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Men's place
The incomplete integration of women in workplace authority

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1. Introduction

Introduction

While the representation of women in positions of workplace authority has generally increased over time (Blommaert et al. 2019; Shams and Tomaskovic-Devey 2019; Mintz and Krymkowski 2010; Malkaoui et al. 2020), changes in the broader gender system have been limited. To begin with, the cultural and institutional devaluation of work done by women has changed little. Occupations numerically dominated by women, for example, pay lower wages than men-dominated occupations and increases in occupations' shares of women are accompanied by declines in wages, explained neither by differences in productivity nor by the presence of more fringe benefits in women-dominated occupations (Murphy and Oesch 2016; Hodges 2020). Likely as a result of the devaluation of activities associated with women and uneven changes in support for gender equality in the public and private spheres (Scarborough, Sin, and Risman 2019; England 2010), women have moved into jobs traditionally associated with men like authority jobs to a much greater extent than men have left such jobs or employment altogether (van der Lippe, van Doorne-Huiskes, and Blommaert 2014; Shams and Tomaskovic-Devey 2019; England, Levine, and Mishel 2020).

At the same time, rich empirical evidence suggests that changes in cultural beliefs about gender and work lag behind social and demographic changes like women overtaking men in educational attainment and achievement (Hek, Kraaykamp, and Wolbers 2016; DiPrete and Buchmann 2013). Gender discrimination and double standards in evaluation occur widely at work. Studies, for example, document gender discrimination in hiring across occupations (Kübler, Schmid, and Stüber 2018), negative evaluations of women employees by managers when "taking charge," behavior associated with the highest performance for men (Correll et al. 2020), and the largest penalties in hiring for women with high academic performance who are seen as not likeable by employers, a standard not applied to high-achieving men (Quadlin 2018). Attributing higher status and competence to men,

gender status beliefs also result in a general view on men as more suitable for authority positions than women (Ridgeway 2001, 2014).

Finally, while the composition of the workforce has changed dramatically over the past decades, ideal worker cultures prevail in many work organizations. Based on an idealized separation of the home and paid work sphere, with historical origins in the gendered separation of work in class-privileged families (Davies and Frink 2014; Pott-Buter et al. 1998), the ideal worker norm defines the ideal worker as someone who prioritizes paid work above other aspects of their life. Work devotion narratives have been found to be particularly strong in high-status jobs like authority jobs (Blair-Loy 2005). In addition, some research has suggested that employers increasingly treat long working hours as a signal of commitment to the organization (Shu and Meagher 2018), and that the increasingly common trend of working long hours has reinforced gender segregation in occupations and slowed progress in the narrowing of the gender pay gap (Cha 2013; Cha and Weeden 2014).

While the existence of a gender gap in workplace authority is well known, the asymmetric move of women into traditionally men-dominated arenas like workplace authority, persistent cultural beliefs about gender and work, and the limited adaptation of workplace cultures to a changing workforce, beg a number of important questions surrounding women's and men's representation in workplace authority that have hitherto been understudied. What do women's authority jobs look like compared to those of men? Where do dominant work devotion norms leave us with regard to the gender gap in workplace authority when coupled with the fact that in heterosexual relationships, presently dominant in most cultures, women bear more responsibility than men for childcare? And how does the cultural view on men as more suitable for authority than women translate to men's disproportionate access to authority positions in organizations? Prior work has provided limited answers to these questions due to a combination of lack of appropriate data and a focus on average estimates of the gender authority gap and associated outcomes.

This dissertation sheds light on these timely questions. Two of the chapters (2 and 3) look specifically at what women's authority jobs look like compared to those of men. Chapter 2 does this by moving beyond a study of the average authority gap and studying variation in the gender

gap in authority across different types of authority positions. Chapter 3 studies how women's authority jobs compare to those of men with regard to job quality, studying the association between authority and job quality for women and men, as well as gender differences in job quality among individuals with and without authority. Chapter 4 examines issues at the intersection of gendered cultural beliefs about who is responsible for childcare and the ideal worker norm by studying the relationship between the gendered transition to parenthood, the gender authority gap and changes in hours worked following the transition to parenthood. Finally, chapter 5 studies organizational variation in the gender gap in workplace authority and its relationship to variation in the salience of gender for organizing social relations across organizations, as the most proximate context where these relations occur. Before I outline my dissertation in more detail, in what follows I first elaborate on my approach to gender and authority and studying the relationship between the two, as well as what we already know about the questions I address.

Approach

Gendered Individuals, Gendered Jobs, Gendered Organizations

This dissertation approaches gender as a "primary frame for organizing social relations" (Ridgeway 2011) that has considerable consequences for work outcomes of individuals. Due to the binary nature of the gender frame in most cultures, individuals in these cultures, who may or may not be different from each other in meaningful ways, tend to be categorized as either woman or man. While these categories are not inherently meaningful, they become real in their consequences through the ascription and prescription of a set of socially meaningful, often seemingly opposing characteristics and roles to individuals associated with the category woman or man (Heilman 2012). One such set of characteristics is ascribed (i.e., women *are* x, y, z) and prescribed (i.e., women *should be* x, y, z) masculinity and femininity to men and women, respectively, that impacts both the way individuals behave and are treated by others (Ellemers 2018). In writing about women and men in this dissertation, therefore, I refer to these categories as political and cultural concepts, rather than intrinsic qualities of individuals.

The content of gender stereotypes also involves a view on women and men as suitable for certain types of jobs more than for others. One of the main arguments I make throughout this dissertation is that because gender status beliefs attribute the highest status and competence to men, men are on average seen as more suitable for authority positions than women (Ridgeway 2001, 2014). These beliefs are incorporated in, for example, employers' hiring and promotion decisions and workplace dynamics because they are common cultural knowledge. Studies have shown that people hold stereotypes about how women and men typically are or are expected by others to be, even when they do not describe themselves in stereotypical terms to the same extent or do not personally endorse these stereotypes (Spence and Buckner 2000; Wood and Eagly 2010). Since the binary gender frame has also informed the view on sex as categorical (Fausto-Sterling 2020), I do not make a distinction between gender and sex; rather, given the complexity of human bodies, irreducible to categories, and the inseparability of nature and nurture, I see sex distinctions as part of the gender frame that entails reading gender categories in bodies.

Just like women and men are seen as suitable for some jobs more than for others, certain jobs are seen as more suitable for women than for men, and vice versa.[1] Authority jobs, associated with higher status and rewards, are generally seen as more suitable for men than for women (Ridgeway 2001, 2014). This gendering of authority jobs is in a dialectical relationship with the (initial) composition of authority jobs. At the time of their initial proliferation with the growth of corporate capitalism in the 20th century in Western Europe and the United States, authority jobs were numerically dominated by men and women were prevented from having authority through laws and regulations (Kanter 1977a; Pott-Buter et al. 1998). Men's continued domination of authority jobs sustains the cultural view on men as more suitable for authority (Ridgeway 2011).

Finally, in this dissertation I draw on Acker's (1990, 2006) notion of the "gendered organization" and Smith's (1989) notion of "the gender

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1   Feminist scholars have argued that the concept of "a job" itself is a gendered concept because it is based on a tradition of a gendered separation of the public and private sphere, where "a job" is that which has traditionally been done by men in the public sphere (Acker 1990); this definition of jobs persists, even though the unpaid economy is indispensable for the sustenance of the paid and hence the overall economy (Pouw 2017).

subtext of organizations" in viewing organizations as embodying gendered assumptions about the worker who will carry out job tasks. An important workplace norm that returns in all chapters is the ideal worker norm that defines the ideal worker as someone whose paid work takes precedence over other aspects of their life. Historically, these "ideal workers" fully dedicated to paid employment have been class-advantaged men, but cultures of long work hours and the 40-hour work week standard persist despite a changing workforce.

My approach to gender in this dissertation comes with three caveats. First, I focus on the part of the gender system that concerns people's tendency to categorize others in a way consequential for the distribution of job resources. This means that I will not address many other aspects of gender, like the complexities of gender identity and expression. Second, when I speak of gender stereotypes, I refer to contemporary *hegemonic* gender beliefs. This does not preclude the fact that gender beliefs change over time and that many individuals and communities hold alternative gender beliefs. However, even these communities cannot always escape the effects of hegemonic gender beliefs given that these are inscribed in legislation and the workings of institutions and public space. Finally, when I speak of men being more advantaged than women, for example, I do not claim that *all* men are more advantaged than *all* women. The social stratification system is more complex and some women have advantages relative to men in many contexts. Rather, the argument is that all else being equal, men are on average more privileged than women.

Studying Authority

While the literature concurs on authority positions being broadly defined as positions that confer some sort of power on the job occupant, studies have operationalized workplace authority in various ways. One common denominator of existing approaches (including mine) is that the study of authority has moved beyond—and away from—conceptualizing authority as equivalent to ownership, a definition adopted in the traditional Marxist literature (Dahrendorf 1959). Authority in its contemporary study is seen as a more general social relation between different individuals at the workplace, with owners largely falling outside the picture. In what follows I elaborate

on three common ways authority has been studied in prior literature and explain how my approach compares to existing approaches.

A large share of the existing literature has used an occupation-based measure of authority (Shenhav 1992; Blum, Fields, and Goodman 1994; Powell and Butterfield 1994; Moore and Shackman 1996; Huffman 1999; Maume 1999; Baxter and Wright 2000; Reskin and McBrier 2000; Maume Jr. 2004; Stainback and Tomaskovic-Devey 2009; Ng and Sears 2017; Mun and Jung 2018; Shams and Tomaskovic-Devey 2019). These studies have typically used the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) that divides occupations at the most aggregate level into 10 major groups, treating the first occupational group—managers—as having authority, and the other nine occupational groups as not entailing workplace authority.[2] While useful, this measure does not capture authority in its fullness, given that jobs not classified as managerial occupations may also involve authority. Using survey data from the Dutch National Survey of Working Conditions I find, for example, that only 17 percent of all individuals who have indicated to supervise others in the workplace are classified as having a managerial occupation as per the ISCO.

Alternatively, studies have examined women's and men's representation in authority by identifying different types of positions in the formal hierarchy of the workplace. For example, scholars have studied gender in the nursing hierarchy (e.g., Brown and Jones 2004) or the academic hierarchy (e.g., van den Brink and Benschop 2012b). These studies, often based on qualitative case study methodologies, provide rich accounts on gender and the differential distribution of positions along the job hierarchy in particular contexts. This approach to measuring authority, however, comes at the cost of not being able to make direct comparisons across different contexts.

The third approach to authority commonly adopted entails identifying the presence of authority on the job through respondents' *direct* reporting of authority tasks in their jobs, specifically asking individuals whether they supervise others. This measure overcomes some limitations of the previous two approaches; it is not context-dependent and—presuming that

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2   These are: professionals, technicians and associate professionals, clerical support workers, service and sales workers, skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers, elementary occupations, and armed forces occupations.

all authority positions at the minimum entail some form of supervision of others—is way more comprehensive than the more specific occupation-based measure. However, a common limitation of studies using this approach is that the majority has used a dichotomous measure of whether the respondent supervises others, not being able to distinguish between different types of authority positions (Bridges and Miller 1981; Huffman 1995; Hultin 1998; Rosenfeld, Van Buren, and Kalleberg 1998; Mitra 2003; Huffman and Cohen 2004; Yaish and Stier 2009; Mintz and Krymkowski 2010; Bygren and Gähler 2012; Dämmrich and Blossfeld 2016).

In this dissertation, the baseline measure I use in all chapters is a dichotomous measure of whether individuals supervise others in their workplace. In chapters 2 and 3, however, I additionally use a more detailed measure of authority that, based on direct reports of job tasks by individuals, differentiates authority positions by the share of supervisory (as opposed to nonsupervisory) tasks and the type of control over resources they entail. As will become evident in chapters 2 and 3, using this measure contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of gender inequality in workplace authority and associated work outcomes than the dichotomous measure commonly used in the literature.

Methodological Approach

All empirical chapters in this dissertation are based on quantitative analyses of secondary data that have considerable advantages relative to observational data employed in prior work on the gender gap in workplace authority. Chapters 2, 3, and 5 are based on linked survey and administrative data, data currently seen as among the most promising types of data for the quantitative study of workplace inequalities (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019). To start with, these are very large data (I study samples as large as 100,000 individuals) representative of employees in the population, providing more accurate conclusions about the population than narrowly defined samples often used in prior work. Second, these data are of very high quality. The administrative earnings data used in chapters 2 and 3, for example, are much less prone to underestimating inequality than survey-based earnings estimates commonly used in past studies (Kim and Tamborini 2014; Valet, Adriaans, and Liebig 2019). Additionally, because the information I use from

the population registers is complete for all respondents, I have relatively little missing data.

Third, I am able to link information of different nature and on different levels of analysis. Matching qualitative information from surveys to quantitative information from the population registers, for example, enables me to study both economic and non-economic job indicators (made use of particularly in chapter 3). Linking the population registers to workplace registers, I am able to match individuals to their workplaces and conduct analyses that contain information on both the individual- and workplace-level (chapter 5). Finally, the longitudinal data I use in chapter 4 enable me to address issues of endogeneity and causality with more confidence than prior work studying the relationship between the gendered transition to parenthood and the gender gap in workplace authority.

Context

The studies in this dissertation are based on data from the Netherlands. Gender structures virtually all aspects of social and work life in the Netherlands. Women in the Netherlands earn less than men with comparable qualifications for the same job and there is a well-established gender gap in authority (Malkaoui et al. 2020). Gendered workplace structures and practices are well documented (Benschop and Doorewaard 1998) and while gender ideologies have changed over time, strong gender stereotypes persist; these include, for example, a low level of confidence in men's caring and domestic capabilities (Grunow, Begall, and Buchler 2018). Dominant gendered parenthood ideals result in a change in work hours and employer discrimination upon the transition to parenthood only for women (Begall and Grunow 2015; Mari and Luijkx 2020).

The Dutch historical context of gender segregation at work shares commonalities with the history of gender segregation in other societies. Women have historically worked in different types of industries than men and the gendered separation of work and home as a cultural ideal emerged in the course of the 20th century as a function of the separation of work in class-advantaged families. Authority jobs developed as men's jobs with the expansion of administrative work at a time where women's suitability for work itself was seen as questionable. Women were prevented from

obtaining authority positions by, among others, getting dismissed from work upon marrying, and thereby not acquiring the amount of work experience required for being promoted to or hired into authority jobs (Pott-Buter et al. 1998). These historical origins of the ideal worker norm and the gendering of authority jobs are similar to those documented in other countries, for example, the United States (Davies and Frink 2014; Kanter 1977a).

Despite these commonalities, and although I expect that the general argument holds in other contexts, the findings in this dissertation remain limited to the Dutch cultural and institutional context, until proven otherwise. One specific aspect of the Dutch context is that the "ideology of intensive mothering" (Hays 1998), reflected and sustained by the institutional setting, is particularly commonplace in the Netherlands (Van Engen et al. 2009). Paternity leave has been virtually non-existent and job-protected leave policies are among the least generous in Europe (Budig, Misra, and Boeckmann 2016). Dutch women are pioneers in part-time work, facilitated by the state introducing legal equality of part- and full-time work, which enabled women to enter the labor market in large numbers in the 1980s and 1990s. Altogether, these cultural and political conditions have resulted in the currently dominant one-and-a-half earner model, with women working part-time and most men working full-time (Merens and van den Brakel 2014).

State of the Art

Prior research has shown that women's representation in workplace authority has grown over time, while that of men has remained the same. This trend, documented in the Netherlands (van der Lippe, van Doorne-Huiskes, and Blommaert 2014), as well as in other countries, like the United States (Shams and Tomaskovic-Devey 2019), suggests that new authority positions have been created, raising the very timely question of what type of positions these are. Given the general view on men as more suitable for authority positions than women, women may be relatively more represented in positions with lower amounts of authority, a prediction consistent with the *resegregation* or *glorified secretary* hypothesis suggesting that due to political pressures to have women represented in authority, women are often given positions with few authority tasks that are managerial only in name (Jacobs 1992).

In addition, the type of tasks women in authority tend to have may mirror the broader pattern of women's employment in people-oriented and men's employment in things-oriented occupations (Lippa, Preston, and Penner 2014), corresponding to the people-things dimension of gender stereotypes (Prediger 1982).

The vast majority of prior studies have examined the gender authority gap in a dichotomous matter, distinguishing only positions that involve authority and positions that do not entail authority at all (Bridges and Miller 1981; Huffman 1995; Hultin 1998; Rosenfeld, Van Buren, and Kalleberg 1998; Mitra 2003; Huffman and Cohen 2004; Yaish and Stier 2009; Mintz and Krymkowski 2010; Bygren and Gähler 2012; Dämmrich and Blossfeld 2016). These studies show that women are underrepresented in authority positions relative to men but not how the gender authority gap varies across authority positions entailing different amounts of authority and different tasks. Knowing the latter is important because the potential concentration of women in positions with lower amounts of authority and different type of tasks may have consequences for job quality and power at the workplace.

The question of potential differences between the authority jobs of women and men can also be extended to potential differences in job quality. The study of the gender gap in workplace authority has to a great extent been inspired by a premise of job authority as a "highly coveted workplace resource" (Smith 2002, 511). Consequently, much of the social stratification literature has problematized women's underrepresentation in authority in terms of women reaping authority-associated job rewards to a lesser extent than men. The limited changes in the broader gender order, however, provide reasons to question the long-standing assumption that, should women have authority, they will have comparable outcomes to those of men. Authority remains a men-dominated field, exemplified by women's move into authority jobs to a much greater extent than men have left such jobs (England, Levine, and Mishel 2020; Shams and Tomaskovic-Devey 2019), alongside the fact that women continue to be seen as incompatible with authority (Ridgeway 2011, 2014).

The existing literature has also provided a limited understanding of the relationship between dominant work devotion norms, the cultural view on women as more suitable for childrearing than men, and the gender gap in

authority. The role of the gendered transition to parenthood in the gender authority gap has long been seen as theoretically relevant, but its study has been obstructed by the lack of adequate data. The vast majority of studies attempting to examine this relationship have compared authority outcomes of parents and childfree individuals using cross-sectional data, an approach subject to two main limitations. First, this approach is prone to selection bias because parents may differ from childfree individuals in other ways relevant to the attainment of authority. Second, these studies commonly use the presence of (young) children in respondents' households as a measure of having children (e.g., Adler 1994; Bridges and Miller 1981; Huffman and Cohen 2004; Jaffee 1989; Maume 1999; Wright, Baxter, and Birkelund 1995), possibly leading to erroneous conclusions as the comparison group here are not only childfree individuals but also individuals with children who have already left the parental home. Studying the relationship between the gendered transition to parenthood and men's and women's representation in authority is particularly timely in light of uneven changes in support for gender equality in the public and private spheres (Scarborough, Sin, and Risman 2019) and the possibility that employers may increasingly treat long working hours as a signal of commitment to the organization (Shu and Meagher 2018; Cha and Weeden 2014).

Finally, scholars have acknowledged the potential of the cultural view on men as more status-worthy and competent than women for explaining the gender gap in workplace authority, given that superior qualifications among men and men's location within the structure of the economy are not the reason for their disproportionate representation in authority (Smith 2002; Longarela 2017). Prior work has, however, largely produced average estimates of the gender gap in workplace authority on the level of national labor markets or particular sectors of the economy (e.g., Yaish and Stier 2009; Bygren and Gähler 2012; Dämmrich and Blossfeld 2016), thereby not taking into account the most proximate context where work inequalities are created: work organizations. Although gender is a generic cultural frame, its salience, as well as organizational actors' ability to put it to work, are likely organizationally variable. Gender inequality in authority, therefore, should also be organizationally variable.

Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of four empirical chapters, all of which can be read independently. Chapter 2 studies variation in the gender authority gap across types of authority positions, distinguishing authority positions by the amount of authority and the gender-typed control over resources they involve. I test the more refined hypothesis that the gender gap in authority is larger in positions that involve more authority and positions with control over organizational resources (things-oriented), as opposed to human resources (people-oriented). Using linked survey and administrative data from about 32,000 employees who have started their careers between 1999 and 2016, I draw conclusions about gender and authority among relatively recent cohorts of employees.

Chapter 3 continues examining the question of what kind of authority positions women have by looking at yet another aspect; namely, job quality. This chapter evaluates two long-held assumptions in much of the social stratification literature on the gender gap in workplace authority. First, that authority jobs are better jobs than jobs that do not entail authority for both women and men. Second, that having women better represented in positions of authority produces a system of gender equality. Using linked survey and administrative data from a sample of about 100,000 employees, the chapter studies gender-contingent associations of job authority with job resources, strains, and job burnout, as well as gender differences in levels of resources, strains, and burnout among individuals with and without authority.

Chapter 4 studies how the gender gap in authority relates to the gendered transition to parenthood and changes in the number of work hours following this transition. This chapter answers several related questions: Does parenthood affect whether women hold positions of authority? Is there a parenthood effect on authority for men? Is the gender gap in authority explained by a more deleterious effect of parenthood on women's in comparison to men's representation in positions of authority? In contrast to past studies that have been limited in their ability to answer these questions due to the use of cross-sectional data, this chapter uses retrospectively collected longitudinal data to study women's and men's probability of having authority up to seven years before and 15 years after the transition to

parenthood. Studying within-person changes in having authority in the years before, around, and after the birth of their first child, I am better able to deal with endogeneity issues and show when exactly the potential effects of the transition to parenthood on authority start, as well as how long they last.

Having discussed generic consequences of the cultural view on men as more suitable for authority than women in the previous chapters, in chapter 5 I bring in the local context: work organizations. In this chapter I study organizational variation in the gender gap in workplace authority and its relationship to the salience of gender as a cultural frame structuring social relations at the workplace, as well as women's and men's relative power to acquire disproportionate access to authority at the workplace. The linked survey and administrative data I use enable me to match individuals to their workplaces and take account of authority-associated characteristics of both organizations and individuals in these organizations. The final chapter, chapter 6, presents the main conclusions and contributions of this dissertation, and suggests directions for research to come.