TITLE: THE POLITICS OF IGNORANCE, GENDER EQUALITY AND ENGINEERING

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ABSTRACT:

The problems of women’s inequality persist in spite of decades of campaigns and effort to create positive change. Engineering stands out as a profession that remains obstinately male dominated with little progress in attracting and retaining women. This paper is based on a series of studies\(^1\) framed by two questions: Why are there so few women in engineering? And why is this so difficult to change? It argues that attempts to promote gender equity are often frustrated by a refusal to know at all levels that the situation of women’s inequality is an effect of the state of sexual politics in the workplace. I define this refusal as a politics of ignorance that works to maintain a denial of gender inequity.

Examples of particular campaigns are discussed that aim to challenge women’s disadvantage in engineering work such as diversity management and women in engineering group initiatives. Whether sexual politics is addressed in the framing of campaigns for workplace change significantly impacts on their effectiveness. The paper also suggests some critical questions for consideration by researchers, policy makers and workplace activists committed to challenging the denial of prevailing sexual politics in work.

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Abstract (no more than 300 words with no figures or tables):
TITLE: Employer responses to training and skills challenges in a market-based training system: the case of the transport and logistics industry

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Abstract (no more than 300 words with no figures or tables):

Addressing the skills needs of industry has been a key priority of the Australian government for many decades. The main question driving incremental policy changes in this area since the late-1980s has been in regard to how, in an economic context characterised by rapid industrial transformations, skill shortages and changing industry skills requirements, a sustainable and appropriate skills base may be maintained. Drawing on interview data collected from key training stakeholders in the Transport and Logistics Industry in Australia we examine the challenges associated with a market-based training system and conclude that negative employer perceptions of the training system and the quality of training has generated a variety of company responses, further entrenching the market system and restricting the transferability of skills.
TITLE: Present pain for future gain: myths of choice and investment in unpaid work experience for young professionals

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Abstract (no more than 300 words with no figures or tables):

There has been an increase in recent years in the number of students and recent graduates undertaking unpaid work experience to improve their professional employability. While the socio-demographic range of students attending Australian universities has expanded in recent years the growth in unpaid internships and other forms of unpaid work experience has the potential to undercut that effort by providing greater access to professional work experiences to those students who have the financial means to engage in unpaid work at the expense of paid non-professional work. In addition to forgoing a wage, there is also evidence that some young professionals are paying for the privilege of unpaid work experience by funding their own personal accident insurances while undertaking unpaid work or paying for the services of companies that specialise in recruitment for unpaid internships. Further, less affluent students and recent graduates may not have the financial means to join the professional organisations which could provide important mentoring and networking opportunities required to access both paid and unpaid professional work experience opportunities. Using data from an ongoing research project into the formative work experiences of young people, this paper reflects on the paid and unpaid professional work experiences of a cohort of young professionals and considers the challenges and benefits presented by this shift from a sociological perspective as well as from the perspective of the young professionals themselves.
TITLE: Changing Ideas of Fatherhood in Australian Workplaces: The Dad and Partner Pay Scheme, and Digital Technologies.

Author/affiliation: Dr Sheree Gregory, Centre for Sustainable Organisations and Work, RMIT University.

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Abstract:

Fathers’ engagement in child care and use of flexible work practices, such as telework to achieve work/life integration, is subject to much debate. Recently, in Australia and internationally, there has been a new attention paid to the changing ideas of fatherhood, and the rise of online technologies which constrain/facilitate new ways of configuring work and intimate life. This focus is marked by a shift in cultural norms, challenging labour market and economic conditions, and the increasing visibility of women’s paid work participation. In Australia, on 1 January 2013 the Federal Government implemented a Dad and Partner Pay Scheme as part of the Paid Parental Leave policy. At the same time, in the United States of America, researchers report ‘The New Dad’ movement where men today are ‘launching a quiet revolution’ against traditional gender roles in their homes (Harrington, Van Deuson & Fraone 2013: 1), and the national ‘At-Home dad network’ and groups are increasing in popularity (Shellenbarger 2013). The problem of men not taking parental leave or utilising flexible work practices when available to them, are commonly highlighted today. Why fathers do not utilise parental leave or other entitlements to enable them to take on greater caregiving role in their households – even when the entitlements are available to them, and how teleworking could be an important device for increasing fathers’ participation in childcare and family life, are timely sociological questions which are relevant in the new work economy. This paper maps the features of the new narrative of fatherhood taking shape in the global stage, at the intersection of work/life integration, gender equity debates, and digital technologies use.

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Abstract:

This paper reflects on the significance of the intersection of gender relations and work/life arrangements for sustaining the connections between men and leadership, using qualitative data from a study of family business succession planning in Australia. The impact of social norms and gender relations on perspectives of succession and family firm/business leadership have been the subject of recent studies in Australia and internationally. In Australia, family business is the largest form of business ownership making up around 70 per cent of all businesses (KPMG 2009). The executive leaders of family businesses are much more likely to be men, compared with women in Australia. Do women in family businesses today opt out of successor grooming and leadership roles? How do family business leaders and members talk about women’s involvement, opportunities and aspirations in succession? What if anything, about these perspectives, might explain the relative persistence of (gender) inequalities in family business leadership? Gender relations in regards to work/life arrangements, and the ways in which they shape family business succession are explored through 20 qualitative interviews with CEO’s and MD’s of family businesses from a tri-state sample. Interviews were recruited and conducted in 2012 and 2013 by the author for a Post–Doctoral Research Fellowship on family business succession planning. Theories of practice and behaviour, broadly encompassing rational choice theory and social practice, were applied to the research. This paper contributes to the growing scholarship on women (specifically, this paper focuses on daughters, nieces and sisters of male executives) as family business successors, and longstanding debates in Australian sociology spanning the last fifty years, with particular focus on key barriers in relation to women, work and leadership.
TITLE: Men doing ‘women’s work’? Gender essentialism and low skilled men’s integration into non-traditional occupations

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Abstract (no more than 300 words with no figures or tables):

Sex differentiated patterns of employment are persistent features of labour markets - they have been described as among the ‘most important and enduring aspects of labour markets around the world’ (Anker 1998: 3). To date, most studies of occupational sex segregation, and its inverse, occupational sex integration, have focused on women’s experience of work and the labour market. In contrast, this paper uses the results from detailed case study research of four strategically chosen female dominated occupations to understand the processes that operate to entice or positively impact on men’s willingness and ability to enter occupations that are normatively regarded as female. The four occupations chosen for case study were aged care, child care, sales assistants and cleaners. The case study approach involved 107 interviews with unemployed men who might take jobs in these occupations, employers, male workers and clients or customers. Findings indicate a number of factors operate on both the supply and demand sides of the labour market to facilitate men's integration into ‘feminine’ occupations. Gender essentialism is central to many of these and the paper highlights the mechanisms by which this operates. Importantly however, the processes, while facilitating men’s integration into gender atypical jobs, in the main actually reinforce male gender essentialism and result in gender segmentation within female dominated occupations. Additional processes unrelated to gender essentialism were found to facilitate men’s integration into female dominated jobs. These included standard labour market factors that attract or deter people from jobs in general; and others were related to men’s minority status as workers. The paper highlights how these operate for men. The paper concludes by discussing the implication the findings have for existing theorising about occupational integration and the conditions that increase men’s movement into female dominated jobs.
TITLE: Sex Segregation in Education and Employment: Australia, Japan and South Korea, 1970–2010

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Abstract (no more than 300 words with no figures or tables):
Between 1970 and 2010, Australia, South Korea and Japan all saw increases in gender equality in education and employment. During this period, women increased their participation in tertiary education as well as the workplace. But has this led to decreased sex segregation? Not entirely. Sex segregation has generally fallen within education, but has frequently increased in employment.

In this paper, I use time series analysis and two Indices of segregation to show what has happened to sex segregation in employment and education in these countries between 1970 and 2010. To measure sex segregation, I use the Index of Similarity and the Index of Association, combined with breakpoint regression analysis (also known as interrupted time series analysis).

Using these combined methods, I show how horizontal sex segregation has decreased within undergraduate university subject choice, but not within occupational choice, and give some reasons for why these results differ (such as cohort replacement theory). I also show the differences in the rate of change for these Indices before and after these three countries ratified the United Nations’ Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in the mid-1980s.
TITLE: Finding informal work in Australia: methodological considerations.

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Abstract (no more than 300 words with no figures or tables):

Informal work, work that is undertaken outside of formal state regulation and measurement, appears to be somewhat neglected aspect of the sociology of work in Australian society. Although there is an emerging literature around informal work in aged care and the gendered household division of labour, larger scale studies of informal work are missing from the Australian based scholarly literature. Perhaps this is not surprising due to inherent methodological problems. Econometric analyses of official data sets to identify the size of the informal labour sector, regardless of methods, remain partial estimates and proxies. In contrast, smaller scale case study approaches are beset by issues of access and trust. Finding informal work and its sites are circumscribed by the fact that these work practices are not readily recognisable; do not reside in stand-alone organisations or firms; and when potential subjects are found they may resist interviews through fear of disclosing information about incomes.

To address these issues, this presentation reviews what have been the most successful approaches for researching informal work to develop a methodological approach for application to an Australian based study. This research intervention is arguably timely for as labour force participation rates drop and unemployment becomes entrenched in the face of macro-economic uncertainty there can be expected an expansion in informal work as a strategy to maintain incomes. However, it also suggested that such efforts to identify and explore the complexities of informal work in Australia should not be focussed solely on quantitative issues and the informing of policy. There should also be scope for a sociological theorisation of the worker subjectivities produced by, and sustained through, informal work.
TITLE: “Time you nearly weren’t here”: Love’s labour and care and support workers straying from their paid role

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Abstract:
More than 220,000 personal care, disability support and community care workers deliver services to over a million Australians each year. This is a significant sector of the total Australian workforce.

Organisations and policy mark out clear client/worker boundaries, intending to maintain instrumental service delivery and professional distance between worker and recipient. These boundaries are frequently crossed. Data from my exploration of the practice and meanings of care for workers in these roles speaks of work which moves beyond circumscribed service delivery and instrumental worker:recipient relationships.

My study uses ethnographic methods to explore practice and meanings of care with both workers and recipient-worker dyads. In this paper, I draw on some preliminary data gathered from aged care and disability support workers and the people they work with in facilities and the community to consider the complexity and tensions around professional boundaries. While workers understand the ‘rules’ and the reasons for them, they continue to work outside their set tasks and times. They and the recipients frequently hide this extra activity from the provider organisations, and organisations may turn a blind eye. I report on the phenomenon as it appears in the present study and from there, turn to the consequences for both workers and recipients, provider organisations, policy settings, and the tensions it signals for the instrumental economy.
Trade Unions - Development Actors or Victims: A Case Study from North West Tasmania

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Abstract (no more than 300 words with no figures or tables):

Trade unions face many challenges, and in the context of deindustrialisation and regeneration the challenge is to become part of the process of economic and social revival. In the main the literature on this subject has focused on the conditions for involvement. Here attention is given to the way trade unions may be marginalised in these circumstances and why. Through an examination of the last decade in the North West Tasmanian region, we explore the ways in which such policies are developed in ways that marginalise the trade unions in the area. The result is partially developed proposals and responses. Part of the problem is that unions have first to address their own resources and capacities, if they are to become actors in these processes. Otherwise, workers become objects within this process, with the dangers that a state and employer led regeneration will lay the foundations for union marginalisation and emerging pockets of poverty and inequality within regions.
TITLE: Australian Academics’ Engagement with the Welfare to Work Reforms: mapping the debate

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Abstract (no more than 300 words with no figures or tables):

This paper presents a systematic review of the Australian academic literature on welfare-to-work during the 13 year period (2000 to 2013) in which activity requirements were expanded to groups other than the unemployed. Over this 13 year period we have seen the McClure Reference Group recommend the introduction of intensive personal support and activity requirements for single parents, people with a disability and other exempt groups, and the implementation of many of these requirements via the 2001 Australia’s Working Together budget package (2001). In 2005 many of these reforms were dismantled and new more stringent activity requirements applied to single parents and people with a disability. This paper examines how the academic literature has responded to this expansion, and how their response compares the with approaches of academics in other jurisdictions, including Canada, USA, UK. We will discuss the quality and quantity of research and evaluate these with respect to their ability to provide effective policy critiques and advice for policy reform.
TITLE: Precarious work and precarious workers in Australia: A review

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Abstract (no more than 300 words with no figures or tables):

This paper reviews the current literature on precarious work in Australia. It argues that there is now a rich array of studies on this topic – comprising case-studies in different occupations and industries, analyses of secondary statistics, and focus groups and individual interviews. The research effort has succeeded in establishing the parameters of an emerging problem of precarious (or insecure) work and in describing some of its key dimensions. However, the discussion is lacking in at least four distinct areas: 1. the impact of precarious work on workers or lives; 2. the impact on labour markets as a whole; 3. the causes of trends to increased precarious work; and 4. the political or policy implications of current trends. Each of these areas presents difficulties that can muddy the waters of contemporary discussion. The paper advances some arguments about the way forward in the four neglected areas, comparing the state of the debate in Australia with parallel debates in Europe.
TITLE: The Contours of Temporary Labour Migration in Australia (Visa 457)

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Abstract (no more than 300 words with no figures or tables):

The aim of this paper is to track the implications of the contours of temporary labour migration in Australia (visa 457) on conceptualisations of their work. Drawing on Pennix and Roosblad (2000) and Schmidt (2008), it is argued that three waves can be distinguished: the pursuit of an exclusionary approach from the period 1996-2007, a ‘pathway to integration’ and inclusionary approach during the period between 2007-2012, and, more recently, a return to an exclusionary phase particularly during 2013. It is in reviewing the events of this latter phase that the impermanence of adopting an inclusionary approach whereby the work of temporary migrant labour becomes integrated into the Australian labour market, becomes evident.
TITLE: Organising the Entertainment Industry: an analysis of union capacity

Author/s and affiliation (add more as required):

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Abstract (no more than 300 words with no figures or tables):

For much of the recent history of trade unionism, organisation has been the focus of debate within and about trade unions. The foundation for union organisation is the workplace, where members work and are employed. Equally, unions organise for purpose, seeking to protect members’ economic and political interests as well as promoting a more just and equitable society. To interrogate the interaction between union purpose and organization, and how that relates to union capacity in an increasingly precarious employment landscape, we examine unions in the film and television production sector. The reason for this focus is that the complexity of this industry, in relation to ownership, work practices and employment make it an exemplary case to draw out the challenges facing unions more generally.

We identify two key means by which film and television unions have successfully leveraged their capacity to exercise power in film and television labour markets. We adopt Levesque and Murray’s analysis of union capacity, namely the ways unions engage in and realise their objectives by focusing their resources and capabilities to develop their collective and representational capacities (Lévesque and Murray, 2002, 2010). First, drawing on a long history of organizing based on a craft unionism tradition, film and television production unions play a major role in labour market regulation and workforce development. Second, unions leverage the strategic capacities of their members (internationally recognised actors and writers, for example), to develop union solidarity. Given that the membership profiles of these unions are marked by significant disparities in occupational status, a strong attachment to the union serves as a foundational organizing principle as well as the base for industrial action at local and international levels.