity (Billing, 2011), this does not mean that it is unproblematic for women if they challenge traditional ideas of femininities. Engaging with patriarchy shapes women's relations with other women and has consequences for how women perceive themselves and their intra-gender relations with other women. This can manifest through self-hatred, disparaging themselves, disassociating from other women (Tanenbaum, 2002) or other back-lash responses (e.g. those outlined by Camussi and Leccardi, 2005; O'Neill and O'Reilly, 2011).

Kanter's (1977) theory of tokenism highlighted the detrimental effects of heightened visibility from a numerical minority status. We suggest that these detrimental effects continue through intra-gender relations so that women's resistance to women who transgress acceptable femininities can be understood as passive resistance, e.g. negative assessments of appearance or professional ability (Starr, 2001). In this way, the gendered nature of organizational contexts means that women, as well as men, hold women accountable to normative gendered expectations (Messerschmidt, 2009). Thus gendered contexts help to explain negative intra-gender relations between women. As women elite leaders do gender well and differently simultaneously, disrupting the gender binary and flexing gender boundaries, the risk of structural ambivalence arises. This can be met with 'a re-establishment of precise boundaries between what is "masculine" and what is "feminine"' (Camussi and Leccardi, 2005, p. 116) which prompts attempts to re-create gendered norms.

Women leaders may also respond by engaging in processes of competition which can take a

range of forms: competing for scarce resources (e.g. powerful men's acceptance/attention/approval); engaging in exclusionary tactics indirectly or unconsciously which stigmatize, exclude or ostracize others (women), and/or altering her (own) appearance (Campbell, 2004). Women who compete for elite positions or show ambition may face negative responses from those women who acquiesce to the masculine symbolic order and attempt to close down resistant forms of femininity as breaking gendered expectations (Connell, 1987). This is apparent in assessments of women as Queen Bees (Staines, Travis and Jayerante, 1973): women perceived to have disassociated from their gender, displaying masculinities in order to survive and possibly thrive in masculine work contexts (Derks *et al.*, 2011). Women are perceived as Queen Bees when other women (and men) see them as 'a problem' in doing gender differently and achieving elite leader positions, perceived as not supporting other women and attempting to hold on to power (Mavin, 2008). However, research into the Queen Bee syndrome has not yet fully accounted for the impact of women's negative intra-gender relations.

Female misogyny (Mavin, 2006) draws attention to how women are reminded of their unstable and subordinated position in the symbolic order by both *women* and men (Fotaki, 2011). Female misogyny may be more apparent at junctures where women either threaten to or succeed in de-stabilizing the established gender order (e.g. either by displaying ambition towards elite positions or by actually being appointed) (Mavin, 2006). Like misogyny, female misogyny reflects a sexist prejudice and ideology within patriarchy that contributes to the explicit and subtle oppression of women. It reflects how women 'also internalize the prevailing misogynist ideology which we uphold, both in order to survive and in order to improve our own individual positions *vis-à-vis* all other women' (Chesler, 2001, p. 2). We argue that female misogyny contributes towards accounting for negative social relations between women as a form of interpersonal mistreatment.

Female misogyny and associated relations can arise from a desire for organizational power (Mavin, 2006); being perceived to be atypical (Catalyst, 2007) or counter-stereotypical (Camussi and Leccardi, 2005); working with other women on competitive tasks (Rudman and Phelan, 2008); and women deflecting from themselves the unfavourable assessments of successful women in male-dominated organizational roles (Parks-Stamm, Heilman and Hearn, 2008). Such boundary marking can be seen as exclusionary or stigmatizing social relations when women compete with women for scarce resources (Campbell, 2004). However, there is a lack of theoretical and empirical research into negative intra-gender relations between women in organizations.

To summarize, within these contexts a hierarchy of masculinities continues to construct gender relations at different levels (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). We recognize this as paradoxical: emphasized femininities (Connell, 1987) which close down possibilities of other femininities, versus women's engagement in the complexities of resistance. However, in adopting a position of doing gender well and differently we believe there are possibilities for disruption and more fluid subjectivities. We propose that negative intra-gender relations between women can be explained by women's marginalization and resistance, intra-gender competition, female misogyny and doing of gender well and differently within the masculine symbolic order. While there has been progress for women, with the career-minded professional woman argued to be a 'new' norm (Billing, 2011), this more disruptive doing of gender within gendered contexts is complex and comes at a price. Complexity provokes ambiguity, ambivalence and struggle for individual women, where motivations of securing self-coherence can result in attempts to re-cast traditional gendered norms, and negative intra-gender relations between women. These negative relations contribute to the constraints around possibilities for women and require research. We now turn to interpersonal mistreatment as a means of further understanding women's negative relationships with women in organizations.

Interpersonal mistreatment, incivility and micro-aggression

There is a growing body of research into negative workplace interpersonal relations under various themes such as incivility, bullying, social undermining, interpersonal mistreatment/conflict and abusive supervision (see Hershcovis (2011) for a review). In general, Harlos (2010) suggests that interpersonal mistreatment is constructed as

53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100
101
102
103

unsolicited offensive behaviour which violates another and her desire for courteous treatment. It includes, but is not limited to, verbal aggression (e.g. swearing), exclusion (from activities) and disrespect (e.g. interruption, public humiliation) (Lim and Cortina, 2005). Similarly, workplace incivility is an inherently social phenomenon often dismissed as trivial, lacking in overt malice and can derive from employees at any level (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Cortina *et al.*, 2001). To support a better understanding of the negative intra-gender social relations interpreted in our data we moved from general workplace mistreatment to focus on micro-aggression which explicitly considers gender.

Micro-aggression can include subtle insults (verbal, non-verbal and/or visual), often automatic or unconscious, expressed towards marginalized groups (Sue, 2010). As with interpersonal mistreatment and incivility, micro-aggression has a sense of ‘invisibility’ in that people are usually unaware that they have engaged in an exchange that demeans the ‘recipient’ of the communication. Micro-aggression is a constant and continuing experience; it impacts on the self-esteem of recipients, produces anger and frustration, lowers

feelings of subjective well-being, and depletes or diverts energy (Sue, 2010). The original taxonomy of micro-aggression was further developed to include a framework of gender with sexual orientation by Sue and Capodilupo (2008) and gender micro-aggression by Nadal (2010) and Capodilupo *et al.* (2010).

Gender micro-aggression is positioned as *inter-gender*, ‘often inflicted upon women by well-intentioned men’ (Sue, 2010, p. 164) who are usually unaware of the impact. See Table 1 for gender micro-aggression themes. An important omission from this framework is the possibility of *intra-gender* micro-aggression. Yet we propose that this research is fitting to better understand women elite leaders’ experiences because they remain in a minority at the top of hierarchies, located within gendered contexts, often marginalized and subject to environmental invalidations and macro- and micro-aggression which reinforce business as a man’s world, women as inferior and leadership as male.

To summarize our discussions, we have outlined how gendered contexts, doing gender well and differently, intra-gender competition and female misogyny ideology can explain negative

Table 1. Inter-gender micro-aggression themes

<i>Sexual objectification</i> (including self-objectification)	<i>Denial of individual sexism</i>	<i>Denial of reality of sexism</i>
Women treated as objects at men’s disposal (e.g. whistles/strange man touching a woman). Women also objectify/evaluate themselves and other women as separate sexual beings	A statement of bias denial (e.g. I’m not racist – I have several black friends; I always treat women and men equally)	Numerous messages sent to women that sexism is in past; women are now <i>advantaged</i> ; women externalize own shortcomings and trivialize sexist incidents. Women’s experiences of sexism are invalidated
<i>Second class citizenship</i>	<i>Assumption of traditional gender roles/restrictive gender roles</i>	<i>Environmental</i> (Nadal, 2010)
Women do not deserve the same opportunities, benefits or privileges afforded to men. Certain groups are less worthy, less important, less deserving and inferior	Expectations of traditional roles/stereotypes conveyed (e.g. a woman’s place is in the home)	Systematic environmental levels (e.g. women systematically paid less than men for similar work; board rooms with photographs of all successful positions are men)
<i>Invisibility (similar to Second class citizenship)</i> (Nadal, 2010)		
Women are not seen or are ignored in the workplace (e.g. forgetting the names of female employees but no difficulty in remembering male names, serving men before women, or not recalling the ideas of a female co-worker)		
<i>Assumption of inferiority</i>	<i>Use of sexist language</i>	<i>Sexist humour/jokes</i> (Sue, 2010)
Women considered inferior intellectually, temperamentally and physically (e.g. too emotional)	‘He’ male as universal experience while female experience as meaningless (e.g. female doctor mistaken for nurse)	Hidden messages filled with stereotypes, demeaning and masked form of hostility

Modified from Nadal (2010), Capodilupo *et al.* (2010), Sue (2010) and Sue and Capodilupo (2008).

1 intra-gender relations between women. By
 2 holding such elite positions and enacting masculinities and femininities simultaneously, women
 3 may engage with, as well as challenge, the masculine symbolic order. We also looked to gender
 4 micro-aggression research to further understand negative relations between women in gendered
 5 contexts. From this we set out to better understand women elite leaders' experiences of negative
 6 intra-gender relations with women at work.
 7
 8
 9
 10

11 **Methodology**

12 This research is a part of a larger project exploring women leaders' social relations with other women
 13 at work. We draw upon the traditions of qualitative research (Mason, 2002; Silverman, 2000) and
 14 adopt a constructionist approach to explore how fragments of individuals' lives, experiences and
 15 emotions become constructed, negotiated and interwoven into patchworks of meaning over time
 16 (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Fletcher, 2006). As co-constructors of the 'realities' discussed, partici-
 17 pants' stories about work are co-constructed and re-presented as partial, retrospective accounts of
 18 their experiences, intertwined with the researchers' own lived experiences (gender, culture, age,
 19 education) (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Dick and Cassell, 2004; Thomas and Davies, 2005; Watson,
 20 1998). Following Stead and Elliot (2012), our perspective supports relational and socially situated
 21 understandings in that it encourages views of intra-gender relations between women as dynamic
 22 participation in social practices within particular historical and social contexts, such as organiza-
 23 tional gendered contexts.
 24
 25
 26
 27
 28
 29
 30
 31
 32
 33
 34
 35
 36

37 Data were collected by the third author and two research assistants. A semi-structured interview
 38 guide was used to facilitate exploration into a similar range of topics across participants as they
 39 were asked about their experiences (e.g. life/career history, experiences of becoming a woman
 40 moving into elite positions including friendship, competition, cooperation and ambition), whilst
 41 also allowing the participant and interviewer flexibility around the depth and breadth of topics
 42 discussed. Interviews with 81 women based in UK organizations were conducted: 36 Executive
 43 Directors/Non-Executive Directors in FTSE 100/250 companies and 45 elite leaders identified as
 44 'influential' in an annual regional newspaper sup-
 45
 46
 47
 48
 49
 50
 51

52 plement about the 'top 250/500 influential leaders'. Research participants held 'top' formal
 53 positions with significant institutional and hierarchical power within a private or public organiza-
 54 tion and were thus considered elite leaders. Participants were aged between 33 and 67 years;
 55 73 self-declared as white British/Irish/other white backgrounds, two black/mixed backgrounds,
 56 with six non-declared. Sixty-two women worked full time and 14¹ part time, with five non-declared.
 57 Interviews lasted on average 90 minutes. These were recorded, transcribed, anonymized, coded
 58 and returned to participants for approval and further reflective thought to enhance the 'trust-
 59 worthiness' of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The women identified their own codes to
 60 protect anonymity but are identified here using pseudonyms.
 61
 62
 63
 64
 65
 66
 67
 68
 69

70 The process of data analysis and theoretical development was interpretivist in that the first
 71 author took the lead in the initial 'literal readings' and 'interpretative readings' (Mason, 2002) of 10,
 72 then an additional 16, interview transcripts to identify possible patterns. A process of constant
 73 comparison across transcripts facilitated the development of 40 broad themes. She also held
 74 post data collection discussions with the third author and the other two research assistants to
 75 explore whether the initial themes resonated with their reflections on the data they collected.
 76
 77
 78
 79
 80
 81

82 Following this initial stage, the second author engaged in a similar process across those 26 tran-
 83 scripts, informed, but not restricted, by the themes already developed. We then began a further inter-
 84 pretative process that included all transcripts to refine these into 10 themes. One of these themes
 85 was labelled 'female misogyny' to reflect women's negative relations with other women. It is the data
 86 from this theme that are the focus here. Both authors were intrigued by participants' retellings
 87 of intra-gender negative relations with other women which prompted discussions of the
 88 authors' own similar experiences.
 89
 90
 91
 92
 93
 94

95 The negative experiences described by participants were often marked by judgements, put-
 96 downs, undermining and exclusion, relating to how (other) women interpreted and enacted their
 97
 98
 99

100 ¹Fourteen women worked part time and held positions which fit the criteria for 'elite leader': significant positions
 101 of power and influence at the top of organizational hierarchies.
 102
 103

expression of doing gender (e.g. inappropriate dress, too pretty, too young) and (other) women's expectations to be treated in particular ways because they were women (e.g. wanting it all – motherhood and career success without sacrifice). Accounts described by 'perpetrators' were often void of conscious intent. Particularly striking were accounts by 'recipients' where they described an intense emotional response (e.g. betrayal, wounded, horrible, vulnerable) because this was with another woman. The participants' experiences resurfaced our theoretical interest in, and focused attention on, how we engage negatively, often unreflexively, with other women within the masculine symbolic order.

At this stage we turned to the extant literature on interpersonal mistreatment, workplace incivility and micro-aggression. Our emerging interest in intra-gender micro-aggression led to a further phase of analysis informed by the taxonomies of gender micro-aggression. However, the experience of violence interpreted from the data was not fully accounted for in the gender micro-aggression literature and we reviewed recent literature on doing gender and abjection to further understand the gendered nature of the negative experiences. This stage of analysis, marked by experiencing surprises in the empirical data and an ongoing back-and-forth between data analysis and theory to explain the unexpected findings (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012), enabled us to develop intra-gender micro-violence as psychosocial and non-physical social relations related to the recipient's doing of gender.

Reflecting on our study, we acknowledge that the women participants are not a homogeneous group and, while they share experiences as 'elite' leaders, they do not share the same experiences (Bryans and Mavin, 2003; Griffin, 1995). Further, although most participants engaged in and/or experienced some form of intra-gender micro-aggression we cannot conclude that all women experience the same.

All authors agreed on the themes discussed here and in what follows we first discuss how the accounts of women elite leaders' experiences of intra-gender relations support existing taxonomies of inter-gender micro-aggression. We highlight how women leaders express varying motivations for *self-objectification* as a micro-aggression (Sue, 2010) in relation to other women; how the *restrictive gender roles*, *denial of the*

reality of sexism and *denial of individual sexism* micro-aggression themes often coalesce in women's talk of intra-gender relations with other women and how the inter-gender micro-aggression theme of *assumptions of inferiority* occurs in combination with *denial of individual sexism* and *restrictive gender roles* in women's intra-gender relations. We then shift our focus to extend understandings of micro-aggression by introducing intra-gender micro-violence with three supporting themes: *disassociating*, *suppression of opportunity* and *abject appearance*.

Intra-gender micro-aggression relations between women

We interpret intra-gender micro-aggression between women as denigrating messages which are subtle, stunning, often automatic 'putdowns' (Pierce *et al.*, 1978; Sue, 2010) via relations which are 'so pervasive and automatic in daily conversations and interactions that they are often dismissed and glossed over as being innocent and innocuous' (Sue, 2010, pp. xvi–xvii). We propose that intra-gender micro-aggression, as common everyday occurrences and experiences between women, may have serious deleterious impact, not only on individual women but also in terms of women's continued marginalization.

Intra-gender micro-aggression between women

As we moved back and forth between the literature and the data, we interpreted that some women were ambiguous 'perpetrators' of micro-aggression towards other women. Existing inter-gender micro-aggression themes enabled us to further understand the dynamic negative relations between women. One of our contributions is that we develop the taxonomies to include considerations of intra-gender micro-aggression (see illustrative examples of data/themes in Table 2).

First, we understand *self-objectification* as a woman objectifying herself within sexualized and sexist contexts (Sue, 2010) and include it here as an intra-gender process as women leaders express varying motivations for self-objectification in relation to other women, dependent on how they and other women do gender well and differently against gender binaries. For example, other

Table 2. Intra-gender micro-aggression between women

Participant	Data example	Micro-aggression as intra-gender
Amanda	Sometimes they've [women] known how to play men very cleverly. You do have to learn how to do that. This whole argument about how you use your looks or your sexuality at work which would have to me been completely anathema as a concept. More and more I recognize we are all sexual beings and I've seen women who are very attractive do very well. I don't mean that they slept around or that they've been nasty to other women but they use their inherent female attractiveness and obviously you also need the power of intellect	Intra-gender sexual objectification
Alice	I would say I've also noticed that being a woman that I often have the ability to – I can get the attention of men more easily than other men might be able to because, I don't know if it's because of my accent or because I wear dresses not suits, I find that I can get meetings perhaps a little bit more easily or get time in if I need it or get the attention of people if I'm speaking. Yeah I think it's because there aren't very many women often in the meetings I'm in that I do feel that I command respect and attention when I'm saying something	Self-objectification
Gillian	The downside of the collegiateness in the women's environment is that it sometimes needs a good shake-up. I have actually said it would be great to have a man on the senior management team because it would just shake things up, it would add more diversity. On the upside we're a great team who work together really well, we've got goals, manage well together. On the downside sometimes we can prevaricate a bit, not make a decision	Intra-gender assumptions of inferiority
Wendy	A lot of this comes out of all this gender diversity on boards women need to think really, really hard, just as men do, when they take on a senior position. They are difficult jobs with lots of responsibility and hard work. I really worry in terms of the discussions around [name of senior role] diversity that it all, it all seems to be conversations about the appointment. We need to appoint more women to the boards. There's little acknowledgement of what a serious job that is and what it entails. I do slightly worry that some of the consequences of what we're seeing at the moment is women – at its best women will be encouraged to, to progress through those sorts of things. At the worst, women will feel entitled to get some of those positions . . . we shouldn't have a sense of entitlement any more than anybody else [man]. These are big jobs	Intra-gender denial of individual sexism/ restrictive gender roles/ assumption of inferiority
Ruth	I will have conversations with women who are in their early to mid-30s who've had one child, possibly going to have the second one, want to work part time yet equally are sort of saying to me 'but this may jeopardize my career opportunities and positions. I don't want to lose pace.' And I have to say I think that's the shadow (issue) the interesting test, because I sit here with very mixed emotions. Clearly as a supporter of these women I don't want to see them lose pace, but equally one has to be pragmatic and you make choices and if you've got three four five years out the workplace and you're part time, it is tough to say, unless you're a particular specialist functions, you're going to keep track with other colleagues and other peers	Intra-gender restrictive gender roles/ denial of the reality of sexism/ denial of individual sexism

women's 'feminine wiles' and 'batting of eyelids' (Shirley) in doing gender well are admired and imitated and/or undermined and managed out by women. The women leaders themselves engage in self-objectification in doing gender well, referring to their appearance (e.g. haircuts, stilettos, lipstick), and in describing their 'battle-dress' (e.g. Julie) or uniform when doing gender differently, which we view as supporting feelings of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) in elite positions.

Our interpretations also highlight how Sue's (2010) *restrictive gender roles, denial of the reality of sexism* and *denial of individual sexism* micro-aggression themes often coalesce. For example, participants discussed the current debate on quotas to increase the number of women on UK company boards and framed how (other) women may be advantaged in organizations (by positive

initiatives). This potential advantage threatens to invalidate the 'perpetrator's' own experiences of sexism. Women leaders also express discomfort with other women's expectations that 'women can have it all' in that work-life balance and caring responsibilities (doing gender well) are somehow not quite in keeping with elite leader positions (which requires doing gender differently). This reinforces the masculine symbolic order in that women should not expect the (patriarchal) system to 'bend' to them when they become mothers. Clare illustrates this:

I feel very strongly that women should not put themselves into a position where they reject leadership. . . . There may be career choices which actually mean that you have to make that sacrifice. You can't expect the framework of the career will entirely

58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75

bend . . . because of what you demand. . . . Some of the areas where I have worked have been about the absolute pinnacle of quality of something and that doesn't fit with taking half your time off or going home when you need to look after the children. (Clare)

According to Mavin and Grandy (2013), women doing gender well against sex category is often perceived favourably. However, they also argue in stigmatized occupations (women exotic dancers) doing gender well may not be enough 'to reposition bad girls (and bad work) into good girls (and good work)' (p. 232). We extend this line of thinking: doing gender well may not be enough to position good girls, doing gender well, into good leaders. Rather, the women leaders' accounts illuminate that in certain *intra-gender* situations doing gender well is a site for micro-aggression.

Further, Sue's (2010) *inter-gender* theme of *assumptions of inferiority* occurs in combination with *denial of individual sexism* and *restrictive gender roles* in *intra-gender* relations when women leaders voice concerns as to whether women can do such 'big jobs' (which require doing gender differently) and that women may feel 'entitled to get some of the positions' (Wendy). This micro-aggression communicates that for varying reasons only certain kinds of women are appropriate for elite roles and reinforces the sexist Queen Bee construction.

We argue that *intra-gender* micro-aggression between women explains a complexity previously not accounted for in the literature. The simultaneous occurrence and overlapping nature of several micro-aggression themes drew our attention to something more complex about the *intra-gender* nature of the social relations between women. Specifically, we were struck by the perversity of how women hold other women accountable to normative gendered expectations and in doing so engage in micro-aggression violating the recipient(s). It is to this micro-violence that we now turn.

Intra-gender micro-violence

In their accounts of *intra-gender* relations with other women, the women elite leaders expressed particularly intense emotion related to experiences of micro-aggression. Some women participants commented upon the severity of their

emotional experience as violating because the relations they discussed were with another woman. We understand this violence as underpinned by the inherent gendered assumptions that women hold of sisterhood and solidarity relationships between women (Mavin, 2008); negative *intra-gender* relations between women 'fly in the face' of what women expect from other women. Thus feelings of violation and betrayal intersect, amplifying experiences of micro-aggression in an *intra-gender* form. The micro-aggression research does not take into account this intensity grounded in *intra-gender* relations so we turned to psychosocial violence and abjection and 'named' these experiences *intra-gender* micro-violence.

We understand *intra-gender* micro-violence as psychosocial and non-physical, where gendered contexts and social factors interrelate with individual thought and social relations. This violence involves (non-physical) aggressive strategies where the perpetrator harms through the manipulation of relationships (Crick, Casas and Nelson, 2002) and social experiences, exclusionary forces which strip people of their dignity (I. Tyler, 2009). Like psychological violence, micro-violence limits women's autonomy and attempts to limit women's ability to act as independent subjects (I. Tyler, 2009). We conceptualize *intra-gender* micro-violence as:

Negative *intra-gender* psychosocial relations which can be subtle, invisible or intangible, non-physical, hostile and verbal and serve to harm, damage, victimize, sabotage, manipulate or undermine the target's doing of gender (*well and differently*). These relations negatively impact the target's self-worth, self-esteem, self-image, character, reputation, confidence, credibility and/or status.

Intra-gender micro-violence is experienced with intensity, ferocity, vehemence or harshness and perceived as unwarranted, unprovoked, unjust, disrespectful, abusive or aggressive.

Micro-violence helps us understand *intra-gender* negative relations between women, facilitated within gendered contexts, and furthers our understanding of women's doing of gender well and differently. The impact and intensity of *intra-gender* micro-violence is illustrated by women feeling 'vulnerable' (Julie): they 'really struggle' (Sandra); feel 'like a wounded bear' (Linda), defenceless against other women.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51

52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100
101
102
103

Micro-violence was particularly vivid in discussions of intra-gender rivalry – competition, competitiveness and competing with other women. For example, Maria recounted how women who acted as her mentors ‘bled me dry and spat me out. That’s why I feel very strongly there are . . . it’s a very very painful thing to realize . . . particularly when it’s other women.’ Also, Lydia offered a striking description of micro-violence which she described as ‘not nice’, ‘horrible’ and ‘hard’ when a woman publicly circulated something ‘untrue’ about her and she wanted to ‘exonerate’ herself by fighting back harder. She experienced this more negatively and intensely than if this had been with a man, more as a ‘betrayal’ and violating.

but if it had been a man who was doing it, it wouldn’t have been good but it wouldn’t have been as bad. I think because it was a woman doing this to . . . women it seemed far – it seemed like a betrayal. It seemed far worse . . . (Lydia)

The women also provide examples of separating themselves from those women who engage in what we interpret as micro-violence, who they describe as ‘conniving, difficult, using screechy bitchiness’ (Christine); as ‘rude and aggressive’ (Amanda); who have ‘female cunning’ and who engage in ‘nasty gossip’ and ‘subterfuge’ (Shirley), ‘side-swipe remarks and intellectual bullying’ (Clare). Women describe these relations as very difficult and ‘hideous’ (Sheila), leading to perfunctory relationships which ‘knock confidence’ (Alison). From our analysis we interpreted three micro-violence themes: *disassociating*, *suppression of opportunity* and *abject appearance*.

Disassociating. Disassociating reflects intra-gender social relations motivated to create distance between a woman and other women, communicating messages which potentially have a harmful impact on women. Women engage in relations which distance themselves (physically or otherwise) from other women and/or exclude other women from social relations. Language describing disassociating in the women’s accounts include ‘nasty’ (Lisa); ‘gossiping’ (Gillian); ‘bitching’ (Deb); ‘excluding’, ‘bullying’ (Clare); ‘picking on a woman, back-biting’ and ‘excluding people, playground type behaviour’ (Sue); ‘conniving, rumour mongering’ (Linda); ‘hostility’ and ‘distancing’ (Julie). From Linda’s account we interpret how a woman’s doing of gender well or differently illustrates disassociating micro-violence.

We’ve also invited women in and out of our dinners who I don’t have anything in common with . . . because they’re very competitive and ambitious [doing gender differently] and all they do at the dinners is instead of talking about their kids or family, holiday [doing gender well], they just talk about their work but not in an empathetic way [doing gender well], in a kind of ‘wanting to tell us how amazing they are’ way [doing gender differently]. . . . That doesn’t work for me at all because the reason we all meet together is to have a moan about our inflexible bosses or talk about children or . . . holidays or . . . hair [doing gender well] . . . but not to big up what we do in our roles [doing gender differently]. . . . Well that’s not what I like doing anyway but there are definitely women out there who do and they are not my cup of tea. (Linda)

Here Linda relates negatively to those women who want to do gender differently. We infer from her account that those women who do gender differently may also relate negatively to Linda for her doing of gender well. This highlights the ambivalence women experience with regard to the elite leader position and the search for ‘precise boundaries between what is “masculine” and what is “feminine”’ (Camussi and Leccardi, 2005, p. 116). Linda disassociates herself from other women who are perceived to be ‘competitive’, ‘ambitious’, ‘big up what we [they] do in our [their] roles’ and are ‘not my cup of tea’. At the same time Linda privileges her doing of gender well in that she wants to talk about: ‘children or holidays or hair’.

We propose that disassociating social relations can be explained by intra-gender competition within the masculine symbolic order, where women’s manipulation of social relationships through stigmatizing and exclusion (e.g. rumours and gossip) strategies can be ‘devastating’ for the victim (Campbell, 2004, p. 18). Edwina illustrates these relations further.

It’s the nastiness with which women can talk about each other. Men don’t always like each other but their dislike of each other is usually expressed in . . . different ways. Whereas women, and there is a particular style of woman that can be nasty and venomous. . . . Now, it happens that the woman [recipient] that she’s [woman leader] been nasty about happens to be younger and, if I’m completely honest, prettier [laughs] and smarter than her. And for some odd reason . . . she [woman leader] doesn’t

1 have to have anything to do with her, she just
2 happens to sit on the same floor as her. (Edwina)

3 For some it was difficult to articulate disassociating
4 micro-violence. This can be seen in Julie's
5 comments.

6 Certainly in my last job it was a little bit different
7 because I was the only female [name of elite role]
8 amongst six males and that was a bit tricky. I did
9 detect that there was a little bit of a distancing from
10 quite a few of the women who were senior them-
11 selves but not quite [name of elite role] level and I
12 detected – It's almost intangible to put my finger on,
13 it wasn't hostility, it wasn't overt. It wasn't overt
14 hostility or it wasn't bitching, it was just a distanc-
15 ing. (Julie)

16 9 Here Julie as the lone woman elite leader has
17 achieved the masculine strategic prerogative (M.
18 Tyler, 2005), disrupting gendered norms, and
19 therefore other women distance themselves from
20 her. Disassociating is covert (and intangible) and
21 overt (and tangible) and can be explained by
22 female misogyny ideology and intra-gender com-
23 petition which reflect concern for, and possible
24 threats to, established gendered hierarchies. This
25 becomes a struggle over destabilization, change
26 and/or maintenance of the gendered status quo
27 (Mavin, 2006).

28
29 *Suppression of opportunity.* While disassociating
30 involves exclusion from social relations, suppres-
31 sion of opportunity involves how women subcon-
32 sciously and/or unreflexively suppress, block and
33 deny other women access to resources and oppor-
34 tunities for progression. This intra-gender micro-
35 violence reflects aspects of the sexist Queen Bee
36 label, where women are constructed as problem-
37 atic because of their positions of power and per-
38 ceived betrayal of gendered expectations. Martha
39 sums up suppression of opportunity by talking
40 about women who are 'not exactly up to the job'
41 which she justifies because 'younger women are
42 not corrected anymore' and 'there's more positive
43 discrimination'.

44 Especially now where there is a real desire socially
45 and in society to appoint women, the real risk is that
46 women are appointed who are not exactly up to the
47 job and then to confirm implicit feelings that women
48 can't really do it or can't be as good as men which is
49 not the case, it's only a case of having chosen the
50 wrong woman but because these younger women

are not corrected anymore and perhaps the pres- 51
sures are a little bit less there's more positive dis- 52
crimination. The real risk is that they actually end 53
up being quite unhappy in a position where they 54
shouldn't have been in the first place and that's a 55
real problem. . . . (Martha) 56

57 With ambiguous intent, Martha is unreflexive
58 with respect to the potential harm of her approach
59 and of how this micro-violence supports the main-
60 tenance of the masculine symbolic order. In pre-
61 senting suppression of opportunity as intra-
62 gender micro-violence we draw attention to
63 something more complex about the gendered
64 context within which these relations happen, so
65 that these intra-gender relations simultaneously
66 support the masculine symbolic order and restrict
67 opportunities for other women. Specifically, this
68 reflects the perversity of how women hold other
69 women accountable to normative gendered expect-
70 ations and in doing so they engage in micro-
71 violence. Lisa talks of how another woman
72 restricted her potential in response to her ambi-
73 tious (masculine) approach.

74 My female boss I admired hugely and learnt a lot
75 from her . . . had a good relationship with, although
76 she was interestingly a big part of why I left that job
77 as well because I felt she put a ceiling on me. I
78 was very ambitious and was always pushing her and
79 . . . it's a whole female management team there and
80 I was a real pusher in terms of ambition and wanting
81 to take the organization to another level and con-
82 stantly, relentlessly . . . she was the one that's put the
83 ceiling on me. (Lisa)

84 In responding to the ambivalence of their pres-
85 ence in organizations, women use masculine nor-
86 mative frameworks in the absence of alternatives.
87 This can be seen when women suppress other
88 women's potential, denying opportunities and
89 constraining opportunities. 90

91 *Abject appearance.* The third intra-gender micro-
92 violence theme, abject appearance, reflects the
93 struggles, tensions and contradictions that
94 women engage in and experience, in relation to
95 their own and other women's bodies and appear-
96 ance. Abject appearance as micro-violence builds
97 upon the *sexual/self-objectification* gender micro-
98 aggression, as women are reduced to their sexual-
99 ity or physical appearance and where women,
100 'evaluated in an objectified culture regarding
101 physical appearance, come to evaluate their own

worthiness or self-esteem based upon appearance and physical attributes' (Sue, 2010, p. 170). Here we interpret sexual objectification as more complex and impacting more intensely when in an intra-gender form. In conceptualizing abject appearance, we were informed by M. Tyler's (2011, p. 1493) concept of 'abject labour' which builds upon Kristeva's (1982) 'abjection' as simultaneous attraction and repulsion. Women in our research are simultaneously fascinated by and repelled (even repulsed) by their own and other women's bodies and appearance at work. Viewing this abjection through a lens of doing gender well and differently simultaneously enables us to further understand the gendered contexts that explain micro-violence between women. For example, Alice talks about 'the right amount of femininity of attire or style in a professional setting', having to 'carefully calibrate' this and balance physical form because there 'aren't many overweight women CEOs'. Through abject appearance women silence other women's doing of gender well and differently, allowing only certain gendered performances 'in ways that are often discriminatory and exclusionary towards those [other women] who deviate from the accepted norms of masculinity' (Fotaki, 2011, p. 50).

Fotaki (2011) suggests that violence describes the way women's bodies are silenced in higher education, symbolically abjected as violence. Here the women elite leaders perceive themselves and other women relative to their views of whether women 'should or should not' be concerned with their body and appearance (as women doing gender well) or whether they 'should be' dressing for masculinity/leadership (doing gender differently). For example Amanda told another woman to get 'rid of the [little girl] hair do' if she wanted to get on. Further, within-sex competition relating to attractiveness can also take on a dynamic of its own (Campbell, 2004). Lisa's comments illustrate these dynamics.

And I remember when I didn't get the job . . . there was a woman on the appointment panel and I thought 'well I will go to her and get some feedback as to why I didn't get it'. And the feedback she gave me was, I shouldn't have worn the high shoes that I wore. I should have had a different suit on, and I shouldn't have worn the tights I was wearing. That was her feedback on why I didn't get the job. I said

'Really?' I have worked here for four years. Why does it make any difference what I was wearing on the day? And she said 'oh it has real impact'. (Lisa)

This intra-gender micro-violence, where women silence and mark out what is acceptable for women, is significant, as women struggle with their desire for acceptance and recognition, without their own normative frameworks for accepted embodiment at work. This desire leads to subjection to normative frameworks, 'even if this subjection is injurious to ourselves . . . we assume identities and roles in order to prevent ourselves from experiencing the consequences of abjection' (Fotaki, 2011, p. 49). From our analysis, abject appearance throws into conflict expectations of emphasized femininity (Connell, 1987) with expectations of de-sexualization/neutralization of women or a doing of gender differently. Serena offers a further example.

I said [to her] 'you were interviewed by a man and a woman. I would have been your boss and you spent all your time looking at him crossing your legs, uncrossing your legs and your skirt was too short and you scarcely looked at me.' I said 'I was going to be the person who would employ you . . . and you are too able', I said, 'you don't need to do that. You've got huge capabilities, why did you do that? You don't need to put all of that stuff on. Just go on the basis of your own abilities. If you had you would have probably got the job.' (Serena)

We conclude that there is no one right way or boundary marking of what is acceptable 'body' and appearance for women elite leaders. Participants talk of how a professional (masculine) appearance is appropriate, thereby doing gender differently; how feminine and sexy is okay, thereby doing gender well; and how dull is best, thereby 'neutralizing' gender. However, a doing of gender differently, presenting women's bodies and appearance in ways closer to masculine norms, was certainly prevalent.

Abject appearance as micro-violence is further illustrated by Kim who highlights the ambivalence and struggle of getting the body and appearance 'right' and reflects women's obsession (fascination) with 'looks'. This manifests as 'bitching', while wanting to present herself 'correctly'; attempting to appropriate masculinity which no one will notice; wanting to be 'safe' and neutralize her body and appearance.

1 I think women can maybe take issue or kind of bitch
 2 . . . about somebody's appearance or clothes . . . one
 3 of the things that I've resisted is the obsession with
 4 looks. . . . But there was other advice that I got often
 5 from women colleagues . . . you must wear lipstick
 6 or you must do this . . . and frankly it wasn't helpful
 7 because I've never worn make-up and I wasn't going
 8 to feel comfortable. A little bit of me wanted to say
 9 look, I honestly don't think I'm going to get X . . .
 10 on the strength of whether or not I'm wearing lip-
 11 stick. . . . I've wanted to be known for what I said
 12 and what I was doing and not for my jackets or my
 13 shoes . . . maybe there's also safety in that. . . . I'm
 14 particularly aiming for the looking correct and
 15 wearing something that nobody is going to feel any
 16 need to report on which means it's utterly boring
 17 but that's where I want to be. (Kim)

18
 19 Further to Fotaki's (2011) use of violence to
 20 describe symbolic abjection of women's bodies,
 21 abjection is an appropriate lens to reflect our con-
 22 ceptualization of micro-violence as it is 'unique in
 23 its ability to articulate the psychosocial dimen-
 24 sions of violence' (I. Tyler, 2009, p. 95). Extending
 25 this research, we argue that abject appearance as
 26 intra-gender micro-violence reflects and commu-
 27 nicates demarcation and containment of what is
 28 in/appropriate for women elite leaders. It illumi-
 29 nates women's complex relationships with other
 30 women and the exclusionary forces which deny
 31 individuals' gender and strip people of their
 32 dignity.

33 In summary, through our analysis of women
 34 elite leaders' experiences of relations with other
 35 women we have demonstrated support for exist-
 36 ing taxonomies of gender micro-aggression.
 37 Specifically, women leaders self-objectify as
 38 micro-aggression in relations with other women
 39 and provide a variety of motivations for doing so.
 40 We also outlined how 'different' micro-aggression
 41 relations in the literature occur simultaneously as
 42 women talk about intra-gender relations with
 43 other women. We propose that intra-gender
 44 micro-aggression between women explains a com-
 45 plexity previously not accounted for and as such
 46 we extend the existing work on *inter*-gender
 47 micro-aggression.

48 We also offer intra-gender micro-violence as an
 49 additional form of micro-aggression relations to
 50 better explain the intensity and complexity of
 51 emotions and experiences of the women, negative
 52 intra-gender psychosocial relations which can

53 be subtle, invisible or intangible, non-physical,
 54 hostile and verbal and serve to harm, damage,
 55 victimize, sabotage, manipulate or undermine the
 56 target's doing of gender (well and differently). We
 57 interpreted three micro-violence themes: disasso-
 58 ciating, reflecting intra-gender social relations
 59 which create distance (physically or otherwise)
 60 and exclude women from social relations; sup-
 61 pression of opportunity, involving women sub-
 62 consciously and/or unreflexively suppressing,
 63 blocking or denying other women access to
 64 resources and opportunities for progression; and
 65 abject appearance whereby women evaluate their
 66 own bodies and appearance and that of other
 67 women in ways which serve to silence other
 68 women's doing of gender well and differently, per-
 69 mitting only certain gendered performances and
 70 'punishing' women who perform alternative
 71 expressions of femininity or masculinity.

72 Discussion 73

74
 75 In fusing literature on gendered contexts, doing
 76 gender well and differently simultaneously, intra-
 77 gender competition and female misogyny we have
 78 outlined how gendered contexts and the mascu-
 79 line symbolic order can facilitate women's intra-
 80 gender violence and contributed to under-
 81 standings of negative intra-gender relations
 82 between women. In 'naming' intra-gender micro-
 83 violence and the themes we have provided empiri-
 84 cal examples of how women elite leaders may
 85 negotiate the masculine symbolic order. Analys-
 86 ing through 'doing gender well and differently'
 87 enabled interpretations of women's enactment of,
 88 and responses to, the masculinized symbolic order
 89 via disassociation or suppression of opportunity.
 90 We have also considered Mavin's (2008) issue
 91 with the uncritical perpetuation of the sexist
 92 Queen Bee label. Further, analysing through
 93 abjection as a simultaneous fascination and repul-
 94 sion towards women's bodies and appearance, we
 95 argue that women hold other women accountable
 96 to normative gendered expectations.

97 Through a gender micro-aggression lens we
 98 have discussed what negative intra-gender social
 99 relations between women might look like. Our
 100 findings resonate with extant literature into inter-
 101 personal mistreatment, incivility at work and the
 102 existence and power of gender *inter*-micro-
 103 aggression. By discussing women's experiences of

1 *intra*-gender micro-aggression, developing intra- 53
 2 gender micro-violence between women and high- 54
 3 lighting three intra-gender micro-violence themes, 55
 4 we have extended *inter*-gender micro-aggression 56
 5 (Capodilupo *et al.*, 2010; Nadal, 2010; Sue and 57
 6 Capodilupo, 2008) to take account of *intra*-gender 58
 7 relations. 59

8 The three themes of intra-gender micro- 60
 9 violence illustrate how the masculine symbolic 61
 10 order shapes and constrains women's social rela- 62
 11 tions with other women. Moreover, because they 63
 12 are intra-gender, specifically between women, the 64
 13 mistreatment is perceived to be more severe than 65
 14 similar relations between *men* and women. Such 66
 15 micro-violence is experienced as intense, personal 67
 16 and violating and often takes the victim by sur- 68
 17 prise (Linstead, 1997), thereby intensifying the 69
 18 emotional impact. 70

19 Cockburn (1991, p. 8) argues that women can 71
 20 only be liberated from patriarchy through a strug- 72
 21 gle to change the system as system. Yet it is impos- 73
 22 sible to confront a common condition before we 74
 23 have recognized it; we cannot begin to find our 75
 24 own power until we consciously recognize our 76
 25 non-power (Rowbothan, 1973). In 'naming' intra- 77
 26 gender micro-violence as relational mistreatment 78
 27 and interpreting it as a 'closing down' of women's 79
 28 intra-gender *differences* at work and thus 80
 29 women's potential to be 'otherwise', we propose 81
 30 that this is our attempt at recognizing a common 82
 31 condition and disrupting the system. We recog- 83
 32 nize that there may be other ways in which female 84
 33 misogyny and intra-gender competition are experi- 85
 34 enced within the masculine symbolic order. 86
 35 However, what we offer here is a fruitful start to 87
 36 engage in further research into experiences of 88
 37 negative intra-gender relations between women. 89

38 Reflecting on the progress of women leaders 90
 39 (e.g. the professional career woman as the new 91
 40 norm; possibilities of more fluid subjectivities), 92
 41 this research highlights ongoing institutionalized 93
 42 gendered macro-manipulation and women's 94
 43 responses in resorting to (intra-gender) micro- 95
 44 manipulation (Lipman-Blumen, 1984). Thus we 96
 45 have illuminated how within gendered contexts 97
 46 women, often with ambiguous intent and unre- 98
 47 flexively, engage in intra-gender micro-violence 99
 48 with other women. These social relations serve to 100
 49 influence and control the balance of power in 101
 50 ways which have the potential to continue to per- 102
 51 petuate gendered contexts, rather than to chal- 103
 52 lenge and disrupt them. It is no surprise that a

consequence of the reproduction of gender within 53
 the symbolic order is that women are reminded of 54
 their subordinate position by themselves, their 55
 women colleagues and men (Fotaki, 2011), con- 56
 sidering the pull towards assimilation or integra- 57
 tion into the majority (Braidotti, 2003) and the 58
 lack of normative frameworks available to 59
 women leaders as resources to secure more coher- 60
 ent selves. 61

62 Within the ongoing debate concerning the lack 62
 of women on UK company boards (Davies, 2011; 63
 Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2013) the identification of 64
 intra-gender micro-violence between women is 65
 politically high risk. However, we have made 66
 visible and named such social relations as a way of 67
 disrupting the system, whilst surfacing how the 68
 embedded masculine symbolic order perpetuates 69
 and continues to shape women's negative intra- 70
 gender relations. We acknowledge that there are 71
 alternative interpretations but have articulated 72
 the potential harm negative intra-gender relations 73
 can inflict upon the experiences and progress of 74
 women. 75

76 It is critical for us to increase gender conscious- 76
 ness (Martin, 2003, 2006) and understand how 77
 gendered contexts and the symbolic order facili- 78
 tate intra-gender competition and female 79
 misogyny, explaining micro-violence between 80
 women. For us, raising consciousness is a means 81
 of disrupting the system and facilitating women 82
 and men's acceptance of women's intra-gender 83
differences. It is this acceptance which has the 84
 potential to improve opportunities for and to 85
 facilitate homosociality between women in 86
 organizations, thus further developing possibili- 87
 ties for women. 88

90 Conclusion 90

91 As women researchers we have reflexively devel- 91
 92 oped our awareness to the same ambivalence the 92
 93 women elite leaders experience in negative rela- 93
 94 tions with other women. Working through our 94
 95 own negative relations with other women is an 95
 96 ongoing project of sense making. We have a better 96
 97 understanding of why these negative intra-gender 97
 98 relations occur but we too continue to struggle 98
 99 within the masculine symbolic order. 100

101 Future research in this area is worth pursuing. 101
 102 Additional future research questions include: 102
 103 What are the outcomes of intra-gender micro- 103

aggression between women? Do intra-gender relations between men involve micro-aggression and, if so, how and why do they emerge and what do they look like? We also intend to continue exploration of abject appearance as intra-gender micro-violence and its distinctiveness from other forms of micro-aggression. Further, we have focused here on women elite leaders' experiences and not their work of leader/ship; therefore future research could look to how doing gender well and differently might inform understandings of leadership theories which consider masculinities and femininities, e.g. transformational and authentic leadership.

References

- Alvesson, M. and S. Deetz (2000). *Doing Critical Management Research*. London: Sage.
- Andersson, L. M. and C. M. Pearson (1999). 'Tit for tat? The spiraling effect of incivility in the workplace', *Academy of Management Review*, **24**, pp. 452–471.
- Bandura, A. (1977). 'Self-efficacy: toward a unifying theory of behavioural change', *Psychological Review*, **84**, pp. 191–215.
- Billing, Y. D. (2011). 'Are women in management victims of the phantom of the male norm?', *Gender, Work and Organization*, **18**, pp. 298–317.
- Bosak, J. and S. Szecsy (2011). 'Exploring the dynamics of incongruent beliefs about women and leaders', *British Journal of Management*, **22**, pp. 254–269.
- Braidotti, R. (2003). 'Becoming woman: or sexual difference revisited', *Theory, Culture and Society*, **20**, pp. 43–64.
- Broadbridge, A. and R. Simpson (2011). '25 years on: reflecting on the past and looking to the future in gender and management research', *British Journal of Management*, **22**, pp. 470–483.
- Brown, B. (1998). *Unlearning Discrimination in the Early Years*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.
- Bryans, P. and S. Mavin (2003). 'Women learning to become managers: learning to fit in or to play a different game?', *Management Learning*, **34**, pp. 111–134.
- Campbell, A. (2004). 'Female competition: causes, constraints, content, and context', *Journal of Sex Research*, **41**, pp. 16–26.
- Camussi, E. and C. Leccardi (2005). 'Stereotypes of working women: the power of expectations', *Social Science Information*, **44**, pp. 113–140.
- Capodilupo, C. M., K. L. Nadal, L. Corman, S. Hamit, O. B. Lyons and A. Weinberg (2010). 'The manifestation of gender micro-aggressions'. In D. W. Sue (ed.), *Micro-aggressions and Marginality: Manifestations, Dynamics and Impact*, pp. 193–216. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Catalyst (2007). *The Double-bind Dilemma for Women in Leadership: Damned if You Do, Doomed if You Don't*. New York: Catalyst.
- Chesler, P. (2001). *Women's Inhumanity to Woman*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, Nations Books.
- Chesterman, C., A. Ross-Smith and M. Peters (2005). 'The gendered impact on organisations of a critical mass of women in senior management', *Policy and Society*, **24**, pp. 69–91.
- Cockburn, C. (1985). *Machinery of Dominance: Women, Men and Technical Know-how*, pp. 185–186. London: Pluto Press.
- Cockburn, C. (1991). *In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organizations* (No. 18). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and Power*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Connell, R. W. and J. Messerschmidt (2005). 'Hegemonic masculinity: rethinking the concept', *Gender and Society*, **19**, pp. 829–859.
- Cortina, L. M., V. J. Magley, J. H. Williams and R. D. Langhout (2001). 'Incivility in the workplace: incidence and impact', *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, **6**, pp. 64–80.
- Crick, N. R., J. F. Casas and D. A. Nelson (2002). 'Toward a more comprehensive understanding of peer maltreatment: studies of relational victimization', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, **11**, pp. 98–101.
- Davies, E. M. (2011). *Women on FTSE Boards*. Lord Davies Review.
- Denzin, N. and Y. Lincoln (2000). 'Introduction. The discipline and practice of qualitative research'. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds), *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, pp. 1–28. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Derks, B., N. Ellemers, C. van Laar and K. de Groot (2011). 'Do sexist organizational cultures create the Queen Bee?', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, **50**, pp. 519–535.
- Dick, P. and C. Cassell (2004). 'The position of policewomen: a discourse analytic study', *Work, Employment and Society*, **18**, pp. 51–72.
- Doldor, E., D. Anderson and S. Vinnicombe (2012). 'Refining the concept of political will: a gender perspective', *British Journal of Management*. Wiley on-line library.
- Ellemers, N., F. Rink, B. Derks and M. K. Ryan (2012). 'Women in high places: when and why promoting women into top positions can harm them individually or as a group (and how to prevent this)', *Research in Organizational Behavior*, **32**, pp. 163–187.
- Fletcher, D. (2006). 'Entrepreneurial processes and the social construction of opportunity', *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development: An International Journal*, **18**, pp. 421–440.
- Fotaki, M. (2011). 'The sublime object of desire (for knowledge): sexuality at work in business and management schools in England', *British Journal of Management*, **22**, pp. 42–53.
- Gherardi, S. (1994). 'The gender we think, the gender we do in everyday organizational life', *Human Relations*, **47**, pp. 591–609.
- Griffin, C. (1995). 'Feminism, social psychology and qualitative research', *The Psychologist*, March.
- Harlos, K. (2010). 'If you build a remedial voice mechanism, will they come? Determinants of voicing interpersonal mistreatment at work', *Human Relations*, **63**, pp. 311–329.
- Herscovis, M. S. (2011). 'Incivility, social undermining, bullying . . . oh my!: a call to reconcile constructs within workplace aggression research', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, **32**, pp. 499–519.
- Kanter, R. M. (1977). *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books.

- Kelan, E. K. and A. Mah (2012). 'Gendered identification: between idealization and admiration', *British Journal of Management*. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8551.2012.00834.x.
- Kristeva, J. (1982). *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ledwith, S. and F. Colgan (1996). *Women in Management: Challenging Gender Politics*. London: Macmillan.
- Lim, S. and L. M. Cortina (2005). 'Interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace: the interface and impact of general incivility and sexual harassment', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **90**, pp. 483–496.
- Lincoln, Y. S. and E. G. Guba (1985). 'Establishing trustworthiness'. In Y. S. Lincoln and E. G. Guba (eds), *Naturalistic Inquiry*, pp. 289–331. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Linstead, S. (1997). 'Abjection and organization: men, violence, and management', *Human Relations*, **50**, pp. 1115–1145.
- Lipman-Blumen, J. (1984). *Gender Roles and Power*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Maddock, S. and D. Parkin (1994). 'Gender cultures: how they affect men and women at work'. In M. Davidson and R. Burke (eds), *Women in Management: Current Research Issues*, Ch. 3. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Marshall, J. (1984). *Women Travellers in a Male World*. London: Wiley.
- Martin, P. Y. (2003). '"Said and done" versus "saying and doing": gendering practices, practicing gender at work', *Gender and Society*, **17**, pp. 342–366.
- Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching*. London: Sage.
- Mavin, S. (2006). 'Venus envy: problematizing solidarity behaviour and Queen Bees', *Women in Management Review*, **21**, pp. 264–276.
- Mavin, S. (2008). 'Queen bees, wannabees and afraid to bees: no more "best enemies" for women in management?', *British Journal of Management*, **19**, pp. S75–S84.
- Mavin, S. and G. Grandy (2012). 'Doing gender well and differently in management', *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, **27**, pp. 218–231.
- Mavin, S. and G. Grandy (2013). 'Doing gender well and differently in dirty work: the case of exotic dancing', *Gender, Work and Organization*, early view online doi:10.1111/j.1468-0432.2011.00567.x, **20**, pp. 232–251.
- Messerschmidt, J. (2009). '"Doing gender": the impact and future of a salient sociological concept', *Gender and Society*, **23**, pp. 85–88.
- Nadal, K. L. (2010). 'Gender microaggressions: implications for mental health'. In M. A. Paludi (ed.), *Feminism and Women's Rights Worldwide*, Vol. 2: Mental Health and Physical Health, pp. 155–175. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- O'Neill, O. A. and C. A. O'Reilly III (2011). 'Reducing the backlash effect: self-monitoring and women's promotions', *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, **84**, pp. 825–832.
- Parks-Stamm, E. J., M. E. Heilman and K. A. Hearn (2008). 'Motivated to penalize: women's strategic rejection of successful women', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, **34**, pp. 237–247.
- Pierce, C., J. Carew, D. Pierce-Gonzalez and D. Willis (1978). 'An experiment in racism: TV commercials'. In C. Pierce (ed.), *Television and Education*, pp. 62–88. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Ross-Smith, A. and C. Chesterman (2009). '"Girl disease": women managers' reticence and ambivalence towards organizational advancement', *Journal of Management and Organization*, **15**, pp. 582–595.
- Rowbothan, S. (1973). *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. In A. Oakley (1984). *Taking it Like a Woman*. London: Harper Collins.
- Rudman, L. A. and J. E. Phelan (2008). 'Backlash effects for disconfirming gender stereotypes in organizations', *Research in Organizational Behavior*, **28**, pp. 61–79.
- Sealy, R. and S. Vinnicombe (2013). 'The female FTSE board report 2013', *Cranfield University School of Management Report No. 1*.
- Sealy, R. and S. Vinnicombe (2013). *The Female FTSE Board Report 2010: False Dawn of Progress for Women on Boards*. International Centre for Women Leaders, Cranfield School of Management, sponsored by Barclays, London.
- Sex and Power (2013). *Who Runs Britain?* Fawcett Society, 28 February.
- Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing Qualitative Research. A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage.
- Smith, D. E. (1987). 'The everyday world as problematic'. In C. Cockburn (1991), *In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organizations*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Spencer, A. and D. Podmore (1987). *In a Man's World: Essays on Women in Male Dominated Professions*. Tavistock Publications.
- Staines, G., C. Travis and T. E. Jayerante (1973). 'The Queen Bee syndrome', *Psychology Today*, **7**, pp. 55–60.
- Starr, K. (2001). 'What makes management experience different for women? Secrets revealed through the structure of cathexis', *Proceedings of the Rethinking Gender, Work and Organization Conference, Keele, 27–29 June*. Keele University.
- Stead, V. and C. Elliott (2012). 'Women's leadership learning: a reflexive review of representations and leadership teaching', *Management Learning*, **44**, pp. 373–394.
- Sue, D. W. (2010). *Micro-aggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Sue, D. W. and C. M. Capodilupo (2008). 'Racial, gender, and sexual orientation microaggressions: implications for counseling and psychotherapy'. In D. W. Sue and D. Sue (eds), *Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice*, pp. 105–130. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Tanenbaum, L. (2002). *Catfight: Women and Competition*. New York: Seven Stories.
- Terjesen, S., R. Sealy and V. Singh (2009). 'Women directors on corporate boards: a review and research agenda', *Corporate Governance: An International Review*, **17**, pp. 320–337.
- Thomas, R. and A. Davies (2005). 'Theorizing the micro-politics of resistance: new public management and managerial identities in the UK public service', *Organization Studies*, **26**, pp. 683–706.
- Timmermans, S. and I. Tavory (2012). 'Theory construction in qualitative research: from grounded theory to abductive analysis', *Sociological Theory*, **30**, pp. 167–186.
- Tyler, I. (2009). 'Against abjection', *Feminist Theory*, **10**, pp. 77–98.
- Tyler, M. (2005). 'Women in change management: Simone De Beauvoir and the co-optation of women's otherness', *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, **18**, pp. 561–577.

- 1 Tyler, M. (2011). 'Tainted love: from dirty work to abject labour
2 in Soho's sex shops', *Human Relations*, **64**, pp. 1477–1500. 27
3 Walby, S. (1989). 'Theorising patriarchy', *Sociology*, **23**, pp. 213–234. 28
4 29
- 5

6 Sharon Mavin is Professor of Organisation and Human Resource Management, Northumbria Uni-
7 versity, UK. Her research interests focus upon doing gender well and differently; women's intra-
8 gender relations and management careers; leadership, identity and emotion work, friendship,
9 competition and ambition in management and leadership. Sharon is co-Editor of *Gender in Manage-*
10 *ment: An International Journal* and has recent publications in *Gender, Work and Organization*,
11 *Organization, International Journal of Management Reviews*, *Gender in Management: An International*
12 *Journal* and the *British Journal of Management*.

13
14 Gina Grandy is an Associate Professor (Strategy), Faculty of Business Administration, University of
15 Regina, located in Saskatchewan, Canada. Her research focuses upon competitive advantage, lead-
16 ership, organizational change, gender and stigmatized occupations. Gina has published in such
17 journals as *Organization, Gender, Work and Organization, Journal of Management Studies, Gender in*
18 *Management: An International Journal, Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An*
19 *International Journal, The Learning Organization* and *Journal of Strategy and Management*.

20
21 Jannine Williams is Lecturer in Human Resource Management and Organizational Behaviour at
22 Bradford University, UK. Her research interests encompass processes of organizing; categories of
23 social relations and constructions of difference, particularly disability and gender; women's intra-
24 gender relations and friendship at work; career studies with a focus upon boundaryless careers. She
25 has co-edited a book *Deaf Students in Higher Education. Current Research and Practice* and published
26 in *Studies in Higher Education* and the *International Journal of Management Reviews*.

