

Imagining Gender Research: Violence, Masculinity, and the Shop Floor

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This paper starts by arguing that visual data enriches gender research in management and organizations. Through an analysis of drawings by factory shop-floor workers, we show that organizational climate is interwoven with gender dynamics, that shop-floor masculinity is not necessarily heterosexual, and that masculinity in the shop-floor context includes oppression as an element of man's symbolic violence against man. We discuss the usefulness of this type of data in gender research in organizational analysis and explore the ways in which gender violence is expressed in organizations. Moreover, the drawings gathered at a newspaper printing site located in the North of England provide a means of showing the relationship between gender violence and the exercise of masculinities, sexuality and oppression. We conclude that the exercise of hegemonic masculinity is associated not only with sexuality but also with the oppression of subaltern enactments of masculinity.

Keywords: masculinity, violence, gender research, images, shop floor, methodology

Introduction

This paper surfaced from a study of organizational climate that unexpectedly resulted in the production of visual data that depicted violent masculinity-themed images. These data led the authors to theorize the gendered violence of the shop floor as oppressive but importantly manifested in a symbolic rather than actual sense. This paper develops this argument to extend previous research on workplace masculine violence (e.g., Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990; Collinson, 1992; Linstead, 1997), which focuses on more explicit manifestations of gender violence at work and has not addressed the oppressive character of symbolic violence in organizations. The gendered/sexualized violence in this study was not obvious to the researchers until they used a visual method that surfaced these data. Visual methods allow for the surfacing of emotionally powerful but otherwise silent or quiet stories related to gender and sexuality that would not be heard through other traditional methods, including qualitative interviews or observations.

It is within the gender literature that the study of *masculinities*¹ in management and organization has emerged, with men and masculinities as the focus of investigation (e.g., Cheng, 1996; Collinson, 1988; Collinson and Hearn, 1994; Kerfoot and Knights, 1998; Knights and Kerfoot, 2004; Westwood, 2008). These studies rest on the assumption that the dominance of specific forms of masculinities in society and organizations is a complex, long-standing phenomenon and that these forms of masculinities must be analysed and understood in order to be overcome (Carrigan *et al.*, 1985; Cheng, 1996; Collinson and Collinson, 1989; Collinson and Hearn, 1994). Moreover, the performance of masculinities has been associated with the exercise of power and violence (Bourdieu, 1998; Connell, 2002; Messerschmidt, 1993; Westwood, 2008). Because shop floors in general, and printing sites in particular, have often been chosen as settings of analysis in discussions of masculinities in

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management and organizations (e.g., Baron, 1992; Cockburn, 1983; Collinson, 1992), the shop floor of 'Press', a newspaper printing site located in the North of England, was found to be an ideal setting for this research.

The vast majority of studies of gender, masculinities and symbolic violence have drawn on traditional research techniques, such as observations and interviews (e.g., Cheng, 1996; Cockburn, 1983; Collinson and Collinson, 1989; Collinson and Hearn, 1994; Robinson and Kerr, 2009). Analysis of visual material, which has been employed in other disciplines, is beginning to develop in organization and management research (see Alcadipani, 2010; Bryans and Mavin, 2006; Kearney and Hyle, 2004; Kunter and Bell, 2006; Stiles, 2004).

This paper is based on an analysis of sketches made by middle-aged, English, male shop-floor workers at one of the largest newspaper printing sites in Europe. The newspaper factory was undergoing major technological change at the time of the study, whereby four of its nine newspaper presses were being replaced by state-of-the-art machines. The drawings were collected during part of a broader ethnographic study being conducted at the printing site that aimed to provide feedback to the company about its organizational climate. The request for this research was made by the company's human resources (HR) manager, who believed that it would provide valuable feedback to the printing facility. The theme of masculinity was not the original focus of the research but emerged after the drawings had been collected. Although there appeared to be no expressions of *overt* violence associated with masculinity during our fieldwork, the manifestation of gender violence associated with masculinity was so strong in the sketches that it required explanation. We argue that visual methods enrich gender research in management and organizations by surfacing otherwise silent stories related to gender and sexuality, that organizational climate is interwoven with gender dynamics and masculinity on the shop-floor.

This paper is organized as follows. The following section discusses masculinities in relation to the shop floor as a background for analysing gender symbolic violence associated with masculinity in organizations. Our methodology is introduced in the next section and describes how the sketches were collected and analysed. We then present our analysis and discussion of the way in which gendered symbolic violence associated with masculinity can emerge as expression of sexuality and oppression.

Masculinities, organizations and shop floors

Masculinities and hegemonic masculinities

Research on men and masculinities in management and organizations draws on broader discussions about masculinities in the social sciences (e.g., Bourdieu, 1998; Connell, 1983, 1987; Kimmel and Messner, 1989). For Collinson and Hearn (1994, p. 5), the literature on masculinities and organizations places 'man and masculinity as Other(s) rather than the One at the centre of discourse'. The question what is 'a man' has been asked and the suggestion that the *male sex* is a historical construct (see Garlick, 2003) has been closely discussed. Accordingly, *man* is perceived as a social category rather than the basis of the masculine gender, whereas masculinity refers to all discourses and practices indicating that someone is a man (Collinson and Hearn, 1994, p. 6). Masculinity is related not only to men; it is a diverse and constantly shifting concept (Carrigan *et al.*, 1985; Kerfoot and Knights, 1993, 1996; Knights and Kerfoot, 2004), which explains why plural 'masculinities' is perceived to be a more appropriate terminology (Carrigan *et al.*, 1985; Collinson and Hearn, 1996).

The notion of hegemonic masculinity has been fundamental in the development of studies of masculinities in organizations (Collinson and Hearn, 1994; Knights and Tollberg, 2012). The term *hegemony* is borrowed from Gramsci (see Donaldson, 1993), and hegemonic masculinity refers to a 'culturally idealized form of the masculine character' (Connell, 1993) — the established dominant form of masculinity constructed in relation to femininities and in relation to subordinated, marginalized, and colonized forms of masculinities (Connell, 1987; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Forms of hegemonic masculinity exist under specific circumstances and are subject to change (Connell, 1993; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Historically, hegemonic masculinity has been strongly tied to social institutions such as the family, the military, religion, and work, as well as to a wide range of people — from the self-made individual to executives of multinational corporations (Connell, 1993). Various types of masculinities emerge in relation to different interests; they embody different culturally and locally embedded commitments, tactics and strategies (Connell, 1993, p. 603). Thus, forms of masculinities can be perceived as stemming from power relations and can be characterized as either hegemonic or subaltern in relation to one another (Collinson and Hearn, 1994). We develop the view that gender is continuously performed (Knights and Tollberg, 2012) and thus this paper rests on the assumption that masculinities must be accomplished. Masculinities are not static, nor are they ever fully accomplished. Therefore, masculinities are in a constant process of being constructed in specific social situations, reproducing or changing social structures (Connell, 1993; Messerschmidt, 1993). Hegemonic masculinity also tends to be heterosexual (Herek, 1986).

Masculinities and organizations

Organizations are a major arena for the achievement and performance of masculinities (Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990; Cheng, 1996; Collinson and Hearn, 1996; Kerfoot and Knights, 1998). Discourses of breadwinner and skilled worker, for example, are traditional modes of securing (masculine) identities in organizations (Collinson, 1992); management innovation discourses develop a highly masculine tone (Knights and McCabe, 2001); senior management is linked to control, conquest and competition as modes of performative elements in the process of *performing* masculinity in business (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993); and management constitutes a form of hegemonic masculinity *par excellence* (Collinson and Collinson, 1995). In addition, various modes of masculinities are central to the exercise of gendered types of power relations in organizations, such as authoritarianism, paternalism, entrepreneurialism, informalism and careerism (Collinson and Hearn, 1994).

The prevalence of hegemonic masculinities and the interplay between hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities in specific organizational settings has been of particular interest in the field of management and organizational research (e.g., Barrett, 1996; Cheng, 1996; Collinson, 1992; Collinson and Hearn, 1996; Kerfoot and Knights, 1998; Mills, 1988; Murgia and Poggio, 2009; Panayiotou, 2010). It should be noted, however, that white-male-dominated masculinities on a shop floor can be read as hegemonic in terms of gender and ethnicity but can also be seen as subordinated to hierarchy and social class (Collinson, 1992).

Masculinities and shop floors

Preoccupation with masculinity has been infused in many aspects of shop-floor culture (see Cockburn, 1983; Collinson, 1992; Willis, 1979). As Thompson (1983) demonstrated in his analysis of a slaughterhouse labour force, the workers tended to engage in activities that helped them to retain their sense of humanity and self-worth while conducting monotonous tasks (Thompson, 1983). Self-esteem is particularly problematic for shop-floor workers, who are treated as second-class citizens, have little decision-making power over their relatively monotonous jobs, and are regarded as being second-class citizens (Collinson, 1992; Gray, 1987). There is a tendency in a male-dominated shop-floor environment for workers to reaffirm their masculinity as a mechanism for reconciling their low hierarchical status (Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990; Collinson, 1992; Gray, 1987).

Shop-floor masculinity can be performed when manual workers display a willingness to swear and be dismissive of women, white-collar workers and managers. These workers also need to show that they are 'rough and tough' (Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990; Meyer, 1999). Skill, technological knowledge, physical strength and endurance — key elements of the work performed in such environments — are related to ways of performing masculinities on shop floors (Cockburn, 1983). Moreover, there is a tendency to emphasize the importance of manual work, whereas work

conducted inside offices is perceived as being 'useless' and effeminate and is therefore devalued (Cockburn, 1983; Collinson, 1992). Sexuality can be manifested in pictures of naked women, suggesting that women are regarded primarily as mere objects of pleasure. For example, the breadwinner and the man who commodifies women as objects are two common identities that workers are seen to assume. The notion of women as sex objects serves to reinforce a heterosexual masculinity, which tends also to be homophobic, even though working-class men are as likely as any other men to have sex with one another (Connell *et al.*, 1993). Studies of masculinity and organizations in general, and masculinity and the shop floor in particular, have not addressed the issue of sexual desire or sexual intercourse among males. Power relations are associated with practices of sex between men in terms of who is active and who is passive and are also associated with such issues as class, which must always be analysed in context (Herdt, 1984; Kippax and Smith, 2001).

Along with malingering, gambling, fighting, restricting output and contesting management authority (see Meyer, 1999), engaging in humour is a distinctive characteristic of male-dominated shop-floor cultures (Collinson, 1988; Willis, 1977), in which jokes are typically sexual, sexist, aggressive and racist (Lyman, 1987). 'Having a laff' allows workers to oppose their mundane circumstances, assuring group identification and differentiation and contributing to shop-floor cohesion by developing a shared sense of masculinity. Shop-floor workers must be able to make and receive jokes and teasing (Collinson, 1988), for only 'real men' can laugh at themselves by accepting insulting nicknames (Collinson, 1988, 1992).

Job deskilling can have a depredatory effect on workers' sense of masculinity. Cockburn (1983) demonstrated how technological change threatened the masculinity of compositors in the newspaper industry in London because they judged their new work to be less manly than when working with the old machines. Baron (1992) analysed the deskilling and consequent emasculation of craftsmen in a United States newspaper composing room before and after the introduction of typesetting machines in the late 19th century. This type of work transformation jeopardizes the respectability of male crafts and threatens workers' sense of masculinity.

The utilization of aggressive jokes and nicknames and the need to be rough suggests that violence, at least in masked forms, is present on shop floors. In the following section, we discuss the relationship between violence and masculinity in organizations.

Organizations, violence and masculinities

Because management is a male construction and organizations are dominated by masculinities, it is not surprising that a certain type of violence related to attempts to achieve masculinity is present in organizational life. According to Linstead (1997), organizations should be regarded as dominance structures in which violence is institutionalized in authority and command systems. He suggested that the male identity was constructed over the course of history through dissociation from sensibility and sentiments and that this disassociation continues to exist. Organizations, as primary loci of male dominance, remain patriarchal and phallogocentric (Linstead, 1997). It has also been argued that violence is inherent in all organizing processes (Bergin and Westwood, 2003; Westwood, 2003). Following Hearn (1994, p. 735), violence means 'that which violates or causes violation, as is usually performed by a violator upon the violated'. Some organizations, such as a slaughterhouse, may be privileged locations for examining the relationship between violence and organizations (Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990).

Following Bourdieu (1998), it is possible to argue that contemporary social relationships in general are pervaded by male dominance derived from omnipresent male violence which often presents as subtle and sometimes is almost invisible. Bourdieu (1998) claimed that contemporary societies are androcentric in that their structures naturalize the differences between women and men; moreover, he argued that male violence is a form of sociability disguised as symbolic violence. Such violence is symbolic, he argued, because it is enacted through language and behaviours that are not regarded as explicit aggressions; they are typically not even noticed. Symbolic violence directed towards women

is expressed in small, almost invisible movements incorporated in quotidian practices, in the construction of masculine and feminine bodies, and during sexual intercourse. For Bourdieu (1998), male dominance and symbolic violence are virtually synonymous, as (symbolic) violence is one of the key methods by which masculinity exercises domination in social settings.

The notion of symbolic violence has been used to explain social and institutional relations in various types of organizations (see Alcadipani, 2010; Cushion and Jones, 2006; Hall, 2004; Richardson and Howcroft, 2005; Robinson and Kerr, 2009; Shannon and Escamilla, 1999; Taylor, 2009), but it has rarely been deployed to make sense of performances of masculinities in organizations and on shop floors. According to Bourdieu (1998), symbolic violence can become incorporated into a *habitus*² permeated in language, and socially authorized and legitimated. Thus, it is a type of violence that can be exercised in such highly institutionalized environments as organizational spaces.

The strong relationship between violence and masculinity is not restricted to organizational spaces and can be related to a wider socio-historical context. The deployment of violence in Western societies, more broadly, is a common way for males to prove their virility (Collinson, 1988; Meyer, 1999; Mumby, 1998). It is no coincidence that movies portraying such hyper-masculine figures as Rambo became blockbusters. In addition, male honour tends to be related historically to acts of violence in many societies (see Spierenburg, 1998), dating back to and beyond medieval duels. Moreover, crimes in general, and violent crimes in particular, are traditionally perpetrated by men. According to Messerschmidt (1993), crime is not a mere *expression* of masculinity; engaging in criminal and violent activities is a way of *performing* masculinity. In other words, men act in a violent manner not because they are men; rather, they commit violent crimes to be or become men. Violence frequently arises in the enactment of masculinities and is practised by individual men to claim respect, to intimidate rivals or in an attempt to gain an advantageous position (Connell, 2002; Messerschmidt, 1993). Given that management historically is a male construction and organizations are dominated by masculinities, the presence of violence is related to attempts to achieve masculinity in organizational life (Westwood, 2008). Thus, gender, sexuality and violence are inevitably linked in the social construction of organizations and in contemporary organizational life (see Hearn, 1994; Hearn and Parkin, 2001).

This paper analyses the prevalence of masculinities in organizational life in general, and on shop floors in particular, to explore the relationships among masculinity, organizations and violence. Although discussions of organizations have focused on analysing the intricate relationship between gender violence and organizations, such discussions have focused on overt violence associated with masculinity in organizations (e.g., Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990; Collinson, 1992), leaving explorations of the symbolic aspects of masculine violence lacking. Moreover, studies of organizations have not explicitly highlighted how the performance of masculinities can result in an oppressive, male-dominated shop-floor environment. We consider oppression to be related to the 'the existence of unequal and unjust institutional constraints' (Cudd, 2006, p. 52), which involves harm to one social group for the benefit of another (Cudd, 2006).

Fieldwork at Press

In this section we present the research site and the research methodology adopted for the visual data collection and analysis of gendered symbolic violence associated with masculinity in a shop-floor organization.

The data for this paper were obtained during fieldwork conducted by one of the authors at a newspaper printing site located in Northern England, referred to here as 'Press'. At the beginning of the study, Press had 290 employees, 106 of whom were assigned to the operation of the activities of the newspaper printing presses on which the study focused. At the time of the study, the majority of Press workers were white, middle-aged, English males and only two females worked on the shop floor. Male workers produced all of the sketches that we gathered at Press. At the time of the study, we did not consider including drawings from the female workers, and one of these women was on maternity leave. The only female among the company's executive staff was an HR assistant.

Notably, the newspaper industry in general, and Press in particular, was facing its greatest crisis in history (see Meyer, 2004): in a declining industry, Press faced the threat of a shutdown. One of Press's main customers, who outsourced jobs to Press, wanted to join efforts to undertake a joint purchase of new equipment to be located at Press — an investment equivalent to approximately £45 million. At first, the news that Press would receive investment in new machinery created euphoria at the plant, as it was believed that the future of the company and its workers was assured. However, the operation of the new presses required fewer workers and new forms of labour. Consequently, a voluntary redundancy exercise was established, after which 65 operators were expected to leave the organization. Managers were powerful in the company's formal hierarchy, and they tended to run the factory without considering workers' perspectives. A significant power gap existed between managers and workers. Among the shop-floor workers, before the new machinery was introduced, the possession of good printing skills was a key quality that conferred recognition and power. The introduction of the new machines changed these informal power relations on the shop floor, and a dispute among old and new press workers emerged. In this scenario, management tended to refer to the new press workers as the 'best ones in the company'.

Our research was conducted between mid-September 2005 and late June 2006 by a 29-year-old Brazilian researcher who had moved to England two years prior. For nearly nine months, he observed daily activities at the plant, typically for 8–12 hours a day, five days a week, to observe activities on both day and night shifts. After completing each day's observations, he wrote field notes. Although the general information gathered while observing activities on the shop floor provided a background for the analysis, this article focuses only on the 53 sketches drawn by Press's male printing-press workers.

During the fieldwork, workers shared their pies and hot drinks with the researcher and tended to be extremely patient in teaching him how they conducted their duties in the factory. However, they sometimes exhibited signs of aggression in jokes directed at him — a situation experienced by Collinson (1992) during his fieldwork. The researcher often felt uneasy and offended by jokes related to his Brazilian origin. On one occasion, a worker asked the researcher for a date, on the assumption that, being Brazilian, he could be a cross-dresser at night. This incident is reflective of the gendered relationship between the researcher and shop-floor workers. The shop-floor workers' stereotypes about Brazilian nationals were an excuse to challenge the researcher's gender position and to identify him as deviant from the shop floor's standard of masculinity. The shop-floor workers challenged the researcher's gender identity, as if they — the English shop-floor workers — were the only proper males. However, the manner in which the researcher's sexuality was challenged also challenged the workers' sexuality given that flirting with another man is not a heterosexual practice. The fact that the researcher felt offended by such personal jokes may express his own potential prejudice against other gender performances and his need to perform his own heterosexual masculinity in that setting. The tension between some shop-floor workers and the researcher caused him to avoid speaking to some of the unfriendly workers. The researcher did not ask those workers to make sketches, and his experiences with them may have contributed to his sense of being in an aggressive environment in which a subtle form of violence was present.

As this paper focuses on the sketches collected during the fieldwork at Press, we briefly discuss the use of drawings in organizational research.

Using drawings in organizational research

The use of sketches and other projective techniques has gained relevance in studies of work and organizations due to the growing popularity of psychological and psychoanalytic theories developed over the last century. These projective techniques primarily include two types of tasks: firstly, *associative techniques*, which can take the form of drawings, sketches or photographs presented to a person who is asked to associate ideas with them, and secondly, *construction techniques*, which require a person to draw an image (pictorial technique), whether a free image or a determined image, such as in the Human Figure test, in which someone is asked to draw a person (Lindzey, 1959).

Since the end of the First World War, projective techniques have been used for clinical diagnoses or applied by personnel officers in industry (Kinslinger, 1966; Lindzey, 1959). This type of analysis has also been adopted in the study of cultures because images and objects may be viewed as symbolic manifestations of a community (Freud, 1911; Jung, 1977) that can be used to interpret art and organizational dynamics (see Barry, 1997; McKinlay, 2002; Vince and Broussine, 1996; Zuboff, 1988). Employed as a method, projective techniques are capable of revealing feelings and attitudes subjacent to the psychodynamics of individuals (Kinslinger, 1966).

Despite their use for more than a century, projective techniques have been controversial, mainly because of their questionable validity and reliability (Lilienfeld *et al.*, 2000). The tests can range from highly structured to open-ended, but the idea underlying them is difficult to analyse (Lilienfeld *et al.*, 2000). The feelings and emotions of the researchers are a fundamental resource because the interpretation of the data is deeply subjective (Bryans and Mavin, 2006; Stiles, 2004). Moreover, there is a significant lack of association between the use of projective techniques in psychology and organization studies.

The use of projective techniques is considered to be more appropriate in studies of individuals than of organizations. Despite the controversies, the use of drawings has been justified by many researchers who have argued that this technique has the potential to be extremely useful for gathering data that are difficult to access by traditional methods in organizational research (see Buchanan, 2001; Kearney and Hyle, 2004; Kunter and Bell, 2006; Meyer, 1991; Strangleman, 2004; Symon and Cassell, 1998; Zuboff, 1988). Meyer (1991) claimed that visual data may offer more information than interviews or questionnaires. The use of drawings most likely offers access to feelings and emotions that are rarely gathered via interviews (Vince and Broussine, 1996).

The use of sketches allows for multidimensional communication, thereby enriching the one-dimensional communication of speech. Moreover, this approach opens the possibility of communicating with people who are better with images than words. In their study of victims of workplace bullying, Tracy *et al.* (2006) demonstrated that drawings can be a way to overcome suffering at work. Drawings can thus be regarded as a form of art therapy (Liebmann, 1986). More recently, Vince and Warren (2012) demonstrated that visual data may be an important element in participatory inquiries because they 'explicitly involve research respondents in the co-creation of qualitative data' (Vince and Warren, 2012, p. 275), and considered drawings and photography to express experiences of organizational life.

In sum, the use of visual data allows for the expression of feelings and emotions that could not be obtained through interviews or other traditional data-gathering techniques. Visual techniques bring the emotional, non-verbal and not strictly rational aspects of organizational dynamics to the surface by helping people to express what may be difficult to put into words.

Collecting sketches on the shop floor

At the beginning of the fieldwork at Press, it was not yet clear how the researcher would present the results of his investigation to the company, although feedback was requested as a condition for entering the firm. At a certain point, the HR manager suggested that the researcher prepare an organizational climate survey and present its results to the company. This task was never completed because the researcher believed that it had the potential to signal that he was actually working for management — a perception that could jeopardize his trust relationship with the workforce. This task would also necessitate a great deal of work that would distract the researcher from his observations. Several days after he had been asked to complete the climate survey, the researcher stumbled upon the sketch reproduced in Figure 1 as he walked on the production floor.

An unknown 'artist' created this sketch on a paper roll that was to be used in the new machine to print newspapers. Attempts to locate the 'artist' to obtain his explanation for the sketch were unsuccessful. The image is strong and aggressive, and it suggests female submission to male power in an androcentric view — a central theme in the literature on masculinities and organizations. The image also represents heterosexuality. When operators were asked to comment on the image, they said it

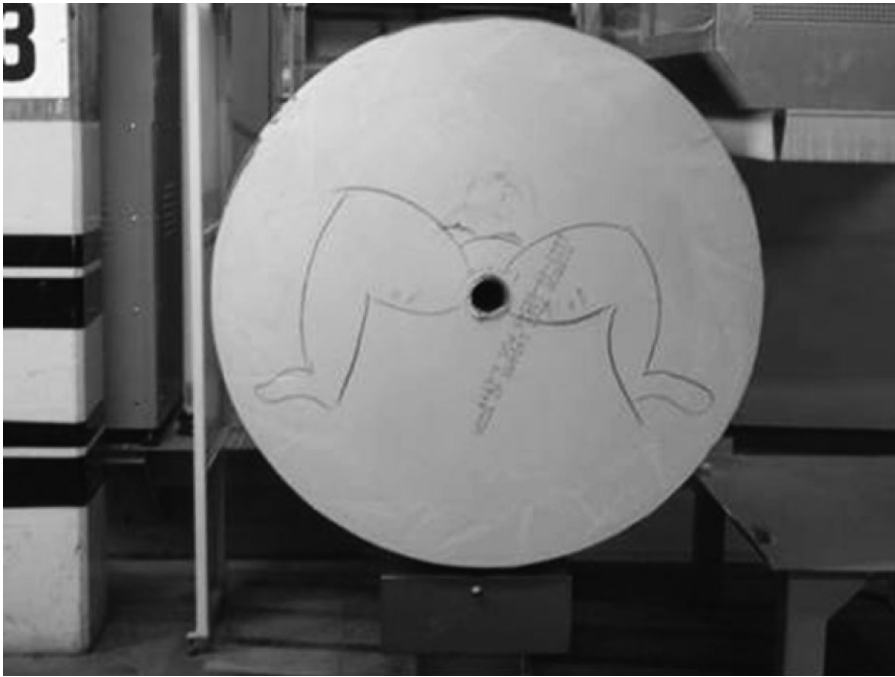


Figure 1: Image from the production floor

was just a way to pass time and have fun. When the image was found near the infirmary, the researcher discussed it with the company's female head nurse who was angered by it. The image was evidence to her that the workers at the plant were 'real gorillas'. She added that she had been threatened on occasion for denying sick leave to employees who, in her opinion, were faking illness to miss work.

The researcher realized that the workers used images in jest, to convey messages to one another, and to depict everyday events. With this interpretation in mind, he decided that instead of a climate survey, it would be much more valuable to ask the workers to sketch something that they believed would represent the organization. The HR manager liked the idea, and the researcher began to collect sketches from workers. The fact that the sketches were part of the fieldwork was an additional advantage, as the researcher was familiar with the context in which the sketches were produced, which is not always the case when sketches are made in interviews or focus groups.

To collect the sketches, the researcher approached Press workers, provided them with a blank sheet of paper, and asked them to draw a sketch that they considered to be representative of the company. The sketchers were informed that their work could be used anonymously in presentations and academic articles within or outside of the company. Everyone who produced a sketch was asked to provide a title to the drawing and an explanation of its meaning. In general, the workers appeared to have no problem sketching, and they performed the task without asking many questions. It was crucial to obtain the support of key people on the shop floor (e.g., team leaders and workers with long tenure at Press), who told others that they had already completed their sketches and encouraged them to participate. Because the researcher had already spent time on the shop floor, it was seen as contributing to his credibility, and the workers appeared to draw their sketches trustfully. It was common for a worker to show his sketch to others and ask for their opinions. In these cases, conversations developed about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the representation, which was inevitably accompanied by jokes.

The question of interpretation in qualitative research has been discussed critically, mainly because the creation of academic meaning from field data can be problematic, as it can silence the voice of the person studied (Clifford, 1983). Such analysis can become even more complicated when the material features subjective experience and emotions, as was the case here. In this paper, we chose to use the artist's interpretations of the drawing and to relate them to the literature on masculinity. A common problem encountered by researchers who use images in management and organization studies is the assumption that images represent an objective truth — a problem that Bell and Davison (2013) referred to as 'the myth of transparency'. Images are the product of a specific context (Rose, 2001) and can be viewed differently by different individuals (Rose, 2001). Therefore, making sense of images entails developing a convincing interpretation (Bell and Davison, 2013; Rose, 2001).

To select drawings from our total sample to be reproduced here, we relied on the interpretations given by the workers who produced the images, on our understanding of the company based on our fieldwork, on our feelings about the pictures (Bryans and Mavin, 2006; Stiles, 2004), and on the literature about masculinity and violence. We analysed the images presented in this paper departing from the background provided by the researcher's fieldwork and in conjunction with the meanings given to the sketches by their creators. As mentioned, we departed from the view that gender, sexuality and violence are interwoven in the social construction of organizations, and we examined all of the drawings in an attempt to determine categories of analysis. The drawings were examined by both authors, who attributed three key words to each of them based on the masculinity and violence literature presented in this paper. We then agreed upon one key word for each of the sketches and decided which sketch we considered to be exemplary for each of the key words selected. Sexuality and oppression were those that best represented the data gathered. Of the 53 drawings, 39 were clearly associated with masculinity, sexuality and oppression (e.g., a male being hanged, two male employees fighting, male workers being stabbed). In the next section, we present and discuss the drawings without assuming that the pictorial representations are an objective truth about the organization. Instead, we suggest that the meaning of the sketches is an outcome of our perspective on gender and masculinity, which could provide insights into the climate of the company.

Sketches of gendered symbolic violence, sexuality and oppression at Press

In this section, we discuss sketches produced by Press's shop-floor workforce that led us to consider two key manifestations of gendered symbolic violence associated with masculinity in that particular setting: sexuality and oppression.

Sexuality and gendered symbolic violence

The three images shown in Figures 2, 3 and 4 demonstrate that issues of masculinity, violence and sexuality are present at Press. In Figure 2, the organization itself is depicted as a 'fucking airport' full of 'arseholes'. This strong and powerful image is clearly sexual, and the representation of the organization was judged to be aggressive.

The man who drew this sketch told the researcher that this is the best way to represent the company, particularly managers, who, according to him, are 'fucking bastards. They just screw us'. From his perspective, even the workers tried to harm one another: 'You know what? You can't trust people here'. When he showed the sketch to some colleagues, they all laughed and said that his depiction of Press was accurate. Notably, one male employee drew a sketch representing workers and managers, all of whom were male; the image has a connotation of sex among males, as it shows a male anus that can be penetrated ('fucked') either by managers or fellow workers. Such descriptions relate to who can subjugate the other and are thus related to the formal and informal hierarchies in the company.

Another image that represents the connection between masculinity, violence and sexuality is shown in Figure 3, in which managers are represented as 'dickheads' dressed in suits. According to

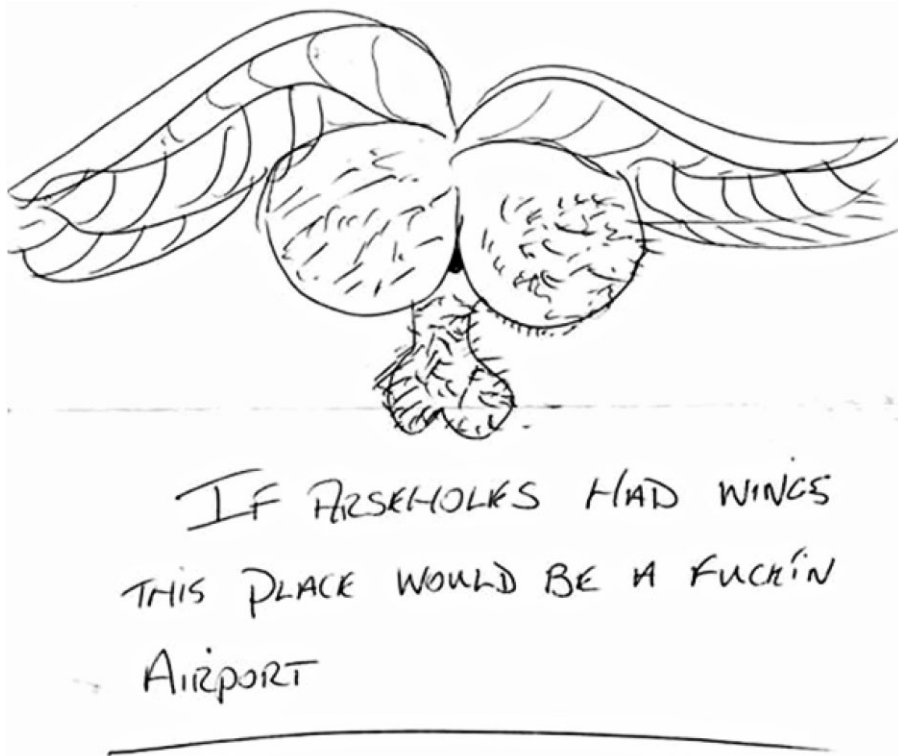


Figure 2: Press as an 'airport' for 'arseholes'

the artist, Press is fundamentally characterized by managers who fail to consider workers, who act aggressively, and who, above all, are 'stupid'. The figure of the erect penis draws a connection between management and masculinity, as if a managerial position is a male position. Yet, there is a subtle connotation of sexual practices among males given the various penises erected together, side by side, with no female presence.

In both depictions, managers and workers are collectively marked by sexuality and by aggressive conduct. Managers are represented as 'dicks' and the rest of the company as 'arseholes' — the ones who 'screw' and the ones who are 'screwed' — suggesting that sexual prowess here is associated with the managerial position. This construction implies not only that managers are 'in power' but also that a submissive male-to-male relationship exists. However, not only managers are in the position of 'screwing' others; workers are also said to 'screw' each other in the first worker's drawing presented in this section. Violation, a central component of violence, is represented here. Thus, a violent sexuality exists among males that is associated with sexual intercourse and connected to the symbolic aspect of who can exercise power in the organization: occasionally male managers over male workers and, on other occasions, male workers over male workers. Fighting for sexual prowess and a sexual dimension of sex among males is related here to hierarchy and power within the organization. Finally, the very figure of an erect penis may suggest that management is in a desirable position or that it constitutes a better position than that of the shop-floor workers.

Figure 4 depicts the operators of the old and new presses in relation to the size of their 'dicks'. According to the artist, this is a humorous way to express his opinion that the operators of the old machines are better than the operators of the new ones. The people represented appear to be



Figure 3: Managers as dickheads

middle-aged, bald men, which describes most press workers. It is noteworthy that those with 'big dicks' are represented as unhappy, whereas the other operator is drawn with a smiling face, as if having a 'big dick' is not related to happiness. Furthermore, when two naked men showing their penises to each other are placed in the same picture, it is possible to argue that a symbolic sphere of sex between men surfaces. In addition, there appears to be a manifestation of power as the old workers face the new presses. What appears to be at stake here is the attempt by old press workers to rebalance power relations with the workers at the new presses by associating the old presses with virility and the new presses with impotence. Yet again, symbolic sexual prowess is related to a power struggle.

The artists of the sketches presented here said that management exercises control in an oppressive manner. We next discuss how gender violence associated with masculinity can be expressed as oppression at Press.

Oppression and gendered symbolic violence

According to the creator of Figure 5, his drawing presents the new area managers who, in his opinion, were hired merely to oppress the workforce. The context of this sketch was that after the new presses were introduced, it was decided that new and old machines would each have a designated manager. In the background of Figure 5 is someone dressed as a sheriff. This depiction alludes to the company's Press Hall Manager, who told the workers that they had 'to straighten up' because there was a 'new sheriff in town'. The artist also said that because the 'sheriff' was unable to exercise his power on the production floor, he needed to create two new management positions for assistants who had to act even more aggressively towards the workforce. The first item to note is the representation of managers as typical hyper-masculine figures. The area managers appear as body builders and

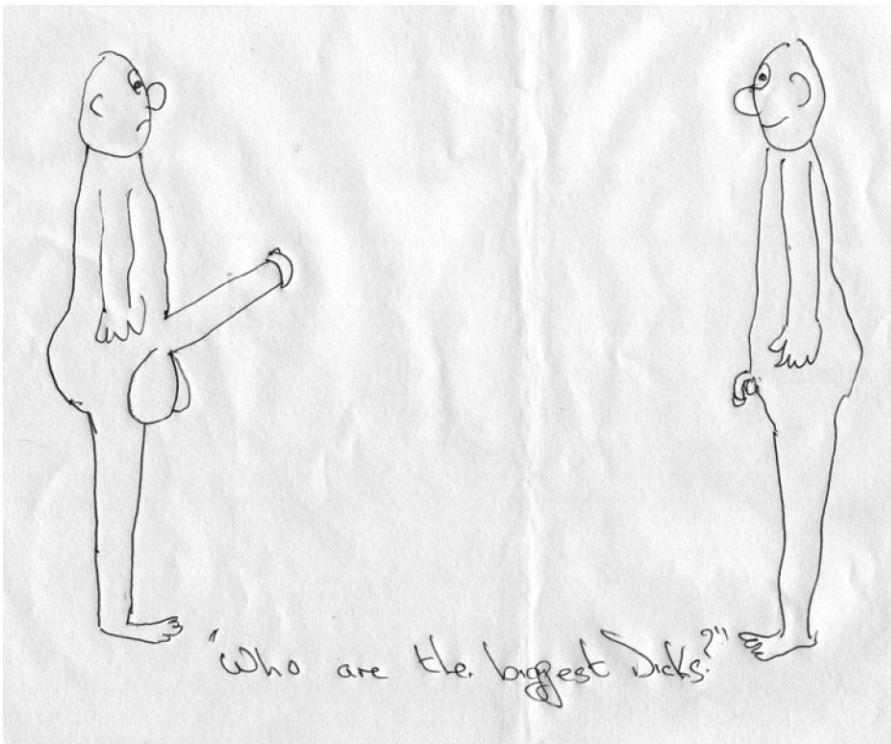


Figure 4: *Who are the biggest dicks?*

the production manager as the sheriff. All manager representations are of strong male characters. The workforce appears distant and smaller in body size; some are described as sub-human, which the artist says is how management perceives them. All workers in the sketch appear to be males, but only their hairstyles indicate their gender. Thus, the figure reinforces the association of management with the exercise of hegemonic masculinity. Simultaneously, it depicts the workforce as subaltern to management and as almost frightened by the possibility of being harmed — a central element of oppression.

In Figure 5, the possibility of physical harm is also associated with masculinity. The two large area managers, depicted as masculine, oppressive figures, have angry faces and the inscriptions 'love' and 'hate' on their hands; the smaller-sized sheriff standing behind them has two machine guns in his belt. These guns are a clear indication of the managers' potential to exercise violence. The members of the workforce, however, have no instrument indicating their ability to exercise violence. The idea that some managers are part of a bullying team may suggest that the violence is more subtle than physical. Thus, the subtle and uncovered violence of male figures as a constant threat is a key element in the notion of symbolic violence. This sketch appears to depict managers as embodying the hegemonic exercise of masculinity at Press, which is sustained through violence.

The feeling of being non-human is expressed in Figure 6, in which a male Press 6 operative depicts himself as worse than 'amoebas' and 'microns'. When the artist showed his drawing to his co-workers, they all agreed that this is how they feel in the company: like powerless men or people under oppression. All types of males (e.g., different types of management teams) are placed above Press 6 operatives, suggesting that these operatives believe their masculinity to be under threat. Moreover, 'Youth Hitler', who is presented as having a higher status than Press 6 workers, is located under the various types of managers, suggesting that managers are stronger than Nazis, who are again present in Figure 7.



Figure 5: New press area managers

Figure 7 presents the managers as Nazis who divide the production floor between new and old machine operators while reducing all workers' wages. According to the artist, operatives of the old printing presses were full of uncertainties and those of the new printing presses were happy because their position was assured. He believed that by dividing the shop floor, management had created a 'regime of horror where brothers were separated from brothers in the factory'. It appeared to him as though only Nazis would be capable of dividing the Press workforce in such a manner. There is also some cruelty in this sketch, as those at the 'sad-face end' cannot access the 'happy-face end' because they are divided by an 'iron curtain'. It is as though the workers are destined to agonize at the

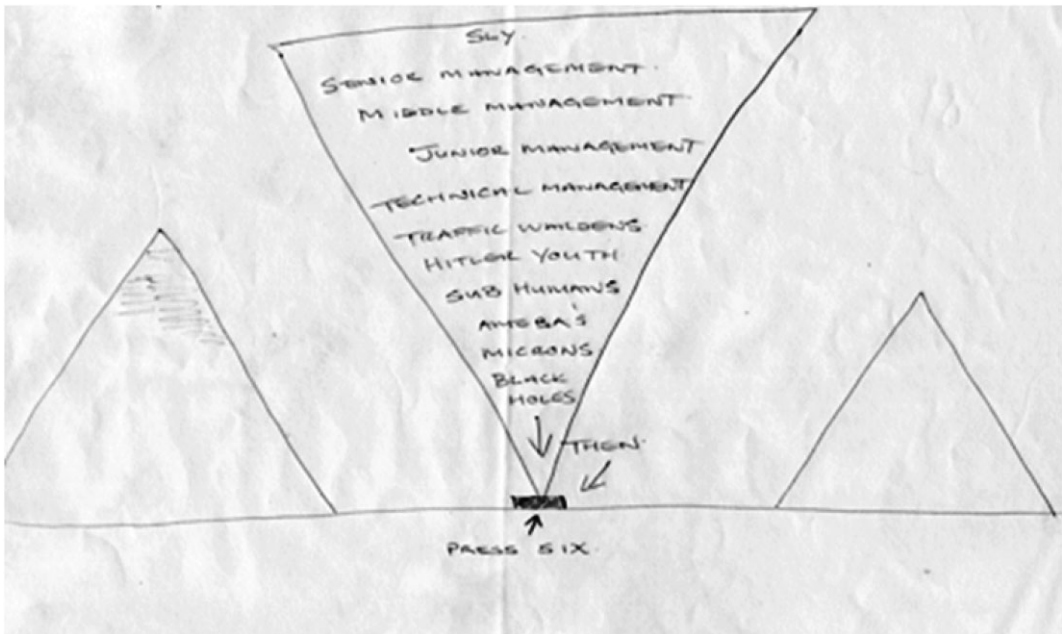


Figure 6: Press six

'sad-face end' until they are declared redundant. Moreover, the possibility of management exercising violence, as presented in Figure 5, appears to be a stronger possibility in Figure 7, which shows that management can indeed exercise its strength, as it did by dividing the workforce in two. The existence of an 'iron curtain' and the representation of managers as Nazis strongly suggest that the factory workforce feels oppressed.

Discussion and conclusion

The vast majority of gender analyses of organizations have been conducted through traditional data sources, such as interviews and observations. The use of visual methods has the advantage of surfacing feelings and emotions that cannot be obtained by interviews or other traditional data-gathering techniques, and as noted by Vince and Warren (2012), visual data constitute a key element in participatory studies. We consider the images presented here to be a rich source of reflection. We have thus explored them in terms of the emotions they helped to surface for both the workers and researchers. Workers at Press were frightened and masculine violence is embedded within a turbulent organizational climate. We have shown how Press's organizational climate is permeated by gender dynamics and that these processes become represented in sketches.

The sketches enriched our perceptions of the organization as no other data-gathering technique could have (Bryans and Mavin, 2006). Our research differed from that of Bryans and Mavin (2006), who used pictorial representation as a teaching practice for a research methods course, in that the drawings allowed emotional and gendered aspects of Press dynamics to surface — aspects that the researchers did not sense while conducting their fieldwork before the drawings were collected. The sketches articulated what had barely been voiced or expressed by other means. Considered together, sketches representing managers as 'Nazis', 'sheriffs' and 'bullies' and the representation of the 'flying ass' highlighted specific modes of gender politics in organizations. Thus, we have shown

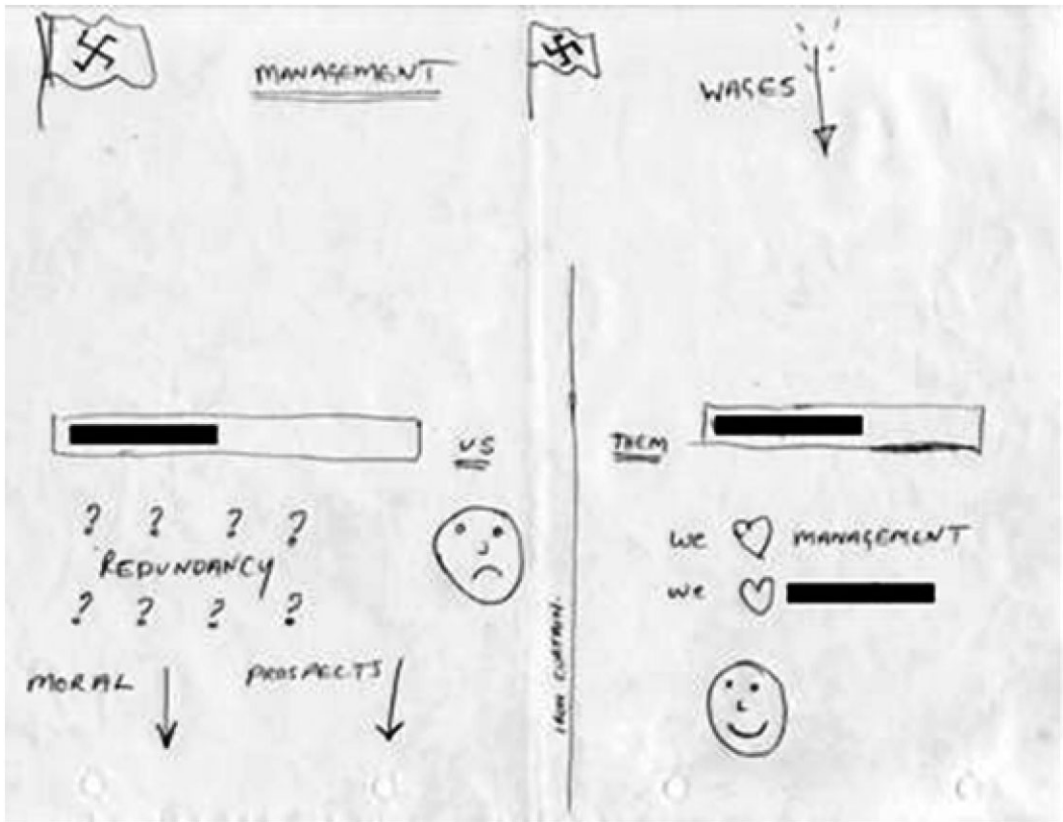


Figure 7: Nazi managers and the split plant

how sketches and images can be powerful tools for expressing the gendered nature of organizational contexts. The 'flying ass', managers as 'erect penises' and the comparison of the operators of old and new presses based on the size of their genitals are suggestive of a symbolic sphere of sex between males on the shop floor. This interpretation is dubious if organizational masculinity is only related to heterosexuality, as the literature would lead one to assume (e.g., Cockburn, 1981, 1983; Collinson, 1992; Walter, 1979). The violation depicted in the drawings is of males among males: either managers violating workers or workers violating other workers. This form of masculinity differs from that depicted in Figure 1, in which a female body is represented. We are not claiming, as Connell *et al.* (1993) suggested, that homosexuality is present among working-class men; rather, we are maintaining that the drawings indicate the subtle presence of sex among men in the way in which masculinity dynamics are performed at Press, as inferred when the researcher was asked to go on a date with one of the male employees. A symbolic sphere of sex among males is associated with a fight for sexual prowess and thus with power relations in the organization. The symbolic sphere of sex also leaves open the question of whether masculinity performed on shop floors is always heterosexual, as the literature portrays.

Some of the sketches presented here depict the production floor as an oppressive place that is associated with hegemonic masculinity. Managers are represented as Nazis and hyper-masculine figures, making explicit the constant threat of violence embedded in the factory. Violent oppression at Press occurs through the threat of brute force, as depicted in Figure 5, and by a regime of terror, as shown in Figures 6 and 7. Both regimes are masculine, even as the workers' masculinity is portrayed

in a subordinated position in relation to the super-powerful managers. It is noteworthy that both sketches symbolically represent the violence perceived in the relationships between managers and press workers, and this symbolic violence appears to sustain the hegemonic position of managers' masculinity. In the company's context of a declining market, workers must fight to perform their masculinity (Cockburn, 1981, 1983; Walter, 1979), and the deployment of production skills (Collinson, 1992) are traditional forms of that performance. At Press, these forms were endangered. Workers on the new machines were under pressure to work harder and longer, and workers on the old machines faced the threat of redundancy. All workers were under constant threat of either being dismissed or pushed to their limits, while one of their key means to secure their masculine identity, deploying their skills, came under attack by the introduction of new technology.

Describing managers as 'the big dicks' and presenting them as violent figures, such as body builders, sheriffs and Nazis, indicates that the way in which job and skill insecurities are expressed by shop-floor workers has particularities not considered before. The aggressive macho figures used to depict workers' insecurity are associated with masculinity. Thus, the workers experience insecurity as a threat to their sense of gender, but they also experience the threat as emanating from masculine figures who are capable of exercising violence and who express particular types of hegemonic masculinities. This interpretation confirms the view that organizations are systems of domination in which violence is institutionalized in command positions and driven by legitimized formal authority control systems (Linstead, 1997).

In this context, the sketches of managers as erect penises and workers as 'arseholes' may indicate that violation (Hearn and Parkin, 2001) is a real possibility in Press's current condition. In this manner, sexuality is present on the shop floor not only in the form of pictures of naked women (Collinson, 1992) but also as a means by which masculine violence can be symbolically performed in an oppressive manner. The sketches highlighted the symbolic and oppressive character of violence — a characterization that is not explicit in earlier accounts of shop-floor workers (see Collinson, 1992; Hearn and Parkin, 2001; Linstead, 1997).

In contrast to Linstead (1997), who analysed how actual organizational violence is associated with males' non-organizational violent experiences, we argue here that violence is associated with the performance of masculinity within the symbolic gender dynamics of organizational settings. The symbolism of masculine violence is related to sexual violation, hyper-masculine figures and regimes of terror. Thus, we have detailed the symbolic dynamics and dimensions of intricate organizational relations through gendered performances.

In conclusion, we used visual data to analyse masculinity-associated gender violence on a newspaper factory shop floor. We discussed the usefulness of this type of data in gender research in organizational analysis and explored expressions of gender violence in organizations. Our first conclusion is that the organizational climate is interwoven with gender dynamics and that these dynamics can be analysed through visual representations rather than through interviews and surveys. Moreover, the drawings gathered at Press allowed us to experience a sense of gendered symbolic violence related to the exercise of masculinities, which we were able to associate with sexuality and oppression. In terms of sexuality, we conclude that the performance of masculinities is associated not only with sex between males and females, as represented by naked girls drawn on walls or described in workers' stories (Collinson, 1992), but also with representations of sex between males in the symbolic sphere. The symbolic sexual representations pertain to struggles for sexual prowess and are thereby associated with power relations in organizational settings. Further research may address whether a symbolic dimension of sex among males can be perceived in organizational gender dynamics. In addition, images of managers as Nazis and as body-builder bullies led us to consider that masculine symbolic violence in organizations is also expressed as oppression. The exercise of hegemonic masculinity is associated not only with sexuality but also with the oppression of subaltern enactments of masculinity. Given that masculine violence expresses itself in subtle ways indicates that hegemonic masculinity may impose itself by means of symbolic violence, in relationships of men with men, expressed in terms of sexuality and oppression. Thus, we have shown that images can express and communicate specific gender dynamics, thereby highlighting the relevance of

using images to conduct research in organizations and management in general and gender research in organizations in particular. This technique appears to be capable of highlighting the dynamics of a hegemonic masculinity, sustained by means of a symbolic violence, that as organizational members we seek to overcome.

Notes

1. Masculinity is related not only to men; it is a diverse and constantly shifting concept (Carrigan *et al.*, 1985; Kerfoot and Knights, 1993, 1996; Knights and Kerfoot, 2004), which is why the plural 'masculinities' is perceived to be more appropriate terminology than the singular 'masculinity' (Carrigan *et al.*, 1985; Collinson and Hearn, 1996).
2. The concept of *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1994) may be understood as thoughts, feelings and language, a collection of taken-for-granted rules that guide human behaviour in a particular context. In this sense, practice is a result of composition of objective structures and subjective actions in a particular *field*. The concept of field may be understood as a social sphere organized by a network of relations and disputes. Organizations could be seen as a subfield, for example, wherein various games are played. Because the *field* is structured by rules, it is also in constant movement led by actors' actions.

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