

FROM “DOING” AND “UNDOING GENDER” TO CHANGING THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE: AN INTERVIEW WITH NANCY JURIK / ALENA KŘÍŽKOVÁ AND HANA MAŘÍKOVÁ

Nancy Jurik has been a professor in the School of Justice & Social Inquiry at Arizona State University since 1981. Her research and teaching interests address issues of gender, occupations, work/related technology, and work organizations. Nancy Jurik is interested in the economic justice surrounding small businesses, microenterprise development, and economic policy relating to poverty and wealth accumulation. Her past research focuses on women in traditionally male occupations. The ongoing research of Prof. Jurik includes a study of the use of technology to facilitate the performance of work away from the office, and gender issues in family business in the US. Nancy Jurik teaches courses in Economic Justice, Women and Work, Theories of Justice, and Feminism & Justice. In 2002/2003, she served as president of the Society for the Study of Social Problems.

In 2007 she and Susan Ehrlich Martin published the second edition of the book *Doing Justice, Doing Gender: Women in Legal and Criminal Justice Occupations*. Her book *Bootstrap Dreams: U.S. Microenterprise Development In an Era of Welfare Reform* was published in 2005 and focuses on the issues surrounding US. microenterprise development in the new economy.

In May 2009, Prof. Jurik came to Prague with Prof. Gray Cavender and visited the Gender & Sociology Department of the Institute of Sociology, where they both gave lectures on “U.S. University Changes in a Time of Economic Crisis” and Prof. Jurik held a lecture on “Technology and the Balance of Work, Family, and Life.” On this occasion, we conducted this interview with her on the conception of “doing gender” and “undoing gender”, the changing US university system, and work-family balance.

AK: In the first issue of this year of the *Gender & Society* journal you were co-editor of the symposium on “Doing Gender” based on West and Zimmerman’s work. Could you give our readers an idea of what the objective of this symposium was?

NJ: This symposium began as a session at the annual conference of *Sociologists for Women in Society*, and, as you know, *Gender and Society* is the official journal of *Sociologists for Women in Society* in the US. This special session at the conference was titled “Twenty Years of Doing Gender”, and the session was almost exactly twenty years after the publication of the original “Doing Gender” article. My co-editor Cynthia Siemsen organized the session. She asked me as well as James Messerschmidt, Nikki Jones and Barbara Risman to submit papers. Because the panel was so well received, we decided to propose a special issue concept to *Gender & Society* editor, Dana Britton. When I approached Dana Britton, she suggested the special symposium format. We wanted the symposium to reflect on the impact that “Doing Gender” – the article and the framework – had on the field of gender studies. We also wanted to reflect on criticisms of the framework and to suggest an agenda for the future.

HM: Could you explain in more detail the concept of “doing gender” and the opposite concept of “undoing gender” developed by Francine Deutsch (2007)?

NJ: The “doing gender” framework was developed in opposition to the “gender-role” perspective. The aim was to move

away from thinking of gender as a fixed aspect of social life or an attribute of particular individuals that was fixed, as something learned in early childhood but then set for the rest of life. The gender role perspective implied that there was a single masculine gender role and a single feminine gender role. The point of the “doing gender” framework was to conceptualize gender as a product of social interaction and an emergent social construction. However, gender was always viewed in the framework as emerging in reference to people’s knowledge of societal expectations. And so, that’s how social structure and social institutions come into play in the framework. But it is important that gender be viewed as ongoing, dynamic and changing.

Now, with regard to the concept of “undoing gender”, I have seen many recent articles referencing this term. When we were preparing the symposium, I did a search on the term “undoing gender”, and I did another one today. I can tell you that I found many more articles using that term now than when we began the symposium a couple of years ago. The origin of that emphasis on “undoing gender” originated with Judith Butler’s book by that title. The article by sociologist Francine Deutsch that appeared in *Gender & Society* came later. And the usage of this term by Deutsch and Risman (in our symposium) is different from that of Butler in her book. Francine Deutsch in a footnote of her article from 2007 actually said: she did not know about Judith Butler’s book “Undoing Gender” from 2004 when she was preparing her paper. And so, not only did she not know

about it, but her use of the term is quite different from Butler's. Deutsch is trying to write about how we should shift the emphasis away from "doing gender" and focus on "undoing gender"; she argues that the concept of "undoing gender" will lead to a more direct and explicit emphasis on social change and social transformation. Her article is really thought-provoking; the idea of focusing on how social interaction could be a means for promoting social change is very positive and very wonderful. In our symposium, Barbara Risman uses Deutsch rather than Butler. Both Risman and Deutsch criticize the way that scholars have been using the "doing gender" concept. A number of scholars have treated "doing gender" as synonymous with doing traditional femininity and doing traditional masculinity. One thing that troubles me here is that both Deutsch's and Risman's articles recognize that this usage is not at all consistent with the arguments of West and Zimmerman or West and Fenstermaker later. "Doing gender" references the methods whereby people make differentiations and these differentiations can be constructed in a variety of ways that may or may not be consistent with social expectations. West and Zimmerman also stress that social expectations are constantly shifting and changing. Expectations change over time and from one situation to the next. So, for example, the gender expectations that I experience when I am living in my regular life as an adult university professor in Arizona are quite different from those that I experience when I am around my older relatives in my original birth home in Texas. My small hometown in Texas is somewhat conservative, and so expectations about proper femininities and masculinities are very different than they are on a university campus. I sometimes find myself acting differently, doing gender in different ways than I might do it where I live regularly. Deutsch and Risman lapse into accepting the definition of "doing gender" as a conforming to traditional social expectations about gender roles. So they conclude that "undoing gender" means going against or transforming social expectations. I think that when they proceed to talk about "undoing gender" they are reinforcing misinterpretations of "doing gender" present in the literature. They seem to argue that, well, everybody *thinks* that "doing gender" means conforming, so we are going to talk about social change and social transformation as though it's not part of the original "doing gender" framework. Maybe it is language, one of them says language is important, but their stress on "undoing gender" also troubles me because their discussions imply that you can categorize social interaction as *either* conforming *or* undoing and instead of more properly stressing that that gender produced in social interaction often falls more along the lines of a continuum ranging from conformity to transformative. Patricia Hill Collins in her book *Black Feminist Thought* from 1991 stresses the concept of "both/and". In the context of doing gender, interaction may produce BOTH conforming AND oppositional forms of gender. Along these lines, Judith Butler, emphasizes that there exists a multiplicity of gender images and that "doing gen-

der" is contradictory and multi-faceted. She wants to consider cases where one's gender is undone for some reason (for example, in the cases of transgender individuals); she wants to understand the insights that might be gained from such gender and sexual marginalization. She is looking for insights that might lead to social transformation. She is also asking the question: "If there are gender differences, do they automatically yield inequality?"

HM: Yes that's the crucial question.

NJ: And Butler's analysis also suggests that we should not assume that we know where psychology and biology begin and end. Those are certainly areas of analysis where we must be careful. In her piece in our symposium, Raewyn Connell stresses that we must analyze the collective processes of social transformation. With Deutsch and Risman's analyses, the importance of collective efforts that address changing social institutions; it is more complex than some undoing in social interaction.

HM: You said that you displayed your gender in different ways. Could you explain it in more detail?

NJ: I'll give you an older example. This was about 15–20 years ago, for a period of one to two years I decided: "I don't see why I have to shave my legs or shave my under-arms. I'm so tired of doing it and I mostly wear slacks anyway", so I just didn't do it. I went to visit my mother; we were supposed to attend a wedding; and I was supposed to wear a dress. My mother was upset at the idea that I would wear a dress and that my legs would not be shaved. And so, I had not really thought about it one way or the other when I went there – to shave or not to shave. But she had already noticed, and so I felt some pressure about that. I ultimately did shave them because I did not want her to feel so bad. I wore the dress because I decided at the time that it wasn't that important to me. I didn't want her to be upset because she puts up with so many ways that I am different from her expectations, things that go against what she thinks is appropriate... My husband Gray and I have a very non-traditional relationship, since he does more of the cooking, especially breakfast and lunch. Sometimes I cook dinner, but he does the laundry, and he does the grocery-shopping. If something breaks in the house I am more likely to go and fix it. I don't like to fix it, I'm not really good at it, but he really hates the fixing, so I do that. When I go to Texas, or when we both go, he might be fixing my coffee or preparing my breakfast. My mother and aunt see this and marvel at it. They say things like "He sure is good to you!" And I don't really think about it, except now you know, they will call me, my aunt will call and ask me, "What are you doing?" I'll say, "I'm working on something on the computer and Gray is cooking dinner". My aunt then says, "Poor thing; bless his heart!"

HM: Do you think that it's possible to have an equal relationship between a man and a woman when people around you think in the traditional way and when in society there

are gender inequalities? Do you think that it's possible to create an equal partnership?

NJ: I do think that, yes, to some extent. This is where Deusch and I agree. She writes about the ways that couples try to carve out more equal partnerships. But what I would argue is that there are always contradictions and that, at least in today's society, we haven't reached the gender equality utopia. I don't know that we should want gender to be irrelevant, but there are always ways in which social expectations impinge on equality. So when we report our taxes, even though a great woman prepares our taxes, she still forgets and puts his name first on the tax return. So it is filed under his name even though we have different last names.

But there are always ways that our, our past and expectations of society impinge and I see this in research about couples who have children, you know, as they try to juggle and share paid work, and in this research, it is often reported that men who do their share or more than their share of childcare are often held up as heroes among women friends and even in the newspaper. So there are always challenges that we face in almost every social interaction even among couples, heterosexual, gay or lesbian, who strive for equality.

HM: But I think it is also necessary to change the institutions, because it's my experience from my own research that people think that they are in an equal relationship, but in fact many men who are taking care of their children have some advantages are considered as "a hero", etc., so it means that they are valued higher than women doing the same thing that "normally" women do.

NJ: Or, sometimes when men do their part, their bosses evaluate them more harshly, but more often I think it happens the way you described it and I agree. I think it's good to focus on how the interaction can be a challenge, but you cannot look only at that level, you have to look above at societal institutions

AK: So it is quite obvious now that you prefer the concept of "doing gender" as you published a book *Doing Justice, Doing Gender*. So, could you please tell us about the research you did and about the book?

NJ: Yes, I worked on this book with Susan Ehrlich Martin whose area of specialty was policing. My initial area of research speciality was researching women in prisons as security guards, or as they are called in the US, "correctional offices". So the two of us got together and decided that we would write a book on women working in traditionally men's criminal justice occupations – in policing, law, and corrections. Since that time, I've done some research on police officers as well. As we were beginning the book we realized that the "gender-role" perspective was not a good conceptualization for the ways that these criminal justice occupations were gendered. Susan and I talked about the "doing gender" framework and decided to use that for our analysis. However, in addition to West, Zimmerman, and Fenstermaker, we used the work of James Messerschmidt,

and Robert, now Raewyn Connell. They emphasize the existence of multiple cultural images of masculinities and multiple femininities and that's the way that I like to think about the social expectations impinging on the "doing" of gender. Connell and Messerschmidt also more explicitly emphasise the analysis of societal institutions and social structure. I would say that West, Zimmerman and Fenstermaker's spotlight shines more directly on social interaction. They understand that social structure is there; it is a part of their analysis. However, their analytic focus is more on interaction. Conversely, Connell is very aware of social interaction, but his spotlight shines on institutions and power and patterns of changing gender imagery over time.

What we tried to do was integrate an analysis of doing gender at the interactional, organisational, and what we call the societal level. One of the things we learned is that it's very difficult to talk about all of these levels at the same time. It is also complicated because there are multiple ways that people "do gender". As I mentioned earlier, doing gender can be both consistent with social expectations and oppositional at the same time. We were trying to say: Here is consistent gender reproduction; here is an oppositional way of "doing gender"; here's an alternative way of doing gender. We began to conclude that women in the settings we were writing about often behave in multiple and contradictory ways – in ways that were sometimes consistent with the expectations of the setting and ways that deviated from them. So there were police women who wore the police uniform and tried to act really tough, they really tried to act as tough as men, but then they also went and got their fingernails done every week. They said: "I want to show that I'm still feminine". So they tried to carve out their way. Was that "doing gender" or "undoing gender"? I think that was "doing gender" in a way that was both oppositional and consistent and I think that in social transformation you can never undo everything and start clean, you are always living the shadows of these institutions.

AK: What about a similar case of women in management who get to a very top position and they in fact behave as men, they conform to the role of men managers because they feel they have to. Is this "doing gender" or is it "undoing gender"?

NJ: Well, again, it's really good to think what this "undoing gender" means. But I think that is an example of where the pitfall of "undoing gender" lies, because Risman especially references the "de-gendering" effect in her article for the symposium. I think that there she's starting to characterize "undoing gender" as too much like the androgyny concept used by second-wave feminists. They called for androgyny as a kind of gender neutral behaviour. The danger of arguing that gender should not matter at all and be made to disappear is that women can end up emulating the way men are often expected to act today. If we could say that de-gendering or undoing gender would make both all gender groups become more caring and stronger in positive ways,

this world of sameness might be “okay”. But there is a danger when you say that gender should be irrelevant. As West and Zimmerman argue in the symposium, you may just be “re-doing gender instead of undoing gender”. So this redoing/undoing might mean that women who become successful must act like men.

AK: Now, maybe we could change the issue a little bit. Yesterday you had a lecture here at the Institute about the changing US university system. It was a very thought-provoking and timely presentation for us here, so could you introduce briefly the main message of that paper for our readers?

NJ: I spoke yesterday with my co-author Gray Cavender and we talked about our research on the changing patterns in US universities. I would sum up our argument by stating that there is pressure on US universities to behave in ways that emulate corporate business models. The irony is that corporate business practices do not always conform to these expectations that are increasingly being adopted by universities. “Universities are being pressured to behave in ways consistent with idealised versions of business norms, or you might say, romanticised ideals of business norms.” These changes have been brought about by a variety of factors that included federal legislation that makes it possible since the 1980s for universities to own patents and businesses. During this same period, public university funding has been diminished – particularly funding derived from state and government sources. Thus, there’s more pressure on universities to find other ways for surviving financially. At the same time, there is a popular discourse derived from neo-liberalism ideologies arguing that even private, non-profit universities and non-profit organisations generally should behave according to these romanticised business principles. We have been analyzing these trends through the research literature and through a case study of the web pages and programme information at our own university, Arizona State University. However, based on the research of others and our conversations with faculty and students at other universities in the US and UK, and including our conversations with you all here, these trends are occurring to at least some extent around the world. The pressures associated with the increased competition and time demands at today’s universities are really further undermining the “work-life” balance issues. Also, there are new femininities and masculinities emerging in these contexts, which I didn’t talk a lot about yesterday. Regardless, we are seeing reports that, regardless of whether woman or man, everyone is expected to produce more and better – be it research, teaching or fundraising. As the expectations are rising, budget cuts mean less staffing, or to the extent that there is more staff, more of them may be part time or temporary. There are more insecure, casualized jobs. For those who are lucky enough to have it, tenure is being challenged. Even if it won’t go away, fewer people will have the opportunity to obtain similar job security in the future. So

there’s pressure if you want to stay and keep your job, to perform more.

AK: Yes, I wanted to ask you about the tenure system, because this is a thing that is not well-known probably here and there is a lot of literature about tenure in the US. Why do you think tenure is good? In the Czech Republic we often hear the opinion and the process is set so that you have to constantly prove yourself, that you are able to do this work, which makes it very difficult and puts a lot of pressure on people, it takes a lot of energy that could have been been put in actual scientific work.

NJ: And it also takes energy from critical work, because you constantly have to think if they’re upset about you, are they going to look at you, scrutinise you? In the US, tenure was something that was more or less expected if someone performed at a high level, and so, if you could get a tenured-track job as an assistant professor, then usually in about six years in most schools – but in Yale and Harvard, some of the really tough schools, tenure was expected to take 10 or 12 years, which was really difficult for work-life balance – but anyway, so at some point you would get tenure and then it was expected that unless you would behave in a really egregious manner with a student or unless you stole your research or were unethical in some ways or got arrested for some serious crime you would keep tenure.

AK: What are you working on right now?

NJ: Too many things. I’m working on a study of entrepreneurs in the area of Phoenix Arizona and looking at how they see their business, what are their business goals, how they perceive that their business goals have changed over time, how they innovate and what they mean by “business innovation”, and how they try to develop creative and original products or processes of production in their businesses. In the midst of all that creativity we also ask how the business and the nature of their business over time changes and how such changes fit or conflict with their work and family balancing issues. We are finding some gender differences in these patterns. I’m also interviewing men and women business owners, and sometimes couples who co-own businesses together about what work they do in their businesses. Next, I plan to interview the men and women separately so that I can make some comparisons with Dr. Křížková’s and her research data on Czech businesses. We also hope to examine how the owners in each country see the future of their businesses. We have some really interesting findings that we think might be different. The other project that I’m working on is the participant observation of the ‘University as Entrepreneur’ project, and that is where the Kauffman foundation gave money for the Arizona State University to be more entrepreneurial. My other project deals with the ways in which a sample of women and men professionals uses technology to perform paid work away from their offices. And in this project, I am particularly interested in how people use the technologies to try to promote work-family balance.

AK: Could you explain this aspect in more detail?

NJ: I'm interviewing professors, physicians, lawyers, government-workers, and a combined group of miscellaneous professional workers. I now have approximately 40 interviews completed and they are still ongoing. I've noticed from my preliminary analysis of the interviews that a small number of younger people who were below the age of 35 had views about using technology that differed from those respondents age 35 and above. I just applied for an extension on my grant and have begun to interview more respondents who are under the age of 35. Most recently, I have been trying to add people in their 20s because, you know, they seem to have different ideas from even those in their 30s. My partner, Gray Cavender, has recently joined me in this project, so that we can move it forward more quickly. The interviews included asking people about the kind of technologies they use. We talk about mobile phones, laptops, home computers, hand-held computers and BlackBerry type of instruments, and different forms of commu-

nication on these devices – the internet, phone calls, email, texting, FaceBook. We ask people what they do with those, how they use them and then whether they're using them for work, for family or some combination. Ultimately, we are trying to address the ways that respondents structure and perhaps set boundaries around their use of technology to do work or how they might use technologies at work to deal with personal/family issues. We did have a few people who said "I don't want to have boundaries, I want everything blended", but they tend to be in the minority of the sample so far. We are looking at how they set boundaries and whether they are satisfied with the boundaries set. Then we hope to examine the factors that enable them to set the boundaries that they want. These factors appear thus far to include things like their family situation and working conditions. These are all part of a qualitative analysis that we are doing of the interview text.

AK: Thank you very much!