Lean In to the Evidence:

Breaking the Glass Slipper of Technical Professions

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Preparing for success

What’s wrong with “happily ever after?”
Fairy tales of gender equality?

Déjà vu, anyone?

a long tradition of workplace self-help

Useful and, also, misleading
The *Cruel Optimism* of our current fairy tale

- What is *cruel optimism*?

- Undeniable evidence
  - The painful truth about women’s ‘success’ in male-dominated professions

- Careful what we wish for (and how we pursue it)
The daunting truth about what we wish for

- Key terms:
  - segregation / integration
  - horizontal / vertical
  - physical / symbolic
The daunting truth...

Common patterns of segregation:
- Professionalize = Masculinization
- De-professionalize, decline = Feminization

Common patterns of integration:
- Infiltration & the Token
  - Glass ceiling vs. escalator
- When the tipping point is reached → ??
  - Feminization threats & re-masculinization
  - Re-segregation
  - Flight

Patterns cannot be reduced to majority-minority
The desirability of an occupation depends on who does it.

We should expect:

status closure $\leftrightarrow$ status composition

Bottom line:

Occupations are known by the company they keep.
The upshot: Ouch!

- Occupational segregation:
  - is global & intractable
  - is the “smoking gun” of workplace inequalities
  - thrives on belief in gender difference (essentialism)
  - CANNOT be fought from an essentialist paradigm
Cruel to be Kind

Attachment to women’s pursuit of ‘success’ already defined against women
Introducing the Glass Slipper
(or: Fairy tales can come true)

The alignment of an occupation with certain embodied social identities, as this creates systems of privilege & disadvantage
By way of illustration

How does a *figurative practitioner* come about?

2 “magic moments”
1. Commercial aviation
2. Computer science
Profession by (dis)association

Case #1

- Up in the air?
- Bad for business
- Industry responses: Mobilizing gender for safety
  - Campaign #1: The ladybird
  - Campaign #2: The professional pilot
- Campaigns collide: Pilot meets stewardess
#1: The Ladybird
If *she* can fly, anyone can!
#2: The Professional Pilot

Trust me: I’m trained for safety!
Privilege by (dis)association

Case #2

- For girls only
- Bad for business

Industry responses: Mobilizing gender to make a ‘real job’

#1: Calling all leaders & intellectuals
#2: Distancing from female talent pool

Campaigns collide again
“Computer girls”: Early feminization

We need some workers – Fast!

Programming is “just like planning a dinner”

Art….or science?

Enter the Lone Wolf
Ignoring the logical talent pool
Calling all leaders & intellectuals!

Appealing to men by enhancing job quality & excluding women

No computing experience necessary – We’ll train you!
Lessons of the Glass Slipper

1. The nature & value of work = invented, not intrinsic

2. Embodied social identities are used to brand work, sparking affect cycles

3. These branding histories matter

4. Understanding & changing them requires a pluralistic (intersectional) approach to difference
   ❥ Goodbye, Mars & Venus!
Lessons...

5. ‘Neutral’ descriptions of **job skills & requirements** are rarely so

6. **Faking it** takes extra work, whereas **fitting** is a privilege

7. The power of **glass**: Invisible systems can be made transparent & fragile
Breaking the Glass Slipper
Kinder Optimism for all change leaders

Promote a more constructive motivation

Such as: Computing & technology should reflect the plurality we live

Not: Tech jobs are desirable, and women/girls deserve inclusion (in the spoils of masculinization?!?) — a rationale already doomed
Kinder optimism for organizational change leaders

- Promote environments that let difference emerge & flourish
  
  - Encourage humility & curiosity; discourage tired stereotypes
  
  - Raise awareness of Glass Slippers in your environment: unconscious bias and institutional barrier
  
  - Cultivate privilege traitors; foster relations of alliance
  
  - Re-value (some) feminized communication habits; advocate dexterity among all members
Repeat the refrain: Plurality! Destabilization! Show difference multiply & thrive!

Forget finding ‘the right’ practitioner; keep them shuffling, shape-shifting, surprising

Develop a queer eye

Focus on practices more than practitioners

Queer coding of job tasks, skills, requirements
ADRENALINE RUSH

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Thank You!

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