

Dozier, Raine. “‘You Look Like a Dude, Dude’: Masculine Females Undoing Gender in the Workplace”. In *Journal of Homosexuality*, Vol. 66, Issue 9, 2019, pp. 1219-1237.

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1 Raine Dozier’s essay “‘You Look Like a Dude, Dude’: Masculine Females Undoing Gender in the Workplace” (2019) examines liminal categories of gender expression and embodiment like masculine females and their capability of ‘undoing gender’ in the workplace. This may be carried out due to their potential to reveal and interrogate naturalized accounts of men and women in theoretical discussions of gender. The process of “doing gender” perpetuates and naturalizes hegemonic masculinities (Dozier 1219). It creates gender binaries which lead to a conflation of gender performativity, biological sex and sexual orientation. It suggests that subordinate masculinities are ontologically a male domain and pariah femininities a female domain for people embodying gender nonconformity. It also does not account for liminal categories of gender expression that otherwise fall on the gender spectrum.

2 Dozier utilizes semi-structured, in depth interviews conducted between 2009 and 2014 with 49 self-identified masculine females in the United States. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and participants were encouraged to converse with the interviewer. A variety of strategies have been used to recruit participants and several sub-culture terms for masculine females have been used in invitations. The females identify with gender related categories such as butch, stud, AG (aggressive), tomboy, genderqueer, queer and masculine lesbian (1223). The sample is diverse in terms of age, race and ethnicity, geographical location and education. Dozier has used inductive thematic analysis wherein data is first collected, then categorized according to central themes that emerge in the accounts of participants. Since masculine females exist on a continuum, the term may be seen as an umbrella term that also includes women who are perceived as men because of their appearance or preference of styles commonly associated with men. The premise of the study is the defiance of the gender binary by masculine females and their potential to disrupt usual gender practices in the workplace. This may be done through behavior, appearance and interactional styles.

3 Various parameters have been used by the participants to delineate their experiences of being perceived of as masculine females. Despite their self-identification as women, the participants received differential treatment from male co-workers due to their differences from gender typical women who performed traditional femininity. Due to their perception as masculine females, credibility and competence was ascribed to them. Since half the participants worked in male-dominated occupations or settings, they were seen as “one of the guys”, a treatment that was not given to typically gendered women in the department (1225-26). Further, the difficulties faced by these women aligned more to the workplace violence faced by men with contested masculinities working in male-dominated environments than with issues like sexual harassment faced by women. Instances where co-workers faced difficulties in accurately categorizing participants’ gender and sex despite evidence of gendered signifiers are quite interesting. They reveal an intransigent relationship between masculinity/femininity and being a man/woman in conceptions of gender (1229). Participants who “refused gender” put their co-workers in a dilemma, thereby forcing them to acknowledge the shortcomings of a binary gender system of classification and allowing the participants special consideration (1229). Here, racial and ethnic minority participants were more likely to be sexualized and stereotypical aggression attributed to them. This led to them being put in charge of dangerous situations that depended upon their perceived aggression.

4 The findings of the study have been presented in a systematic manner using lucid language. Thus, the essay holds interest for academicians as well as other readers who may not be familiar with technical terms. It illustrates that masculine behavior describes a distinct social location inhabited by some women. It foregrounds the radical potential of masculine females in undoing gender by completely obfuscating gender binaries. Dozier’s study is rooted in a thoroughly interdisciplinary theoretical framework. However, it stands out from existing scholarship by bringing to focus a group that is often ignored in discussions on gender.

5 Dozier’s study may be seen as an affirmation of poststructuralist feminism which sees gender as an indeterminate category, notably Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity (Butler 1990; 2004). More interestingly, the study may be seen as an attempt to bridge the gap between continental and American feminist theories. Dozier’s study allows the reader to challenge the assumption that masculinity and being a man is always synonymous. Masculine women redistribute the exclusive power of categorizing masculine behavior that usually rests with hegemonic masculinity. This has strong associations with Luce Irigaray’s critique of *homosocial*

economies controlled by heterosexual men and this study may benefit a mention of the same (Irigaray, 1985). However, the study remains pertinent due to the hope it provides for the weakening the utility of gender as a meaningful method of categorization.

Works Cited

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