

**GENDERED PROCESSES IN SELF-MANAGING TEAMS:  
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY**

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# **GENDERED PROCESSES IN SELF-MANAGING TEAMS: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY**

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## **(ABSTRACT)**

This study examines how gender as a socio-cultural construction factors in the currently occurring change from a bureaucratic work organization to more interactive and team-based structures. Informed by Joan Acker's theory of gendered organization, I identify processes that produce and reproduce gendered relationships of domination and subordination in self-managing teams, despite the premise that self-managing teams foster more egalitarian workplace relations. In a multiple case study, using in-depth interviews and participant observation, I examine four currently functioning, mixed-sex, self-managing teams in two service sector organizations and one manufacturing plant. The objective of the study is to uncover how and in what ways gender is present in teamwork and shapes various routine work processes.

The so-called "gendered processes" I found to occur in the four case-study teams include a gender division of team tasks that required women to perform clerical work even when teams were supposed to implement cross-functional task sharing. Gendered processes also took place through interaction and team metaphors of 'family' and 'football team'. I illustrate how the construction of emotions in teamwork marginalized women's contributions and how women and men consciously employed strategies to fit into expectations of gender-appropriate behavior. Despite these gender divisions, I suggest that one possible way for teams to improve organizational gender equality is that they emphasize non-hierarchical spatial arrangements. Finally, although I found gendered processes in all four teams, the ways in which gender shaped teamwork varied according to the organizational status position of a team. Also self-management proved the most comprehensive in teams that functioned at the higher organizational levels.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, Pekka Juhani Ollilainen, who has always encouraged and supported my intellectual curiosity and love of learning.

Omistan tämän väitöskirjan isälleni, Pekka Juhani Ollilaiselle, joka on aina rohkaissut uteliaisuuttani ja tukenut rakkauttani oppia uusia asioita.

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