Disruptive Masculinities? Male Workers Challenging Gender(ed) Norms in Technology Startup Organizations

Edyta Tobiasiewicz   iD

AGH University of Krakow, Poland

Abstract: The tech industry is one of the most influential and profitable sectors of the new economy, with startup organizations playing a significant role within it. Existing research highlights that these emerging companies remain male-dominated—structurally, normatively, and symbolically. However, researchers rarely consider how norms and gender inequalities, which privilege men and masculinities, might be questioned and negotiated by male employees, especially those in positions of privilege. This article examines how men occupying different roles in tech startups contest, transgress, or redefine dominant gender(ed) norms in their workplaces. Drawing on semi-structured interviews conducted between 2021 and 2023 with 43 male and female startup employees—as part of a broader study funded by the Polish National Science Centre (grant no. 2020/37/N/HS6/03913)—this analysis demonstrates how men engaging in emotional labor (on individual and collective levels), actively reconfigure the gender regime and "disrupt" the reproduction of normative models of masculinity within their companies.

Edyta Tobiasiewicz is a Ph.D. student in the Institute of Sociology at Jagiellonian University and an MA student in psychology. She is a research assistant in the project: "NEXUS: Twinning Research and Innovation Institutions to Design and Implement Inclusive GEPs" and an academic teacher at the Faculty of Humanity at the AGH University of Krakow. She is a project coordinator ("Innovative Professional Organizations: Gender and Technology Startups," financed by the National Science Center in Poland [Preludium 19 competition]). Her scientific interests revolve around gender patterns and gender inequalities, tech organizations, gendered innovations, and social innovations.

email address: tobiasiewicz@agh.edu.pl

In the new economy, the high-tech industry is recognized as one of the most "powerful and profitable" industries globally (Neely, Sheehan, and Williams. 2023:320). Available data and forecasts from various institutions indicate that the prominence of this sector for the economy will be and is constantly increasing (Eurostat 2024; Saura García 2024). The development of this industry is not only a fact but also the strategic aim of public policies, oriented toward the digital transformation of societies and economic growth. Tech organizations and new jobs emerging in this sector are changing the structures of the labor market, but also the technologies created in this area (especially communication-information technologies) are transforming the character of work and workplaces (including tech companies) (see: Barney 2008:114; Knappert, Cnossen, and Ortlieb 2024). The spread of non-standard forms of employment (part-time work, freelancing), spatial and temporal dislocations of work (elastic work time, remote work), horizontal and decentralized organizational structures (Barney 2008:102), digitalization and robotization of organizational processes, and new management solutions (e.g., agile management), are just some of the changes that are revolutionizing spaces of performing paid jobs.

Many of the above-mentioned phenomena occur in startup structures. These organizations present a specific technological landscape characterized by an ideology rooted in Silicon Valley, specific organizational culture and work ethos, flat structures, non-traditional financing methods, and orientation for generating "disruptive innovations" (Levina and Hasinoff 2017; Tobiasiewicz 2022). It should be noted that they are not just small versions of large companies (Blank and Dorf 2013). Technology start-ups represent a modern form of work organization that plays a crucial role in developing the new economy. As some researchers suggest, "startup entrepreneurship and startup cultures need to be understood as a transformative social force that expands way beyond Silicon Valley" (Koskinen 2023:814), due to the popularity of this organizational form in various parts of the world and the positions that startups achieve in the global economy. At the same time, a large and still growing body of literature has demonstrated that work organizations are gendered (Acker 1990; Connell 2006; Martin 2006; Ely and Kimmel 2018; Kaplan 2022; Alegria and Banerjee 2024). Workplaces are seen as spaces shaped by masculine values (e.g., "rationality" and "competitiveness" [Ely and Kimmel 2018:628]), norms (e.g., "displaying strength" and "showing no weakness or doubt" [see: Berdahl et al. 2018:424]), rules, identities, or images (Acker 1990) of privileges men and masculine practices have in this context. On the other hand, the concept of masculinity is co-constituted by achievements in the domain of paid work (Berdahl et al. 2018; Ely and Kimmel 2018), where masculinity is constantly achieved, demonstrated, and confirmed. Furthermore, masculinity is symbolically intertwined with the meanings attributed to technology (Bray 2007). This dynamic is often described in the literature as the "co-production" of masculinity and technology (Ottemo 2019).

From this landscape, tech workplaces emerge as spaces distinctly unfavorable for women and femininity. This is corroborated by numerous studies that present women's struggle within this male-dominated environment (Frenkel 2008; Alfrey and Twine 2017; Ozkazanc-Pan and Muntean 2018; Alegria 2019; Li 2023; 2025). However, we still know little about the difficulties and challenges experienced by men working in tech companies, who—as previous

research has shown—do not constitute a monolithic group (Li and Chan 2024), differ in terms of their access to power and privilege, and have different (im)possibilities to embodying the dominant patterns of masculinities in the structures organizations. This article addresses this gap by exploring how men in various positions within tech organizations challenge, transgress, or redefine dominant gender norms in their workplaces. The analyses presented in the following sections contribute to this literature by examining the gendered struggles and tensions experienced by men working in startups.

Startups as a New Model of Work Organization

Studying the sociological literature focused on the relationship between gender and technological organizations, Megan T. Neely, Patrick Sheehan, and Christine L. Williams (2023) noted two main approaches to understanding the tech industry. The first approach is based on economic categories used by public institutions to define and analyze this sector (Neely et al. 2023:321). Specifying production methods (electronic and computer) or the percentage of employees working in STEM occupations in organizations is distinctive for this current. Another stream (key to this article) defines the tech industry through the prism of the organizational form and work culture common in this sector (Neely et al. 2023:321), typically exemplified by "startup organizations."

However, the "startup" category in academic and popular science literature, as well as public or industry discourse, remains vague (Cockayne 2019; Neely et al. 2023). Available studies present these organizations fragmentarily, characterizing selected dimensions of their activities. In limited sociological literature, these organizations are often identified with the "flat," anti-hierarchical, and antibureaucratic structures (Neely et al. 2023), which reflects the short social distance separating startup founders and employees, the pursuit of power decentralization (partial), and the application of a democratic model of organizational management. In the cultural dimension, startups are usually linked with a specific work ethos and an "informal and playful" work style (Koskinen 2023). Their ideological roots can be traced to Silicon Valley, where belief in the potential of technological solutions as tools that can generate social change, progress, profit, and simultaneously solve the social problems of the modern world is widespread (Levina, Hasinoff, 2017; see also Alfrey and Twine 2017).

A review of recent literature on startups points out a few additional elements that distinguish this form of organization. Various researchers emphasize that startups are organizations immersed in networks of complex relationships among interconnected individuals, institutions, and resources supporting their development, referred to as "startup ecosystems" (Cervantes and Nardi 2012). This relationship system may include large business companies with an established market position, universities, public and private institutions financing startup activities, or non-governmental organizations supporting the local development of this type of entrepreneurship (Kałowski and Góral 2017). Incubators, accelerator programs, technology parks and hubs, and business campuses are only some examples of the elements of a specific institutional startup environment (Tripathi and Oivo 2020). Furthermore, startups are often positioned as companies oriented on collaboration between academia and business and focused on commercializing academic "ideas" (solutions, inventions, and theories) within a business

context. Next, a high percentage of workers with a postgraduate degree is visible among startup employees (Startup Poland 2019; Koskinen 2021). What seems to be equally important, startups differ from standard companies in terms of access to and exercise of non-traditional methods of financing their operations, as, for example, crowdfunding, venture capital funds, or "business angels" (Cegielska and Zawadzka 2017; Cavallo et al. 2019). But, above all, startups are focused on creating new business models based on breakthrough ideas and technologies (Savin, Chukavina, and Pushkarev 2023:660), called "disruptive innovations," which will enable these companies' rapid growth (and profits) in the international arena, and in the long term will change grounded markets paradigms.

Numerous gender researchers argue that gender inequalities are built into the structure and ideology of professional organizations, which create "enduring systems of stratification along the gender axis" (Healy et al. 2019:1749; see also Acker 1990; Bates 2022). It should be emphasized that these emerging gender regimes are not rigid, unchangeable, and identical in all work organizations but fluid, specific, and adapting to local conditions. Within this approach, new forms of work organization are seen as a space in which reconfigurations of gender practices become possible (Acker 2012; Bates 2022). According to scholars, new technologies used in a workplace also create opportunities to redefine gender relations, division of labor, or power in organizations (see: Connell 2006; Acker 2012; Young, Wajcman, and Sprejer 2023). In light of the above reflections, startups constitute a landscape where people may configure new, more diverse, inclusive, and egalitarian patterns of gender relations. What can potentially support the pursuit of gender equality in startup organizations is the above-average belief

in progressivism that characterizes the startup community and the widely shared belief that the products created by these organizations themselves can contribute to solving current social problems (Chen 2022). It can be assumed that the implementation in this environment of non-traditional organizational forms and ways of performing work, based on the empowerment of the individual, freedom of self-expression, and the abandonment of the control and subordination of employees, will allow for going beyond the traditional patterns of gender schemas. However, whether this occurs in startup organizations remains open at this stage of the article.

Gender in Tech (Startup) Organizations

A significant portion of the literature analyzing the relationship between gender and technology organizations focuses on uncovering various forms of oppression against women in the sector (Frenkel 2008; Petrucci 2020; Mickey 2022; Twine 2022; Li 2023). Recent research has provided evidence for experience of women's exclusion, hostility, and routine microaggression in interaction with men (Alfrey and Twine 2017), intra-occupational gender segregation (they occupy lower paid and less prestigious positions) (Campero 2021), barriers in career progression (Alegria 2019), and are more vulnerable to layoffs in the event of an organizational restructuring (Mickey 2019). In this collection of research, the specificity of masculinity is revealed indirectly—in the process of discovering women's experiences. It is mainly portrayed as a monolithic construct characterized by domination, antipathy, and sometimes violence applied to women and almost everything identified with cultural femininity.

Nowadays, exploring men's experiences and models of masculinity is considered equally important for

understanding how gender dynamics and related systems of inequality operate (Budgeon 2014). This also applies to recognizing gender regimes reproduced in technological organizations (Lohan and Faulkner 2004; Li and Chan 2024). Although, to my knowledge, this literature is not extensive, there are several studies that trace the connections between masculinities and the (startup) technological organizations. This discussion primarily engages with two key thematic areas: (1) the strategies undertaken or inequalities experienced by racial and ethnic minority men in technology companies, and (2) the specific models of privileged masculinity ("nerd," "geek," or "entrepreneurial") that emerge and are reinforced within this organizational context.

An example of the first approach is research conducted by Johanna Shih (2006). Shih illustrated how Asian men who faced prejudice, objectification, and cultural disadvantage in startup workplaces decided to look for new jobs to secure a more equitable work environment and actively sought out companies with ethnically diverse management teams to which they applied. In some cases, Asian men decided to leave their jobs and start their startups, encouraging their colleagues to leave the organization (Shih 2006). To compete with the "old white boy" social networks in the new economy, these men created supportive networks based on solidarity among people of the same ethnic or gender category.

The significance of gender and race in the tech workplace has also been examined by Sharla Alegria and Pallavi Banerjee (2024). Their analysis reveals that Indian temporary workers have less control over their work hours than US permanent engineers. Due to their visa status and precarious employment, they feel pressure to accept extreme work demands and "sacrifice family life" to achieve the status of a "desirable worker" (Alegria and Banerjee 2024:9). Although full "work devotion" in tech companies proves the masculinity of men, this principle does not apply to India workers. In the competition for hyper-masculinity, social recognition for the effort put into the task is not available to them, due to their inability to control their working hours. In this context, the "work devotion" of Indian workers is interpreted as the result of coercion rather than a privilege available to true tech enthusiasts and is evidence of their subordinate status in the workplace (Alegria and Banerjee 2024). It can, therefore, be concluded that the (im)possibility of controlling one's working time is becoming a new indicator and mechanism of the distribution of power and prestige in tech companies.

Other studies that address the issues of masculinity, migration, and class present research by Xiaotian Li and Jenny Chan (2024). Researchers described how men working in Chinese technology organizations produce a model of "guru masculinity" that arises at the intersection of gender norms prevalent in Chinese society and specific gender regimes in the tech sector. "Guru masculinity" encompasses a range of practices: showing overwork, being proactive, subordinating personal life to a professional career, meeting the material needs of the family, or (temporarily) migrating to big cities (Li and Chan 2024).

The second stream of research on masculinities and technological organizations is represented by Marianne Cooper's research (2000). She observed that the hegemonic masculinity constructed in Silicon Valley differs from the hegemonic masculinity prevalent in broader American society. According

to Cooper, the new economy, driven by advanced technologies, produces a form of masculinity in which physical appearance and athletic ability lose significance, while technical skills and intellectual brilliance take priority. In the context of technology startups, competition between men in sports or romantic pursuits ("getting the girl") is replaced by competition in ingenuity, innovation, endurance in working excessive hours, and the ability to write the "best code" (Cooper 2000:382). This acclaimed Silicon Valley model of masculinity, referred to as "geek" or "nerd masculinity," is strongly connected to the ethos of hard work because demonstrating a fanatical interest in technologies for someone employed in the tech industry is expressed through work that is "highly enjoyable," exciting, and borders on addiction (Feldman, Armitage, and Wang 2017; Cooper 2000). In her research, Cooper also illustrates different models of combining family life and work life ("superdads," "traditional," and "transitionals") as embodied by male fathers employed in startup organizations.

A similar issue is explored in the study by Ulla Hytti, Päivi Karhunen, and Miruna Radu-Lefebvre (2024), who examine the types of masculinity enacted by entrepreneurial fathers (or the attitudes of men without children toward future fatherhood) in the tech industry. These fathers, on the one hand, seek to maintain the ideal of neoliberal, heroic, entrepreneurial masculinity, while on the other hand, they struggle to reconcile it with the demands of family and personal life. To alleviate the tensions that occur as a result of divergent normative expectations in the various contexts in which they participate (professional and personal), male entrepreneurs embodied a model of hybrid hegemonic masculinity and navigated between three variations of it: "heroic,"

"breadwinner," or "caring" entrepreneurial masculinity. Including care practices and feminine dispositions in the repertoire of (the last two mentioned) varieties of entrepreneurial masculinity does not lead to the deconstruction of gendered power relations or the pattern of hegemonic masculinity but merely "restructures and broader" this model (Hytti, Karhunen, and Radu-Lefebvre 2024:266).

Scholarly works argue that the emergent model of tech entrepreneur masculinity—materializing through displays of heroism, risk-taking, hyper-individualism, passion, and unconventional behaviors or ideas—is becoming a dominant form of masculinity on a scale previously unseen both normatively and economically (Mellström, Balkmar, and Callerstig, 2023; Mendick et al. 2023). Ulf Mellström, Dag Balkmar, and Anne-Charlott Callerstig (2023) argue that this specific configuration of masculinity has moved from the margins of geeks and nerds toward a position of control propelled by structural shifts in the global economy that have cantered digital technologies as key drivers of power and wealth.

As we have seen, the existing body of research has mapped out key dimensions of a broad spectrum of struggles and strategies of racial and ethnic minority men in the technology industry. Prior investigations have provided valuable insights into the experiences of male fathers founding and employed in tech companies. Scholarship in this area has significantly advanced our understanding of the most desirable and privileged model of masculinity in this context. However, little research has examined how male employees—particularly those in privileged positions—question, challenge, or negotiate gender(ed) norms and inequalities that sustain the dominance of a narrow group of men and specific forms of masculinity

within technology organizations. Meanwhile, social agents navigate complex matrices of domination and subordination. Individuals who hold high-status and prestigious positions within one set of interpersonal relations may find themselves dependent or subordinate in a different situational context, even within the same institutional field. Moreover, even those occupying positions of respect and privilege, with access to control, are subject to various norms, pressures, and expectations imposed by their social environment (see: Scott 2015:145-158). Available literature depicts men and the masculinities they embody as primarily constructed in relationships, interactions, practices, or processes taking place *within* organizations. I mentioned earlier that tech startup companies (and, in effect, their employees) are immersed in complex networks of relationships. As I suggest, to fully understand specificities emerging in this context of masculinities, it is also necessary to consider professional relationships that extend beyond organizational structures but influence their shape (with investors, mentors, or different supportive institutions).

Research Methodology

The analyses presented in this article aim to explore how men occupying different positions within tech startup organizations challenge, transgress, or redefine dominant gender(ed) norms in their workplaces.

To address this research question, I analyzed empirical material from qualitative research conducted between 2021 and 2023, as part of a broader research project.[1] This study draws on 40 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with individuals engaged in tech

startup organizations (38 individual interviews, one dyadic, and one triadic interview). Among these participants, 17 were female, and 26 were male, representing 27 different startup organizations. The interviewees included people representing various positions: startup founders, managers, ordinary employees, investors, mentors in acceleration programs, and representatives of local institutions focused on supporting startup activity. Due to the specificity of the research problem, which concerns, among others, the difficulties and barriers experienced in the startup context, I decided to include the stories of those who resigned from working in a startup or (permanently/temporarily) from developing their startup.

Research participants were mostly between 20 and 43 years of age. Only one person was over 50, but the group of people surveyed was dominated by people between 25 and 35 years of age. The participants usually lived in large (less often smaller) urban agglomerations, such as Cracow, Warsaw, or Gdansk. Of the total interviews, 29 were conducted face-to-face, 13 were conducted remotely via MS Teams, and one was conducted by phone (since the survey was also conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic). The interviews usually lasted from one to two hours, with the shortest lasting about 50 minutes and the longest 135 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed, resulting in nearly 1,300 pages of standardized transcript data. The interviews covered a range of topics, including participants' pathways into their organizations, descriptions of a typical workday, conceptualizations of the ideal startup employee, strategies for conflict resolution within teams, and how family and friends perceived their work in startups. The content of the interviews at the first stage of analysis was coded according to a categorization key developed on the basis of the theoretical framework ad-

opted in the research project (Connell 2006), which was then expanded to include additional empirical categories emerging from the analysis of the material. Empirical data were coded using MAXQDA 2023 qualitative data analysis software.

None of the interviewees received financial gratification for participating in the study. Before the interviews, interviewees were briefed on the purpose of the project, how the data would be used, and the possibility of withdrawing consent to participate in the study. The research procedure received a positive opinion from the Research Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University.

I support my analysis of the empirical data from the interviews with analyses of ethnographic notes, which were created during the course of overt observations carried out between March and August 2022. These observations were conducted during public events for the startup community (e.g., speeches, mentoring training, and final events of accelerator programs known as *demo day*), as well as during a three-week stay in a coworking space that served as the headquarters for several emerging startup organizations and individual employees of startups companies operating in other regions. It is worth noting that when I entered the field, I was not part of the startup community, nor was I in any way connected or familiar with it.

The names in the empirical section are not the real names of the people who took part in the study but fictitious pseudonyms intended to facilitate the presentation of their narratives and experiences. To protect the anonymity of all interviewees—particularly those whose identities could be easily discerned based on age and position within the startup ecosystem—I only provide information regarding their gender and organizational role alongside the quoted material.

Research Analysis

"Some People Actually Have a Private Life Too…": Redefinition of Work Norms

Numerous studies proved that the ethos of hard work is one of the key norms in startup culture, which permeates and shapes the practices undertaken in these structures while also being reflected in the symbolic dimension of these organizations (dress or language) (Cooper 2000; Wynn and Correll 2018; Papageorgiou 2023; Li and Chan 2024;). This conclusion is confirmed by the statements of many male interlocutors. In their narratives, men spontaneously emphasized the central role of professional work in their lives, highlighting the pleasure, satisfaction, and sense of fulfillment it provides—regardless of the energy and effort it demands from them. They frequently reported exhaustion due to excessive workloads while simultaneously expressing difficulties in controlling or limiting the amount of time they dedicate to work and establishing clear boundaries between their professional and personal lives. For example, Robert, the founder of a small startup, states that he is unable to do work that will not give him pleasure. However, he admits that he finds it difficult not to engage in additional tasks for the same reason, leaving him feeling overtired.

> **Robert:** He works there for the money—for him, it's basically an ATM, so to speak. But I just can't do that. I have this thing... I can't do something that doesn't bring me joy…
>
> **E.T.:** …And roughly how many hours a day do you spend working? Either on the startup or in general? Or is that hard to calculate?

Robert: It's hard to calculate because I work, let's say, quite flexibly. Sometimes I get up really early and work until, I don't know, 3:00 PM, then take a two-hour break and work again from 5:00 PM to 10:00 PM. I basically work whenever I can—unfortunately…And eventually, my batteries started running low, and I realized I don't really have time for myself. I used to feed off other people's success. Like, if the founder I work with achieves something, I get excited about it and support him. And like I said, I don't know how to say no. For example, someone I used to work with might text me saying, "Hey Robert, can we jump on a call at 11:00 PM on a Friday?" because they're in the US, and would that be a problem? And I'm like, "Of course!" [male, startup founder]

Robert's approach to paid work closely resembles what previous research has termed the "founderitis syndrome," which is characterized by a "bulimic working pattern" and an endless competition for overwork, driven by the blurring of boundaries between labor and passion (Papageorgiou 2023:9). Robert's preferred model of work did not receive the approval or enthusiasm he had eagerly anticipated from his coworkers. The group of friends with whom he had set out to build the startup openly resisted and rejected the level of commitment he attempted to impose. Since everyone except Robert opposed the manic work style, the team ultimately made a "democratic" decision to establish alternative work standards.

Robert: Well, yeah, because for me, like I said, this is my whole life. I dedicate myself to it completely. I love doing this, and honestly, I'd love to get a call from the guys at 3 AM, like, "I have an idea for this or that— let's do it." But that doesn't happen. I just got the information that some people actually have a private life too…It turns out I'm the only one who wants to do it this way…Like, in the end, it turned out that I was the only one…So, democratically, we decided that maybe it wouldn't be that way…I had to learn that a bit, but I think we've worked through it—we figured it out. [male, startup founder]

The cited excerpts illustrate that the work patterns promoted within startup culture are not always uncritically adopted and reproduced by employees. Instead, they are sometimes resisted and "refrained" by workers, who, thanks to democratic management models, the diffusion of power in startup structures, and close relationships in the workplace, gain a relatively strong negotiating position within the organization. The principles underlying startup operations can, as demonstrated, serve as a tool for renegotiating workplace rules and challenging the demanding norms of professional commitment. Robert's experience shows how men in leadership positions in startups were often obliged by co-workers, co-shaping work structures and expressing their expectations, to change their behavior and practices of managing their emotionality.

The theme of reconfiguring workplace norms also emerges in Grzegorz's account. He shares the story of a colleague who, upon joining a startup, had to "teach his boss" to respect the boundary between work and private life by refusing to be available for tasks in the evening hours due to his family responsibilities:

Grzegorz: Actually, I have a good example—a colleague of mine…He had just had a baby and started working at a startup...it was just before the baby was born. And he told me that one of his biggest challenges was that his boss would call him at 7 PM…but he simply couldn't pick up because he was taking care of his child. And it was really difficult to get his boss to understand that…if you're able to set boundaries,

it's fine [in a startup—E.T.], that's all it really is. [male, software developer]

In Grzegorz's view, employees in startups can negotiate their working conditions with their boss, as these organizations foster a "different" and "modern" approach to employees—one that is reflected in more informal and casual employer-employee relationships and a greater level of respect for workers. To better illustrate the realities of working in a startup, the participant outlines the differences between working conditions in a startup and a software house, as he said:

> **Grzegorz:** In a regular job, there's a typical boss, basically a ruler, and I'm expected to answer calls at 10 PM—because if I don't, I might get fired. But in startups, there's a slightly different approach. In my opinion, a more modern approach to work. There's a bit more separation within the hierarchy...And that's a real difference because in those kinds of companies, the boss sees themselves as the boss, and you have to be their servant. [male, software developer]

The startup is thus portrayed as a type of organization where employees experience greater empowerment, gain a stronger sense of agency, and exert more influence over their superiors' behavior. Notably, the practices of challenging the prevailing work regime in startups, as described, were undertaken not only by men who were fathers but also by those who did not engage in care work in their private lives but simply sought to maintain a better work-life balance.

Individual Dimension of Emotional Labor: Transgression of the Norm of Unemotional Masculinity

The analysis of the interviews indicates that work overload was a common experience among men

involved in the creation and operation of the examined tech startups. Spontaneously emerging declarations of experiencing mental health crises and professional burnout in the interviews (with employees in different positions) were framed as a consequence of the physical and emotional exhaustion resulting from an intense work regime. A compelling example of this is Michał, a startup co-founder with prior experience as a programmer in various international companies. When asked whether his personal life had changed since transitioning to startup work, he responded:

> **Michał:** I have already been through clinical depression—I was treated for depression caused by overwork and burnout.
> **E.T.:** Was that during your time at this startup, or was it earlier?
> **Michał:** Earlier. Earlier, but apart from [name of a large international startup], I have always worked in startups, and it always happened there.
> **E.T.:** I see.
> **Michał:** And it was total burnout, and now I am through a year of therapy. And now I am careful. And I can designate a place to which I can continue to work, but no further. [male, startup co-founder, programmer]

Michał's statement illustrates how the ubiquitous culture of overwork in the startup environment can lead male workers to a deep health crisis and start seeking and participating in therapy. The same pattern is visible in Robert's experiences:

> **Robert:** Basically, I work whenever I can—unfortunately… And right now, for example, I'm also working with a therapist to kind of slow down because I'm the kind of person who doesn't say… I don't

know how to say "no" and I just keep working all the time. [male, startup founder]

Issues described by Robert and Michael's actions, which are an attempt to resolve their mental health problems, can be interpreted as an example of undertaking personal "emotional labor" (Kaplan 2022). This term defines a set of various practices aimed at meeting the needs of other people to provide others with a sense of satisfaction, often at the expense of personal needs and ambitions (Leszczyńska 2016:230). Emotional labor, therefore, describes the intentional regulation of one's emotions to adapt to the rules applicable in a given context (Hochschild 1983:7; see also Szczygieł et al. 2009). To regulate their emotional state, the interviewees decided to start therapy, which can be interpreted as transgressing traditional norms of masculinity. As analyses show, cultural constructions of masculinity are symbolically separated from emotionality, especially in the professional sphere, which is usually understood as the domain of rationality (Murgia and Poggio 2013).

The accumulation of extensive responsibilities and a heightened sense of accountability for the organization's success, combined with limited financial and human resources, as well as time pressure and investor expectations, were frequently the causes of the described emotional crises among founders. This is exemplified by Marcel's story. When asked to describe the most challenging experience of his professional career, he recalled a time when he and his business partner decided not to inform their employees about the startup's financial difficulties. Instead, they chose to forgo their salaries to ensure that their employees continued to receive their wages. The emotional labor performed by Marcel involved concealing his stress and maintaining a false impression among his colleagues of both

his well-being and the company's stability. As he notes: "People know, they just feel it internally, that you are too stressed, you don't laugh at jokes. Like, something is wrong, but no one knows why, and everyone's imagination just goes crazy."

In interviews with participants, the shareholders—who operate within a logic of profit and calculative reasoning (Cooper 2000)—were portrayed as yet another group to whom founders felt compelled to mask their emotions and the challenges they faced throughout the startup's development:

> **Izabela:** ...often, as a CEO, you are alone with the problem. You can't tell your employees about it because they will start feeling that something is wrong. If you have co-founders who, let's say, are not as deeply involved as you are, they either don't understand or just don't worry about it as much. You can't really go to your investors either because if you tell them, like, "I feel like I'm burning out, and you gave me money," they will immediately have this red flag—like, oh! Something must be wrong with the company…And you can see, for example, that women tend to be more open, you know, they talk about things, whereas men often come to you only when they really see that… [female, investment manager]

According to interviewees, the reluctance to admit their mistakes (and thus the need to mask difficult emotions) was less common among female founders. In contrast, male founders seemed to get bogged down in the "heroism trap." They constantly experience the compulsion to demonstrate dominance by displaying strength, perseverance, and endurance. However, these practices have proved to be devastating for them. Embodying a successful entrepreneur, effectively operating in a high-risk environment (Li and Chan 2024), promoted by the

startup community, has often been problematic or impossible for startup founders.

> **Izabela:** They often hide the pressure they are under, the fact that they can't cope with it…Because you are a man running a company, you have a certain image to maintain, you have to be strong. You are not someone who cries when things go wrong. And she [coach who is friends with the interlocutor—E.T] says that, during coaching sessions, she often witnessed situations where men, once the relationship had been built, simply broke down and cried—because the whole world sees them in this way, and they cannot, for example, afford to start behaving differently in a business context. But internally, they still feel that they are human, too. [female, investment manager]

Masking difficulties can be seen as a male founders' strategy for coping with high demands and pressure from investors. Some participants emphasized that practices of humiliating, belittling, or mobbing startup founders by investment fund representatives are not uncommon but still present in this environment. Jacek's statement illustrates this tendency well:

> **Jacek:** It's in their interest to crush a startup founder's ego—after crushing it, then you start negotiating with them…So basically, this kind of grinding people down, a form of mobbing—not employee mobbing, but more like, "You're coming to us for money? First, we'll humiliate you, and only then we'll start working with you"—this is still pretty common. LESS than before, it's changing and so on. But it hasn't disappeared; it's just normal. [male, startup mentor]

Toxic and abusive relationships with investors were one of the triggers for seeking help and beginning emotional labor.

Collective Dimension of Emotional Labor: Transgression of the Norm of Uncaring Masculinity

"Doing" emotional labor by male workers in startups takes various forms. In Błażej's case, it manifests during social interactions. Identifying himself as an "introverted person" with an "analytical mind," he extensively described how, in daily interactions with colleagues, he develops the ability to empathize and accurately interpret others' statements, a willingness to understand and adopt different perspectives, as well as an attentiveness to the emotional states and impressions of other people:

> **Błażej:** …I had to come to terms with the fact that not everyone I work with perceives the world the same way I do, and sometimes I also need to adjust how I communicate to the person I'm talking to…And that's a challenge because, compared to working with programmers or just with code, everything there is very concrete and precise…You have to take into account that someone might be in a different emotional state, that they might be, I don't know, more excited or feeling down. Working in such a small team requires greater sensitivity to who the other person is. You can't just send an email with dry facts, orders, or just bounce things back and forth. Because for me, it somehow naturally happened that when I was talking to someone like that, I would just bounce the ball back at them to make them express themselves, articulate something. But sometimes, it actually requires more, I don't know, flexibility in communication to really understand what state that person might be in, what they mean, how they usually communicate. We work much better when we know each other well, when I know who I'm dealing with…And in our team, we talk a lot about whether someone has mental health struggles, if they're in a worse mood, or if they're go-

ing to therapy. So it's like, someone comes into the office, and we know, for example, that they have therapy at 3:00 PM that day, and then it's clear that we shouldn't flood them with emails because that's their time for themselves. And later, they just come back, and sometimes we even talk about it. [male, startup co-founder, programmer]

In the organization developed by Błażej, discussions among men about their emotional experiences and participation in therapy became normalized. Moreover, workload distribution was adjusted according to employees' capacities and current psychological well-being. The practices described in Błażej's narrative exemplify "empathetic emotional labor" (Ward, McMurray, and Sutcliffe 2020), a form of affective engagement that, as scholars have argued, is far more commonly associated with feminized forms of labor and professions (see: Nixon 2009; Godfrey and Brewis 2018). Popular discourses in startups that emphasize the autonomy and uniqueness of the individual encourage employees to practice "philanthropic emotion management," that is, to undertake emotional work in which interpersonal relationships, sympathy, caring, and concern for others, among other things, become important (Lewis 2008:131). It is worth noting that Błażej's motivations for undertaking emotional labor were partly instrumental. This approach, he claimed, allows him to interact more effectively in a dynamic work environment: "Sometimes, if there's a quick decision to be made, you have to quickly understand what the person is talking about." Nevertheless, my interlocutor's experiences indicate that men in startup organizations are contextually mobilized to reproduce practices typical for normative femininity, which are perceived as a significant resource in tech startup companies.

Conclusions

The contemporary gender system is changing (Ridgeway and Saperstein 2024). Extensive research has documented how the social organization of gender relations is renegotiated and contested by individuals who reproduce non-hegemonic gender patterns (Alfrey and Twine 2017; Risman 2018). The analyses presented in this article further demonstrate that the labor norms prevalent in Polish tech startups—consistent with those observed in other cultural contexts (see: Papageorgiou 2023; Li and Chan 2024)—are not only oppressive to women, caregiving men, or individuals with minoritized status, as previous studies have reported, but also to privileged men within these organizations (founders and programmers).

Empirical data reveal that male founders striving to meet the divergent expectations of those in their professional surroundings (e.g., investors and subordinates) experienced significant tensions and emotional distress. High demands and excessive workloads, compounded by insufficient organizational resources, contributed to serious emotional and health-related crises. The imperative to address these challenges necessitated engagement in emotional labor—practices that extend beyond normative models of masculinity. Notably, the strategies employed to manage these difficulties—such as initiating therapy or fostering workplace discussions on mental health needs, care, and empathy—appear unconventional when viewed through the lens of the broader literature on normative masculinity (Hearn 1993; Bradley 2008; Nixon 2009). Thus, the specific neoliberal conditions in which startups develop, intersecting with normative ideals, as well as the motiva-

tions and ambitions of entrepreneurs (who seek both success and fulfilling the role of the "good leader") not only facilitated but, in some cases, necessitated a redefinition of emotional norms within tech startups. Moreover, horizontal structures and informal organizational culture of startups provided space for negotiating dominant work ethics and, at times, enabled a partial transformation of the labor regime in tech organizations.

The existing scholarship on emotional labor from a gendered perspective has primarily focused on the empathetic emotional work performed by women (Ward, McMurray, and Sutcliffe 2020). In relation to men and masculinities, studies have largely examined emotional labor in the context of men employed in feminized professions (Ward, McMurray, and Sutcliffe 2020; see also Nixon 2009). More recent research has provided insights into the emotional labor performed by men in stereotypically masculine and highly masculinized professions—such as soldiers (see: Godfrey and Brewis 2018) and security guards (see: Søgaard and Krause-Jensen 2020; see also Nickson and Korczynski 2009). This article contributes to these discussions on masculinity and emotional labor by examining how—and under what conditions—men occupying various positions within (masculine) tech organizations engage in emotional labor.

In the literature, ongoing debates examine the implications of selectively integrating nonhegemonic practices—including those stereotypically associated with femininity—into dominant masculinity models (Messerschmidt and Messner 2018; Bridges and Ota 2020). These discussions often revolve around the concept of hybrid masculinity (Bridges and Pascoe 2014), raising the ques-

tion of whether such hybridity supports greater gender equality or operates as a mechanism for reinforcing hegemonic masculinity and sustaining gender inequalities. Many scholars argue that hybrid masculinity ultimately does not transform gender relations (Eisen and Yamashita 2019; Kluczyńska 2021; Leszczyńska, Zielińska, and Urbańska 2024). However, the hybridization of masculinity models may manifest differently across diverse socio-cultural contexts.

I interpret the described practices in which men working in startups engage and to which they are mobilized by external expectations as a reproduction of specific hybrid masculinity (Bridges and Pascoe 2014), characteristic of tech startup organizations. This form of masculinity partially realizes the pattern of *positive masculinity*, which, as suggested by James W. Messerschmidt and Michael A. Messner (2018:42), "contributes to legitimating egalitarian relations between men and women, masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities," but only in selected dimensions of startup organizational structures (Connell 2006). While it represents the most celebrated and prevalent form of masculinity in this organizational field—thus functioning as a "dominant masculinity" (Messerschmidt and Messner 2018:41)—it remains unable to challenge or transform dominant gender norms and structures beyond the immediate organizational boundaries. The lack of control over key resources valued in the institutional field (financial, social, and structural) prevents startup hybrid masculinity from evolving into a "dominating masculinity" (Messerschmidt and Messner 2018:42), thus remaining insufficiently powerful and hegemonic to fundamentally "disrupt" the dynamics of the wider system of gender inequality in this context.

References

Acker, Joan. 1990. "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." *Gender & Society* 4(2):139-158.

Acker, Joan. 2012. "Gendered Organizations and Intersectionality: Problems and Possibilities." *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 31(3):214-224.

Alegria, Sharla. 2019. "Escalator or Step Stool? Gendered Labor and Token Processes in Tech Work." *Gender & Society* 33(5):722-745.

Alegria, Sharla and Pallavi Banerjee. 2024. "Time Won't Give Me Time: Intersections of Racialized and Gendered Organization of Work in Tech." *Social Problems* 20:1-15.

Alfrey, Lauren and France W. Twine. 2017. "Gender-Fluid Geek Girls: Negotiating Inequality Regimes in the Tech Industry." *Gender & Society* 31(1):28-50.

Barney, Darin D. 2008. *Społeczeństwo sieci* [*The Network Society*]. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sic!

Bates, Trudy. 2022. "Rethinking How We Work with Acker's Theory of Gendered Organizations." *Gender, Work & Organization* 29(4):1041-1064.

Berdahl, Jennifer L. et al. 2018. "Work as a Masculinity Contest." *Journal of Social Issues* 4(3):422-448.

Blank, Steve and Bob Dorf. 2013. *Podręcznik startupu. Budowa wielkiej firmy krok po kroku* [*The Startup Handbook. Building a Great Company Step by Step*]. Gliwice: Helion.

Bradley, Harriet. 2008. *Płeć* [*Gender*]. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sic!

Bray, Francesca. 2007. "Gender and Technology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 36(1):37-53.

Bridges, Tristan and Kendall Ota. 2020. "'Sprinkle Some Gay on My Straight': Hybrid Hegemonic Masculinities in a Post-Gay Era." Pp. 274-285 in *Routledge International Handbook of Heterosexualities Studies*, edited by J. Dean and N. Fischer. New York: Routledge.

Bridges, Tristan and C.J. Pascoe. 2014. "Hybrid Masculinities: New Directions in the Sociology of Men and Masculinities." *Sociology Compass* 8(3):246-258.

Budgeon, Shelley. 2014. "The Dynamics of Gender Hegemony: Femininities, Masculinities and Social Change." *Sociology* 48(2):317-334.

Campero, Santiago. 2021. "Hiring and Intra-Occupational Gender Segregation in Software Engineering." *American Sociological Review* 86(1):60-92.

Cavallo, Angelo et al. 2019. "Fostering Digital Entrepreneurship from Startup to Scaleup: The Role of Venture Capital Funds and Angel Groups." *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 145:24-35.

Cegielska, Edyta and Danuta Zawadzka. 2017. "Źródła finansowania startupów w Polsce [Sources of Startup Financing in Poland]." *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio H. Oeconomia* 51(6):53-61.

Cervantes, Ruy and Bonnie Nardi. 2012. "Building a Mexican Startup Culture Over the Weekends." *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Intercultural Collaboration (ICIC '12):*11-20.

Chen, Carolyn. 2022. *Work Pray Code: When Work Becomes Religion in Silicon Valley*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Cockayne, Daniel. 2019. "What Is a Startup Firm? A Methodological and Epistemological Investigation into Research Objects in Economic Geography." *Geoforum* 107:77-87.

Connell, Raewyn. 2006. "Glass Ceilings or Gendered Institutions? Mapping the Gender Regimes of Public Sector Worksites." *Public Administration Review* 66(6):837-849.

Cooper, Marianne. 2000. "Being the 'Go-To Guy': Fatherhood, Masculinity, and the Organization of Work in Silicon Valley." *Qualitative Sociology* 23:379-405.

Eisen, Daniel B. and Liann Yamashita. 2019. "Borrowing from Femininity: The Caring Man, Hybrid Masculinities, and Maintaining Male Dominance." *Men and Masculinities* 22(5):801-820.

Ely, Robin J. and Michael Kimmel. 2018. "Thoughts on the Workplace as a Masculinity Contest." *Journal of Social Issues* 74(3):628-634.

Eurostat. 2024. *ICT Specialists in Employment*. Retrieved April 06, 2025 (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/in-

dex.php?title=ICT_specialists_in_employment#Source_data_for_tables_and_graphs).

Feldman, Robin, Alice Armitage, and Connie Wang. 2017. "The Gender Gap in Startup Catalyst Organizations: Bridging the Divide between Narrative and Reality." *Oregon Law Review* 95(2):313-336.

Frenkel, Michal. 2008. "Reprogramming Femininity? The Construction of Gender Identities in the Israeli Hi-Tech Industry between Global and Local Gender Orders." *Gender, Work & Organization* 15(4):352-374.

Godfrey, Richard and Joanna Brewis. 2018. "'Nowhere Else Sells Bliss Like This': Exploring the Emotional Labour of Soldiers at War." *Gender, Work & Organization* 25(6):653-669.

Healy, Geraldine et al. 2019. "In the Steps of Joan Acker: A Journey in Researching Inequality Regimes and Intersectional Inequalities." *Gender, Work & Organization* 26(12):1749-1762.

Hearn, Jeff. 1993. "Emotive Subjects: Organizational Men, Organizational Masculinities and the Deconstruction of 'Emotions.'" Pp. 148-196 in *Emotion in Organizations*, edited by S. Fineman. London: Sage.

Hochschild, Arlie R. 1983. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hytti, Ulla, Päivi Karhunen, and Miruna Radu-Lefebvre. 2024. "Entrepreneurial Masculinity: A Fatherhood Perspective." *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice* 48(1):246-273.

Kałowski, Adam and Justyna Góral. 2017. "Tendencje rozwojowe polskiego rynku start-upów [Development Trends of the Polish Start-Up Market]." Pp: 273-304 in *Start-up a uwarunkowania sukcesu. Wymiar teoretyczno-praktyczny* [*Startup and the Conditions for Success. Theoretical and Practical Dimension*], edited by A. Kałowski and J. Wysocki. Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH.

Kaplan, Amit. 2022. "'Just Let it Pass by and It Will Fall on Some Woman': Invisible Work in the Labor Market." *Gender & Society* 36(6):838-868.

Kluczyńska, Urszula. 2021. "Męskości hybrydowe, czyli wilk w owczej skórze. Definiowanie konceptu [Hybrid Masculinities or a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing. Defining the Concept]." *Przegląd Krytyczny* 3(2):35-50.

Knappert, Lena, Boukje Cnossen, and Renate Ortlieb. 2024. "Inequality Regimes in Coworking Spaces: How New Forms of Organising (Re)produce Inequalities." *Work, Employment and Society* 39(1):43-63.

Koskinen, Henri. 2021. "Domesticating Startup Culture in Finland." *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology* 8(2):175-196.

Koskinen, Henri. 2023. "Outlining Startup Culture as a Global Form." *Journal of Cultural Economy* 16(6):812-828.

Leszczyńska, Katarzyna. 2016. *Płeć w instytucje uwikłana* [*Gender in Institutions*]. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Leszczyńska, Katarzyna, Katarzyna Zielińska, and Sylwia Urbańska. 2024. "From Hegemonic to Hybrid and Back? The Context-Adaptive Masculinity of Polish Male Migrants." *Men and Masculinities* 27(3):219-243.

Levina, Marina and Amy A. Hasinoff. 2017. "The Silicon Valley Ethos: Tech Industry Products, Discourses, and Practices." *Television & New Media* 18(6):489-495.

Lewis, Patricia. 2008. "Emotion Work and Emotion Space: Using a Spatial Perspective to Explore the Challenging of Masculine Emotion Management Practices." *British Journal of Management* 19:130-140.

Li, Xiaotian. 2023. "Strategic Flexibility in a Male-Dominated Occupation: Women Software Engineers in China." *Journal of Gender Studies* 32(4):330-342.

Li, Xiaotian. 2025. "The Gendering of Programmers' Work: Taking China's IT Industry as an Example." *The Journal of Chinese Sociology* 12(1):2. doi: https://doi.org/10.1186/s40711-024-00228-6.

Li, Xiaotian and Jenny Chan. 2024. "Migrate to (Not) Be 'Gurus': Unpacking Workplace Masculinity in China's Tech Sector." *Gender, Work & Organization* 31(6):1-16.

Lohan, Maria and Wendy Faulkner. 2004. "Masculinities and Technologies: Some Introductory Remarks." *Men and Masculinities* 6(4):319-329.

Martin, Patricia Y. 2006. "Practising Gender at Work: Further Thoughts on Reflexivity." *Gender, Work & Organization* 13(3):254-276.

Mellström, Ulf, Dag Balkmar, and Anne-Charlott Callerstig. 2023. "Tracing the Superheroes of Our Time: Contemporary and Emergent Masculinities in Tech Entrepreneurship."

Pp. 417-429 in *Routledge Handbook on Men, Masculinities and Organizations*, edited by J. Hearn et al. London: Routledge.

Mendick, Heather et al. 2023. "Geek Entrepreneurs: The Social Network, Iron Man and the Reconfiguration of Hegemonic Masculinity." *Journal of Gender Studies* 32(3):283-295.

Messerschmidt, James W. and Michael A. Messner. 2018. "Hegemonic, Nonhegemonic, and 'New' Masculinities." Pp: 35-56 in *Gender Reckonings*, edited by J. W. Messerschmidt et al. New York: New York University Press.

Mickey, Ethel L. 2019. "When Gendered Logics Collide: Going Public and Restructuring in a High-Tech Organization." *Gender & Society* 33(4):509-533.

Mickey, Ethel L. 2022. "The Organization of Networking and Gender Inequality in the New Economy: Evidence from the Tech Industry." *Work & Occupations* 49(4):383-420.

Murgia, Annalisa and Barbara Poggio. 2013. "Fathers' Stories of Resistance and Hegemony in Organizational Cultures." *Gender, Work & Organization* 20(4):413-424.

Neely, Megan T., Patrick Sheehan, and Christine L. Williams. 2023. "Social Inequality in High Tech: How Gender, Race, and Ethnicity Structure the World's Most Powerful Industry." *Annual Review of Sociology* 49(1):319-338.

Nickson, Dennis and Marek Korczynski. 2009. "Aesthetic Labour, Emotional Labour and Masculinity." *Gender, Work & Organization* 16(3):291-299.

Nixon, Darren. 2009. "'I Can't Put a Smiley Face On': Working-Class Masculinity, Emotional Labour and Service Work in the 'New Economy.'" *Gender, Work & Organization* 16(3):300-322.

Ottemo, Andreas. 2019. "The Coproduction of Masculinity and Technology: Problems and Prospects." Pp. 341-350 in *Routledge International Handbook of Masculinity Studies*, edited by L. Gottzén, U. Mellström, and T. Shefer. London: Routledge.

Ozkazanc-Pan, Banu and Susan Clark Muntean. 2018. "Networking towards (In)equality: Women Entrepreneurs in Technology." *Gender, Work & Organization* 25(4):379-400.

Papageorgiou, Antigoni. 2023. "Exploring Everyday Experiences of Entrepreneurial Labour: Gender and Work in Collaborative Workspaces of Athens." *Gender, Place & Culture* 30(10):1351-1371.

Petrucci, Larissa. 2020. "Theorizing Postfeminist Communities: How Gender-Inclusive Meetups Address Gender Inequity in High-Tech Industries." *Gender, Work & Organization* 27(4):545-564.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. and Aliya Saperstein. 2024. "Diversifying Gender Categories and the Sex/Gender System." *Annual Review of Sociology* 50:385-405.

Risman, Barbara J. 2018. *Where the Millennials Will Take Us: A New Generation Wrestles with the Gender Structure*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Saura García, Carlos. 2024. "Datafeudalism: The Domination of Modern Societies by Big Tech Companies." *Philosophy & Technology* 37(3):90.

Savin, Ivan, Kristina Chukavina, and Andrey Pushkarev. 2023. "Topic-Based Classification and Identification of Global Trends for Startup Companies." *Small Business Economics* 60(2):659-689.

Scott, James. 2015. "Za kulisami oficjalnej wersji [Behind the Official Story]." Pp. 145-158 in *Opór i dominacja: antologia tekstów* [*Resistance and Domination: An Anthology of Texts*], edited by A. Pasieka and K. Zielińska. Cracow: Nomos.

Shih, Johanna. 2006. "Circumventing Discrimination: Gender and Ethnic Strategies in Silicon Valley." *Gender & Society* 20(2):177-206.

Søgaard, Thomas F. and Jakob Krause-Jensen. 2020. "Bouncer Service Work: Emotional Labour and Flexible Masculinity." *Journal of Organizational Ethnography* 9(1):30-43.

Startup Poland. 2019. *Raport Polskie Startupy 2019* [*Polish Startups Report 2019*]. Retrieved April 06, 2025 (https://startuppoland.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Startup-Poland-raport-Polskie-startupy-2019-PL-www-1.pdf).

Szczygieł, Dorota et al. 2009. "Praca emocjonalna w zawodach usługowych – pojęcie, przegląd teorii i badań [Emotional Labor in Service Roles—Conceptualization, Theories, and Research]." *Psychologia Społeczna* 3(11):155-166.

Tobiasiewicz, Edyta. 2022. "Mechanizmy stratyfikacji płciowej w strukturach organizacji start-upów technologicznych [Mechanisms of Gender Stratification in the Organizational Structures of Technology Startups]." *Przegląd Socjologiczny* 71(3):191-218.

Tripathi, Nirnaya and Markku Oivo. 2020. "The Roles of Incubators, Accelerators, Co-Working Spaces, Mentors, and Events in the Startup Development Process." Pp. 147-159 in *Fundamen-*

tals of Software Startups: Essential Engineering and Business Aspects, edited by Anh Nguyen-Duc et al. Switzerland: Springer.

Twine, France W. 2022. *Geek Girls: Inequality and Opportunity in Silicon Valley.* New York: New York University Press.

Ward, Jenna, Robert McMurray, and Scott Sutcliffe. 2020. "Working at the Edge: Emotional Labour in the Spectre of Violence." *Gender, Work & Organization* 27(1):82-97.

Wynn, Alison T. and Shelley J. Correll. 2018. "Combating Gender Bias in Modern Workplaces." Pp. 509-521 in *Handbook of the Sociology of Gender*, edited by B. J. Risman, C. M. Froyum, and W. J. Scarborough. Switzerland: Springer.

Young, Erin, Judy Wajcman, and Laila Sprejer. 2023. "Mind the Gender Gap: Inequalities in the Emergent Professions of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Science." *New Technology, Work and Employment* 38(3):391-414.

Citation