

Thesis Master Gender Studies  
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# Feminist theory approaching masculinist work-cultures

A Case Study of a Global Corporation in the Netherlands

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## Introduction

In this thesis I intend to explore how feminist theory can help understand traditionally masculinist organizations, and how it can help in creating more space for the feminine therein. Therefore the main aim of this thesis is to develop a theoretical framework that can be brought to an understanding and explanation of masculinist work-cultures, using a Dutch-based multinational corporation as a case study.<sup>1</sup> To develop the theoretical framework I am interested in bringing feminist sexual difference theory into dialogue with feminist organizational theory and organizational theory that takes a gendered approach, to develop a lens through which masculinist work-cultures can be analyzed, with the potential for interventions. I will test this theoretical framework through analyzing data from interviews I conducted at the case study organization. From this, I am interested to understand how the potential to generate awareness in work practices, through feminist theory, could lead to change. Thus the primary question guiding this thesis research is: How can feminist theory be incorporated into analyzing a masculinist corporation's work-culture and what interventions does it suggest?

In order to answer the research question I have three sub-questions, which also help to shape the thesis content and structure. The first chapter aims to answer the sub-question: How does feminist theory reflect on masculinist spaces and space for the feminine therein? Drawing from sexual difference theory, where the feminine is used as being a socially constructed image that is broadly applied to women, as well as using feminine values in a practical manner, per the model designed on the basis of Geert Hofstede's intercultural studies. I will explore the feminist debate surrounding sexual difference and the strategies for change the debate suggests. I have chosen this theory as I believe it has both good potential to approach and connect to organizational theory, and the potential to suggest interventions and strategies for change applicable to the workspace. Through a close reading of Luce Irigaray, as she is taken up by Elizabeth Grosz, I start at the beginning of the debate: a critique on the psychoanalytical division of the sexes of women and then move on to the implications for women and the feminine she has derived. After which I will look more closely at how Irigaray, and later Grosz and Rosi Braidotti who build on the same material, think the theory of sexual difference offers new insights and strategies that can transform spaces to bring the feminine into representation.

The sub-question for the second chapter is: How can feminist theory regarding masculinist spaces be combined with organizational theory concerning the feminine in work-cultures? I will first engage with the theory of the gender subtext as explained and brought up to date by Yvonne Benschop and Hans Doorewaard (2012, 225-235). As part of this theory they define work-culture as a process that pertains to symbols, images, rules and values that ex- and implicitly steer and justify gender distinctions in the organization (a definition I adopt throughout this thesis). Benschop, in cooperation with several colleagues, has evaluated the body of literature written so far, concerning gender and change, which is especially relevant given their recommendations for future work. Another relevant debate that I will approach in this chapter is that of critical diversity theory and the diversity management strategies that originate from it, in order to see what relevant strategies they might bring to

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<sup>1</sup> In consultation with the respective corporation it has been decided to keep the company anonymous throughout this thesis.

this thesis. The second chapter will end on an attempt to combine the theories discussed in the first and second chapter.

The second half of the thesis will focus mainly on the case study material, which chapters three and four serve to introduce and analyze. Chapter three focusses on how the data was obtained: the internship research project, its feminist methodology and the interviews that I have conducted. Chapter four presents, discusses and quantifies the data that I gathered through the interviews. Chapter five then aims to answer the third sub-question: How can the theoretical framework developed in this thesis be applied in an analysis of a case study presenting a masculinist corporation's work-culture and what does it reveal in the way of practices and potential interventions? In this chapter I will engage theory and data, to find if the theoretical framework of the first two chapters has the capacity to shed new light on the organization's work-culture and, as such, potential for intervention and sustainable change. From there I will reflect on some of the limitations of the research and make suggestions for future research.

## Chapter 1 – Feminist theory approaching the feminine

This chapter will focus on the first sub-question: How does feminist theory reflect on masculinist spaces and space for the feminine therein? I will work with the theories of Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz, who both build and reflect on the theory of sexual difference as presented by Luce Irigaray. I will look into the political strategies of sexual difference as it reveals masculinist cultural appropriation and reworks the relation between the masculine and the feminine as a way to generate different possibilities for a recognition and valuing of the feminine. Grosz offers an extended reading of Irigaray's theory of difference, which is why I will use her work as a basis for understanding Irigaray's theoretical contributions (Grosz 1989; Grosz 2005). In exploring Irigaray's work I will start with her critique on the psychoanalytical division of the sexes and then move on to the implications for women and the feminine she derived from this reading. I will then continue to look into Braidotti's work on sexual difference. After this discussion I hope to present a snapshot of those aspects of sexual difference theory that can be applied to organizational theory.

### The *Negative* Oedipus Complex and Masculine Appropriation

Irigaray is known as a French feminist philosopher who critically analyzed and built on the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. In her work Irigaray proposes a feminist project to challenge and deconstruct the cultural representations of femininity so that it may be capable of representation and recognition in its own self-defined terms (Grosz 1989, 101).<sup>2</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, who is seen as the inspiration for the second wave of feminism, saw the difference that women embody as unrepresented and concluded that woman as an un- and misrepresented entity must be brought into representation (Braidotti 2011, 152). Taking a different approach, Irigaray evaluates woman's otherness (to men) not merely as not yet represented, but as *unrepresentable* within the current scheme of representation (Braidotti 2011, 152). In her work on sexual difference she draws attention to Freud's and Lacan's notions of sexuality as masculine and their attribution of privilege to masculinity and its qualities:

Freud developed a model of human subjectivity that represents all variations of subjectivity only according to a singular (Western, capitalist, white, Eurocentric) male model that in Irigaray's reading institutes a phallic economy based on sameness, oneness or identity with the masculine subject (Grosz 1989, 105).

This quote illustrates that Irigaray is critical of Freud's presumptions and conclusions, as according to her they cast women into a secondary, dependent position by cultural necessity.

The 'male model' that Irigaray speaks of in the above quotation from Grosz is the main point of departure for the theory of sexual difference and is thus essential to this thesis, hence I will explore it further. The use of one model of subjectivity, the male, by which all others are positively or negatively defined is called phallocentrism (Grosz 1989, 105). As the term suggests, phallocentrism speaks to the centrality of the phallus: the sociocultural mandate and authority that is attributed to the masculine, and the male sex. Phallocentrism implicates that all other subjects are reduced to or defined only

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<sup>2</sup> The project of sexual difference must not be read as the anatomical difference between the sexes.

by the terms chosen by and appropriated for masculinity, or the masculine subject. According to Grosz's (1989) explanation of this term, phallogentrism has three distinct forms: whenever the sexes are perceived as identical<sup>3</sup>, as opposites<sup>4</sup> or as complements<sup>5</sup>. If taken together, these forms describe the historically varied positions that have been socially acknowledged for women and the feminine in patriarchal cultures. Thus Irigaray's claim is that women are only represented on models and schemes that are masculine, thereby both containing and negating the feminine. Her claim articulates the debt that the patriarchal symbolic order (including relations of economic, textual and representational production) owes to femininity and maternity as symbolic law is both paternal and phallic (Grosz 1989, 102, 107). She thereby opposes Freud's containment of women in men's self-reflecting representations, yet also acknowledges it as the requirement patriarchy poses for women.

This deconstruction takes us through Freud's Oedipal complex, which takes place in the Phallic stage of the little boy's psychosexual development and describes the son-father competition for psychosexual possession of the mother. Freud also developed the *negative* Oedipus complex, describing the psychosexual development of the little girl during the Phallic stage. Irigaray observes the phallogentric logic of sameness at work in Freud's understanding of this Oedipal development, which at the same time involves a sexual binary: Freud describes the little girl as a 'little man' whose libido is masculine and sexuality is phallic. The little girl is thus seen as identical to, or the same as, the little boy. Her phallic sameness must then transform into negation and binary opposition: she is confronted with her own 'castration', the 'lack' of the organ which empowers males (her 'lack' essentially creating and confirming his phallic position) and she must conform to the position of castrated passive object. When and if the girl reaches a resolution to the Oedipal complex, Freud suggests that she will develop several specifically 'feminine' characteristics.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, according to Irigaray, female sexuality is contained by masculine constraints, revealing the interests of a phallogentric system in upholding masculine privilege ('normally hidden under the claims of "neutrality"' (Grosz 1989, 116)) which lies submerged in these prevailing definitions of femininity (Grosz 1989, 114-116). What I think Irigaray is suggesting, in general terms, is that in current cultural and societal dynamics, sexual difference is bound by a hierarchical relationship that symbolically privileges the masculine over the feminine. The male body is constituted as virile and phallic, and

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<sup>3</sup> One term is taken as the norm against which the other is measured (Grosz 1989, 105).

<sup>4</sup> The theory of binary oppositions as defined by Nancy Jay in 1981 proposes 4 rules: 1) The two terms in a dichotomy are contradictory and thus mutually exclusive. 2) The two terms are mutually exhaustive – there is no third term, thus the two terms cover every situation and possibility (the logician's 'law of the excluded middle'). 3) Within the binary structure, only one term has positive value, the second term is defined as the negation of the first and is thus not recognised as possessing any characteristics or value of its own. 4) Although the first term is amenable to clear and precise formulation, the negative, secondary term becomes amorphous and includes everything other than the first term (Grosz 1989, 106).

<sup>5</sup> One term is taken as given, in need of completion or complementarity, while the other is regarded only insofar as it serves to satisfy this need (Grosz 1989, 105).

<sup>6</sup> Grosz explains: '... a recognition and acceptance of her castration; the substitution of the desire for the phallus with the desire for the mother; the transfer of sexual focus from the clitoris to the vagina; the acquisition of the skills of seduction and the traits of narcissism, masochism and exhibitionism – which mesh in apparently complementary harmony with the characteristics of masculinity' (Grosz 1989, 108). According to Freud, then, female sexuality is first clitoral, meaning active and phallic, but must move to being passive and vaginal. As Irigaray points out, both stages conform to the logic of and sameness, either as the opposite (clitoral) or the complement (vaginal) of male identity and sexuality (Grosz 1989, 114). Yet in a culture that tends to count and number everything, her sexual organs are not counted as one (vagina) or two (plus clitoris), but as none and being 'only the indispensable complement to the only sex': the penis. Her sex is the negative, the underside and the reverse of the only visible organ: she is the other sex that is not one (Irigaray 1985, 24-28).

the female body as passive and castrated, which is not the direct result of biology but of social constructions and projections. Irigaray sees these bodies not as anatomical parts but as 'bearers of meaning and social values, the product of social inscriptions, always inherently social' (Grosz 1989, 112). In Freud's understanding, women can only take a place in the post-oedipal symbolic order in two ways. As above-mentioned they can accept their castration and inferiority to men and accept a symbolic position through the mediation of men. The other interesting option that Freud offers is that women can identify with men, acting and speaking as if there was no difference, in which case they suffer from what Freud calls *the masculinity complex*: a negative resolution to the negative Oedipus complex. However, according to Irigaray a double negative does not a positive make, as both positions are phallogocentric (Grosz 1989, 127). The options presented by Freud – conform to, or imitate the masculine – keep women contained in a phallogocentric framework that privileges the masculine.

Building on the implications the phallogocentric model has for woman's sexuality and the way she is culturally appropriated and explained, it is useful to look deeper into the implications this has for woman's (discursive) representations. The male domination of the right to speak on behalf of the feminine was achieved by the capacity to obtain a certain distance from its object of analysis. It is able to "transcend its own male body", creating a space for reflection, in which it claims to be looking at itself and the feminine from "the outside". This "outsideness" is equated with objectivity (Grosz 1989, 128). In such a phallogocentric discursive framework, there is no space for the addition of femininity as to speak with the current language, which presents itself as universal, is in fact to speak as a masculine subject. Far from being neutral, this language in fact serves the cultural ideas of, and by, the masculine, and as such does not have the capacity to do justice to the feminine. Irigaray goes as far as asking whether that language is indeed 'what maintains the alienation and exploitation of women in and by society?' (Irigaray quoted in Grosz 1989, 127). Projecting this theory onto masculinist work-spaces implies that women are contained and forced to operate within a masculine framework, formed by masculine language, while being represented through masculine interests. Thus, whilst being invited to operate within this masculinist framework, which has codified and inscribed certain behavior as appropriate for work-spaces, a stand-up performance or imitation of this behavior is not interpreted as having the same meaning, because in this framework the feminine represents the opposite to the masculine.

According to Irigaray, if women want to overcome their restrictive containment in "objective" patriarchal representations, a major reorganization of conceptual, linguistic and value systems is required. As she suggests:

When women want to escape from exploitation, they do not simply destroy a few 'prejudices': they upset the whole set of dominant values – economic, social, moral, sexual. They challenge every theory, every thought, every existing language in that these are monopolized by men only. They question the very foundation of our social and cultural order, the organization of which has been prescribed by a patriarchal system. (Irigaray quoted in Grosz 1989, 126).

Irigaray is thus making the more general proposition that to recognize feminine specificity requires the recognition and development of other kinds of discourse, new methods for language and acquiring knowledge, different forms of evaluation and different ways of knowing (Grosz 1989, 126-127). For

this, it is necessary to speak with a multiplicity of meanings that upsets the current language's phallogocentric meanings, formalizations and truth functions for otherwise 'we shall fall back on the words of men – who for their part, have "known" for a long time' (Irigaray as quoted by Grosz 1989, 128). If women are defined by masculine interests, given no place of active, self-defined subjects and no language to speak their own specificity, then how is change possible?' asks Grosz (1989, 132).

To reconceive of women and femininity as independent of men and masculinity, women must first become familiar with the patriarchal discourses, knowledges and social practices that define and confine them. Counter-intuitively, 'it is only through its own tools that patriarchy can be challenged and displaced' (Grosz 1989, 133). Thus, rather than thinking outside of the box to realize change, as one might expect, this quotation of Irigaray suggests that the potential for sustainable change should be sought *within* the space of a phallogocentric representative order, or masculinist culture, rather than necessarily coming from outside of it. In terms of the context I am exploring in this research specifically – masculinist work-cultures – this implies that women do have to accept the invitation into the masculine work-space.

Patriarchy does not prevent women from speaking but it refuses to listen when women do not speak "universal": as men (Grosz 1989, 127). Furthermore, as I noted before, when they do speak and behave the same way, the same meaning is not applied to their behavior or words. Therefore women must use the language of prevailing discourses against their own explicit pronouncements and claims (Grosz 1989, 114). Irigaray's strategy is to seek out the blind spots which most often occur when phallogocentric discourses try to answer to the question of femininity, female sexuality and the maternal function, to make explicit what has been excluded or left out by phallogocentric images (Grosz 1989, 110). Instead of opposing or rejecting phallogocentrism, Irigaray wants to put it on trial: to continually question it and thereby destroy its apparently naturalistic self-evidence and demonstrate the possibility of alternatives (Grosz 1989, 113). It involves speaking from a position in between the binaries (taking the position of the excluded middle), 'affirming both poles while undoing polarization' (Grosz 1989, 132). In a nutshell, then, as Grosz describes it, 'Irigaray's strategy is not to use the rules to win (the game is in any case rigged) but to disrupt the old game in order to initiate new ones' (Grosz 1989, 139). Even though the game is rigged (women can join the masculine work-space but are not understood the same way – even as they speak the 'universal' (masculine) language –, nor does their (masculine) behavior have the same meaning), Irigaray still sees the possibility for change. By identifying and exposing the points where the game is rigged, the old game is disrupted and new rules can be created that allow newly claimed space for the feminine or subjects that are different to the norm, within the masculine work-space.

## Sexual Difference as Ontological Difference

In her article *The Force of Sexual Difference* (2005), Grosz builds upon Irigaray's argument. Evaluating the potential of sexual difference as an ontological force, she points out the need for new ways of knowing. That is, to come to different ontologies requires a transformation in our conceptions of epistemologies, of how we know. She emphasizes that phallogocentrism is not so much the *refusal* of an identity of women, as there seems to be a proliferation of identities, such as wife, mother, teacher,

nun, secretary, whore etc., but rather the *containment* of that identity by other definitions and identities. It suggests the project that Irigaray started must challenge the current conceptual systems as they refuse to acknowledge their own limitations and interests. Grosz affirms that a feminist future cannot be obtained by striving for sameness with men; to have the same rights as men or the same access to their conceptual frameworks or value systems. The idea of sexual *difference* entails the existence of at least two points of view, two sets of interests and perspectives, two types of ideals and two modes of knowledge (Grosz 2005, 174-176). An approach of *difference* implies that the habit of containing women (even and especially when she transcends or confounds them) to a “known” set of identities appropriated for her by the masculine, must be broken. The phallogentric order, in the case of this thesis being a masculine work-space, must allow her to choose and represent her own identity. This implies that the dominant masculine order must accept and make space for her self-appropriation, allowing for a different point of view, a different set of interests, perspectives, ideals, knowledges, and accepting that these are gained by different means as they are gained by a different subject (instead of a non-subject). In other words, it must create space for the feminine.

Similar to Grosz’s negotiation with the subject of identity, Braidotti agrees that the goal for the project of sexual difference is to find a ‘definition of woman as other-than a non-man’ (Braidotti 1989, 91). Braidotti writes that the project of sexual difference should be read as emphasizing the political importance of desire, which plays a big role in the constitution of the subject. Just as sexual difference cannot be read as the difference between the sexes in purely anatomical terms, desire cannot be read as libidinal desire, calling to the restricted notion of sex drive. Rather, it should be read as ontological desire: ‘the desire to be, the tendency of the subject to be, the predisposition of the subject toward being’ (Braidotti 1993, 6). Feminist theory expresses this ontological desire to become female subjects, not as disembodied (universal) entities, but rather as corporeal and consequently sexed beings. According to Braidotti the redefinition of the female subject therefore starts with the reevaluation of the bodily roots of subjectivity. Thereby she rejects the phallogentric vision of the knowing subject as universal, neutral, “outside” the body and consequently gender-free. By laying emphasis on embodiment, emphasis is laid on the sexually differentiated structure of the speaking subject (Braidotti 1993, 6-8). Braidotti thus identifies that the difference of woman as a new speaking subject lies in her embodiment, which she was denied in phallogentric systems.

In answer to the question of where change begins, Braidotti agrees with Irigaray that feminists should return to the blind spots in the homologation – the self-evident naturalizing manner – of phallogentrism: ‘My answer is that the new is created by revisiting and burning the old’ (Braidotti 1993, 9). According to Braidotti, in the search for adequate representations for women, feminists should start by deconstructing the image of Woman. The concept and image of Woman, that Braidotti draws upon here, is used by Teresa De Lauretis as she argues that all women are also implicated in the confrontation with a certain image of Woman that is the culturally dominant model for female identity.<sup>7</sup> For Braidotti, the signifiers Woman and the feminine are metaphors for crisis with rational and masculine values (non-man/non-masculine). Therefore the precondition to gaining subjectivity as a woman and feminist is the recognition of a distance between Woman and real women, of representa-

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<sup>7</sup> From here on out I shall refer to the problem with female identities as specified by Irigaray, Braidotti and De Lauretis, with the concept of Woman.

tion (Woman as cultural imago) and experience (real women as agents of change) (Braidotti 1993, 8-9).

Braidotti suggests that the consensus point needs to be cleared that 'being a woman is always already there as the ontological pre-condition for my existential becoming as a subject' (Braidotti 1989, 102). As Braidotti points out, this isn't just about women as all subjects must become embodied: 'The same could and indeed should be said about being-a-man, but the male subject has historically chosen to conjugate his being in the universalistic logocentric mode' (Braidotti 1989, 101-102). This point Braidotti makes of recognizing embodied difference is an intervention in itself as it forces us to recognize and revalue sexual difference. By emphasizing embodied difference we question the phallogocentric norm of the universalistic, self-evident and justifying distance phallogocentrism has created between body and mind, and recognize different subjectivities. According to Braidotti the 'conscious political realization' of women's presence in a system that has not underwritten what or who they are, should not be seen as a defeat or a difficulty. It could pave the way for a new political project to affirm the positivity of the difference that women embody: the positivity of sexual difference (Braidotti 1989, 104). Like Irigaray, Braidotti recognizes that the game is rigged: masculine work-spaces have not underwritten what or who women are within that space, apart from her being a Woman.

## Considerations.

In exploring the work of Irigaray, Grosz and Braidotti we start to derive a response to the first subquestion of this thesis: How does feminist theory reflect on masculinist spaces and space for the feminine therein? An approach of sexual differences reveals that all space is appropriated by the masculine and the position of the feminine within masculine space is as its other or as non-man. Woman has no space as a subject in patriarchal phallogocentric cultures that favor a transcendental objectivity that denies any other sex than the phallic one. According to the psychoanalytical schema, as Irigaray demonstrates for us, femininity is only developed when woman accepts her subordinate position to men as negative, opposite or complement.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from answering the research question concerning space for the feminine, sexual difference theory offers strategies for change. Irigaray, Grosz and Braidotti oppose the containment of women in men's self-reflecting representations and call for a representation of women in their own self-defined terms. To effect change, we must start with deconstructing the phallogocentric patriarchal system that presents itself as natural truth. This will lay bare *blind spots* which can provide starting points for new and other kinds of discourses. It suggests that, women should not strive for *sameness* with men or to have the same rights as men or the same access to their conceptual frameworks or value systems. They should affirm their difference and become subjects in their own right, thereby emphasizing the positivity of the sexually differentiated structure and embodiment of the speaking subject. Women are already inside the masculine work-culture, but as these theories highlight, that does not mean that there is space for the feminine therein. By disrupting the norm from *within* these work-spaces, however, space can be created for a different valuing of sexual difference and thus the feminine. The goal of the next chapter is to connect these theories to an organizational context.

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<sup>8</sup> If she does not she shall suffer from the masculinity complex (Grosz 1989, 127).

## Chapter 2 – Organizational Theory Meets Feminist Theory

In this chapter I will answer the second sub-question: How can feminist sexual difference theory be combined with feminist organizational theory to find a place for the feminine in masculine work-cultures? I will first give an extensive reading of (feminist) organizational theory and critical diversity theory. Based on articles by Benschop and Doorewaard I will start with an account of the gender subtext as a workable feminist concept for understanding gender inequality in organizations. I will then move towards a reading of critical diversity management up to the present and the meaning of diversity for organizations. I will also examine femininity and masculinity in the workplace as it has been theorized by Hofstede. At the end of this chapter I will combine the feminist theoretical framework of sexual difference and the organizational concept of the gender subtext into one theoretical framework that can be applied to the analysis of data from my case study, and provides strategies for change.

### The Gender Subtext

In analyzing the conditions that lead to gender inequality in organizations, feminist theorists have developed the concepts of *gender subtext* and *gender mainstreaming*.<sup>9</sup> The latter has been evaluated by Yvonne Benschop and Mieke Verloo as being an approach that is capable of introducing change into workplaces, but it is not capable of breaking down the genderedness of organizations substantially (2006, 19). According to these authors, even though it does invoke an image of equal parties pursuing a dual agenda of business needs and feminist goals, their analysis determined that results are dependent on crucial power differences (Benschop and Verloo 2006, 19), which are not accounted for in the gender mainstreaming theory. Therefore I have chosen to use the concept of *gender subtext* rather than *gender mainstreaming*, as the former does take power relations into account.

The concept of gender subtext has been built on the work of Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977), first introduced by Dorothy Smith (1987, 1989, 1990) and further elaborated by Joan Acker (1990, 1992). Kanter first investigated gender inequality in organizations and her study demonstrated the influence of structural conditions such as opportunities, structural power and proportional distribution on the unequal chances for men and women in organizations (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012, 226). Through organizational ethnography, Kanter showed how gendered roles, relative numbers, network structures and sex-specific reward systems kept women in subordinate professional positions (Benschop et. al. 2010, 10). Later studies emphasized other, less visible underlying processes of gender inequality, which led Smith to introduce the concept of *gender subtext* in order to try and understand these processes. Acker then built upon the insights of both Smith and Kanter in her theory of gendered organizations, of which two elements are especially important (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012, 226):

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<sup>9</sup> 'Gender mainstreaming is a gender equality strategy that aims to transform organizational processes and practices by eliminating gender biases in existing routines, involving the regular actors in this transformation process' (Benschop and Verloo 2006, 19). In their 2006 article Benschop and Verloo evaluate gender mainstreaming and conclude that it does not breach the genderedness of organizations, precisely because it involves the inclusion of regular actors. 'Our case suggests that the necessity for compromise with existing attitudes hinders its transformative potential' (Benschop and Verloo 2006, 31). '...invoking an image of cooperation between equal parties pursuing a dual agenda of business needs and feminist goals, we have seen how the crucial power differences between the parties determine the outcome' (Benschop and Verloo 2006, 31).

... the first one pertains to gendered processes, the concrete activities, what people do say and think (Acker 1992, 251). The notion of the disembodied worker, who is presented as a neutral abstraction but fits the situation of men workers better than the situation of women workers, constitutes the second element (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012, 227).

The first process discerns behavior (performance), saying (communication) and thinking (internal feeling) as separate processes that are gendered and may not align. To illustrate, the masculine values may not be internally felt, yet be performed through behavior and communication. The sexual difference theorists have pointed out that this doesn't recognize their difference in ontological terms – not allowing them to be different subjects in this space – as masculine behavior performed by a woman will not be recognized as equal to men and will generally be misunderstood.

Benschop and Doorewaard have built on the concept of gender subtext and the theory of gendered organizations, focusing on the organizational and individual processes constituting gender inequality, the notion of the abstract "ideal" worker and the power basis that is captured in the idea of gender subtext. Where Acker has demonstrated that structural arrangements such as career planning, hierarchical positions and allocation of personnel reproduce gender segregation (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012, 227), Benschop has continued to build on this by adding that the ways in which jobs are composed and tasks and work processes are coordinated appear to be gendered as well (Benschop 1996). To explain these processes more coherently Acker identified four categories of inter-related processes that produce and reproduce a gender subtext: structure, culture, interaction and identity processes. The gendered processes demonstrated by Acker and Benschop are processes of *structure* – career planning, hierarchical positions, allocation of personnel, job composition and process coordination –. Organizational *culture* pertains to symbols, images, rules and values that ex- and implicitly steer and justify gender distinctions in the organization (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012, 227). Gendered processes of social *interactions* focus on the role orientation of men and women (task or social-emotional oriented) and the characteristics of unspecified or specified status. The fourth gendered process is that of *identity*, which implies that people are identified and identify themselves as men and women.<sup>10</sup> As Benschop and Doorewaard explain it, 'to identify means to accept and reproduce not only the physical and biological distinction between men and women, but also the implicit and explicit rules and norms connected with the assessment of masculinity and femininity in all its distinct forms' (2012, 227). These four categories were identified to make genderedness of organizational processes explicit and I propose to take them as a starting point when assessing the genderedness of organizations.

The second element of the gender subtext, the 'ideal worker', is also useful in measuring the genderedness of organizations. Benschop and Doorewaard have taken up this notion in the terms that I have touched upon briefly above but will now explain in more detail through their reading of Acker. In examining the rules and codes that prescribe workplace behavior and the relation between work and private life, Acker identifies that these rules are often based on the abstraction of the disembodied worker; an "ideal" worker who has neither body nor gender. Implicitly however, and in a claim that

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<sup>10</sup> There can be confusion in reading the section on gendered 'identity' processes that proves to be problematic. Therefore I suggest they are read as gendered 'identification' processes as the authors refer to: processes of gendered identification of the self as man or woman, masculine or feminine; and processes of gendered identification by others of the subject being man or woman, masculine or feminine.

corresponds with Irigaray's suggestions regarding the 'universal' subject, the characteristics of this image of the "ideal" worker correspond rather to the assumed characteristics of men workers than to those of women workers in day-to-day reality (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012, 227). The abstract ideal worker creates an (underlying) expectation for employees of how they should perform, behave and communicate in order to be successful. And although this ideal worker is presented as gender-neutral, thus disembodied, it is actually a masculine subject/worker, which leaves 'the feminine' incapable of living up to its standards. As I mentioned before, this masculine coded 'gender-neutral' ideal does not recognize women's embodied subjectivity, as masculine behavior performed by a woman will not be recognized or valued as equal to men, leaving her no room to be evaluated as being successful. Thus, we can say that the game is rigged.

Next to considering the above gendered processes and notion of the "ideal" worker, Benschop and Doorewaard (1998) have paid explicit attention to power, which constitutes the gender subtext (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012, 227). They specify that apart from paying attention to manifest and latent power (violence, authority or manipulation), attention must be paid to hegemonic power processes in work place practices: 'Hegemonic regulation points at the power of self-evidence, expressing the relevance of combinations between implicit rules and regulations and generally known customs and conventions' (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012, 228). Thus, apart from situations where power is asserted directly through authority (hierarchy), they suggest that there is a more subtle and indirect form of power at work. This power, constituted by the gendered processes of organizational culture (to reiterate; implicit symbols, images, rules and values), inspires the customs and conventions of those work spaces. Anything not fitting or different to these customs or conventions will be perceived as unconformable or in disagreement with the norm. This aspect of power is crucial to understand gender relations in organizations as:

... hegemonic gender regulations refers to concealed processes of meaning and identity formation that encourage consent with the dominant organizational discourses and the acceptance of organizational practices, despite the possible disadvantages of these practices for those involved (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012, 228).

The hegemonic power process inspires conformity with the dominant organizational culture and the discourses that confirm it. According to Benschop and Doorewaard, hegemonic power demands conformity with the 'ideal worker' and organizational practices, leaving no room for individuality, authenticity, difference or the 'other': essentially presenting a problem for change. As the authors explain, hegemonic power inspires a tendency to depreciate anything 'other' and is therefore a large obstacle to creating more space for the feminine.

The combination of gendered processes (1), the abstractness and neutrality of the "ideal" worker (2), and the workings of hegemonic power (3) can show how gender bias is present in the day-to-day organizational practice. Furthermore, the gender subtext helps to explain how persistent gendered practices of gender inequality are reproduced even though an organization may have a dominant perception and message of gender equality, which it continually stresses. The gendering done under the gender subtext pertains to the way people deal with the 'gender-equality-that-can-not-be: they prefer agreeable interpretations of relations between women and men that firmly stress equality,

covering unappealing accounts of inequality' (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012, 228). But with this preference lies the danger of simply adding a discourse of equality to the hegemonic discourse, thereby 'dissolving' the *differences*. Sexual difference theory, on the other hand, stresses the positivity and importance of differences as these provide sites where gendered relations can be uncovered, reevaluating them and rethinking the role of the feminine in them. A discourse of equality, that does not recognize gendered and other differences, is therefore not effective in prompting masculinist work cultures to create space for the feminine. Instead, sexual difference theory presents a discourse that stresses the positivity of difference as having potential for intervention and change.

In their 2012 article, Benschop and Doorewaard reconsider their earlier definitions of the concept of gender subtext, updating it to include three new insights that have come about since then: intersectionality, the disappearance of the layered process, and the persistency of power, of which two are relevant to this thesis. In the decade and a half since their 1998 articles, the concept of *intersectionality* has been on the rise in feminist theory in all different areas (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012, 228-230). Intersectional analysis foregrounds the mutually co-constitutive forces of race, class, sex, gender and nation (Puar 2012, 49). The point that this approach makes is that these categories cannot be isolated to take an exclusive look at only one category, as they all relate to, and influence, each other. Therefore, though the gender subtext retains its name in their article, Benschop and Doorewaard stress that it should no longer be considered to be about gender only, as it cannot be separated from its relation to other factors of identity such as nationality, race, ethnicity and class. Another realization of the authors is that new insights into organizational gender theory no longer focus on the interrelated processes of structure, culture, interaction and identity, but rather separate these, focusing on culture and interaction only. Therefore just like with intersectionality they call for interrelatedness, or, in this case, a return to it, thus to revisit the probes of structure (gendered practices) and identity (the practice of gender) (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012, 228-230). Benschop and Doorewaard conclude that the concept of gender subtext is still useful as long as it is complemented by the new insights of intersectionality and the reiteration of the layered structural, cultural, interaction and identity processes (Benschop and Doorewaard 2012, 233).<sup>11</sup> Considering the aim of this research, the gender subtext opens the scope for understanding work-spaces and how they (re-)produce gender inequality.

The next question in my analysis of the gender subtext is whether the theorizing of gender and change in organizations so far has led to tangible results. In an article written in cooperation with Jean Helms Mills, Albert Mills and Janne Tienari, Benschop poses the question of how to proceed with gendering change. In the article they comment on the growing body of literature and theory on gender and change, but observe that relatively little is known about how to ensure sustainable change. From the authors' reflection I can discern that no attempts were made to translate the theories of sexual difference and the gender subtext into action, or have been thought of in combination thus far. The main conclusion of the authors' reflection is that even though the most obvious gender discrimination is tackled, the more subtle forms 'too often remain a taken-for-granted, naturalized and often subtle and unintentional element of everyday life in organizations' (Benschop et. al. 2012, 2). The gender subtext is an approach that allows us to reveal the 'naturalized' subtle forms of gender discrimination,

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<sup>11</sup> Referring again to the four gendered processes that Benschop and Doorewaard engage.

that sexual difference theory points to. Through the gender subtext, the ‘naturalized’ blind spots can be brought to the surface, that sexual difference theory presents as tangible sites for change.

The issue of how to effect change is at the forefront of Benschop’s analysis. Benschop and her colleagues see the necessity of a reevaluation of the hierarchical order in organizations so that the contributions of women or, in other terms, how we might understand the feminine, are valued and no longer seen as inferior to the masculine in workplace contexts. The aim to change gender as a structure, thus changing everyday organizational routines and interactions so that they no longer automatically (re)produce gender inequalities, is what they see as the most transformative approach. They further comment on the *paradox* of change by which they mean that through the process of change, similar to what sexual difference theory suggests and attempts to do, old stigmas and sites of inequality will be laid bare, such that they can then be subjected to change. They say:

Olsson and Walker (2004) conceptualize female identity as inherently paradoxical in ‘a world of corporate masculinity’ and show how women executives’ identity work ‘involves shifting rational, and frequently contradictory discursive constructions’ (Benschop et. al. 2012, 4).

In their conclusions of what the next step in *engendering* change should involve, they express that they are encouraged to develop strategies of reading feminist research ‘not just for its critique, or theoretical insights but also for its implied strategies of change’ (Benschop et. al. 2012, 7). In agreement, I hope that a combination of the strategies for change implied by sexual difference theory and the analytical potential of the gender subtext can move the debate forward and can help find modes for change.

## Critical Diversity Theory and Diversity Management

Discourses of equality have gained ground in workplace contexts and as a result organizations have developed strategies for managing diversity, or *differences*. The term diversity in organizational theory is usually traced back to the mid-1980s, when demographic projections in the U.S. showed that by the new millennium the workforce would become more heterogeneous. The notion of diversity revolutionized the understanding of differences in organizations, as for the first time in history they started to be portrayed as strategic assets, which, if well managed, could provide a competitive advantage. Critical diversity theory has developed on the grounds of three fundamental points of critique. The first point of critique being that in diversity theories identities are conceptualized as ready-made, fixed, clear-cut categories (Benschop et. al. 2010, 12-14), for easier measurability and comprehension. In sexual difference terms this is not a move away from universal (phallogocentric) representations of identities for women, as Grosz suggests. Furthermore this approach has been criticized for taking the white, heterosexual, western, middle/upper class, abled man as the term of reference, and measuring other groups’ difference from this norm, which needs a deeper reflection.

The approach of critical diversity does take difference as a priority, as is called for by sexual difference theory. However, in this approach the white male subject is prioritized as a reference point, meaning that, if we take the approach of sexual difference theory, ‘different’ identities are appropriated to a space in which their only option is to be other or complement to the white male subject. This

also resembles an important point made through the theory of the gender subtext: what it suggests about the disembodied 'ideal' worker. If we recall, the 'ideal' worker, presented as neutral and achievable for every worker, is rigged, however, in favour of the male white subject. This approach therefore creates no space for the feminine, due to the unachievability of the 'ideal' worker and the limitation of being other or complement to men.

The second point of critique is that diversity theory was diagnosed as having the tendency to downplay the role of organizational and societal contexts in shaping the meaning of diversity (Benschop et. al. 2010, 12-14). As sexual difference theory affirms, the naturalization and universalism of phallogentrism downplays any other processes that may affect them. Through the gender subtext it is demonstrated that the organizational context itself (re)produces gender roles and inequalities. In fact, and as we have seen, the gender subtext identifies four different sets of gendered processes that are inscribed within the organization. If critical diversity theory doesn't look at how these organizational processes may (re-)produce gender inequality it risks naturalization the norm again instead of finding strategies for change. The third point of critique was that diversity theory did not, or did so inadequately, theorize power (Benschop et. al. 2010, 12-14); a concept that Benschop and Doorewaard have focused attention on.

In their article, *Unpacking Diversity, Grasping Inequality: Rethinking Difference Through Critical Perspectives*, Benschop and her colleagues have predicted the road ahead for projects of diversity research. They offer five promising directions for this approach, of which several are relevant to this research. First, they call for more empirical investigations of diversity in organizational settings, as:

Organizational actors do not simply take over existing grand, hegemonic discourses of diversity but rather selectively appropriate them, and re-combine them with other available discourses to make sense of diversity, their organization and their work, and to construct an own professional identity (Benschop et. al. 2010, 17).

Also they call for more insight into how diversity is made sense of and experienced by a diverse workforce itself, rather than by (top) managers and policy makers. Finally, they call for theories of positive construction, as organizational gender theories as well as feminist approaches in general have a tendency to stop at deconstructing and diagnosing what is wrong, without striving towards strategies of change or actual change. The authors' emphasis falls on the need for research to now focus on developing strategies and interventions in order to move towards the future instead of only analyzing the present (Benschop et. al. 2010, 17-19).

In a 2001 investigation of diversity management in two separate case study organizations, Benschop evaluates the effects and results of two different strategies for diversity management with the intention to discover ways of moving forward for change.<sup>12</sup> From both case studies Benschop was

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<sup>12</sup> She used Milliken's and Martins' meta-study of thirty-four empirical studies on diversity, which distinguishes four effects that have an impact on the long-term outcomes and performance of diverse groups, labelled as: cognitive effects, affective effects, communicative effects and symbolic effects (Benschop 2001, 1168-1170). The cognitive effects refer to the ability of a group to process information, perceive and interpret stimuli, and make decisions. A synergy may occur when people with different world-views and experiences are able to share ideas and perspectives that inspire new solutions to problems. The affective effects refer to the social performance of groups and organizations, and refer to the engagement of organization members with their work, colleagues and the organization. (See next page)

able to conclude that an organization's strategies for managing diversity influence the process of meaning formation regarding diversity. The case study organizations had a different approach to managing diversity, which she distinguishes as being a traditional and a more advanced interpretation of diversity management. The traditional interpretation of diversity is one that operates in narrow categorical terms of women and ethnic minorities. This is a limited and rather negative perspective, according to Benschop, as it allowed prejudice to continue to flourish under the surface, creating a 'diversity-that-cannot-be. The taboo constituted by 'pride and prejudice' on signifying diversity prevents the perception of the performance effects of diversity' (Benschop 2001, 1179). In essence this is a live example of the first point of critique on diversity theory: acknowledging 'different' categories does not create space for change, as it in fact has a limiting effect for the 'different' categories. In the other case study, organization diversity was taken as a starting point perspective for HR management. Here Benschop found that the availability of an organizational vocabulary and instruments to interpret those interactions in terms of diversity makes a crucial difference:

Active management of diverse human resources has merits in the sense that this strategy can make underlying processes of meaning formation more explicit, address prejudice and allow for the valuation and learning of cultural differences, so that the detrimental effects of diversity can be dealt with and so that the potential benefits of diversity can eventually be realized (Benschop 2001, 1179).

In the conclusions of her investigation of diversity management the latter strategy has preference. The traditional HR management models foster workforce homogenization and similarity (to the reference category), which then hinders the organization's ability to respond to changes (Benschop 2001, 1168). The more advanced approach is capable of change, as it moves beyond categorisation of the workforce towards the processes that give meaning to the diversity of that workforce. In other words, it has the potential to tackle the gender subtext – the underlying gender bias –, and moves away from dealing with categories – measuring numbers on the basis of similarity –. In line with Irigaray, who calls for rethinking the cultural (phallogocentric) language that contains and dictates women's identities and representations, it engages with the contextualization of what diversity means. Sexual difference theory can thus add to critical diversity theory, after moving away from categorisation towards contextualization, by rethinking diversity, stressing the positivity of difference and moving towards a different valuing of the feminine and different subjectivities, than the norm.

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<sup>12</sup> (Continuation) Because of *homophily* (processes by which male managers select other male managers in ways that reproduce an all-male managerial elite) group members can feel less sense of belonging to a diverse group. However these negative effects will diminish over time. The symbolic effects stand for the symbolic meaning and composition the group can have for internal and external stakeholders. Symbolic effects of diversity include a better public image, more legitimacy, better access to different groups of customers and even a possible increase in sales to members of minority culture groups. The composition of the workforce, especially in managerial rankings, also carries a symbolic message inside the organization. (Benschop 2001, 1168-1170)

## Masculinity and Femininity in the Workplace

Within gender studies, masculinities as a field of research is gaining ground and has facilitated new ways of understanding workplace relations. Before, studies focused on showing how most organizations 'are saturated with masculine values': critically analyzing the continued centrality of masculine models of lifetime, full-time continuous employment and revealing the embeddedness of masculine values and assumptions in organizational structures, cultures and practices (Collinson and Hearn 2004, §2). Now, within the debates surrounding masculinities, an important distinction is made between hegemonic, complicit, and subordinated masculinities, a distinction that was first introduced by Raewyn Connell (1995). The distinction argues that some masculinities (for example: white, middle-class, middle-aged, heterosexual/homophobic, Anglo-Saxon, able-bodied) often dominate others (for example: gay or working class):

The former masculinities tend to predominate, at least at the level of ideology, in powerful organizational positions such as middle and senior management, while other masculinities (for example: black, working class and homosexual) are relatively subordinated (Collinson and Heard 2004, §2).

Thus the study of masculinities reveals there are power relations between men and men, apart from men and women. Adding the theory of hegemonic masculinities to the hierarchical mix, the feminine is rendered invisible as it is overshadowed by the power struggles between the masculinities. Bringing in the gender subtext, masculinity studies underline that indeed masculinities may often shape managerial practices but certain managerial practices may also affect the emergence and reproduction of specific masculinities. This brings attention to the type of masculinity privileges in these spaces and also reduces the potential for the feminine to be valued in an organizational context even further.

As we've read during the exploration of critical diversity theory, the social context that inscribes femininity and masculinity cannot be naturalized. Professor Emeritus Geert Hofstede, as an (organizational) sociologist, asks questions of how cultures and societies shape the ideas of femininity and masculinity, whilst focusing on the topic of intercultural studies. He created a culture model to help assess and deal with differences in thinking, acting and feeling of people with different cultural backgrounds (Hofstede et. al. 2010, xi-xiv). The model contained six dimensions, of which the third, masculinity, discusses men and women's social roles and how the consideration of certain behaviors as masculine or feminine differs among societies in a cultural diversity context, also looking at the effect this may have on organizational cultures. Hofstede has been critiqued on the basis that the masculinity dimension should in fact be two dimensions - that the theory should include a femininity dimension. He agrees but makes a distinction on the level of analysis: the comparison of societies in their entirety or the comparison of individuals in those societies, as an individual can be both masculine and feminine but a country is always predominantly one or the other (Hofstede et. al. 2010, 146-147).

In his model, organizations in what he terms masculine societies stress results and try to reward achievement on the basis of equity – according to performance. Organizations in what he calls feminine societies are more likely to reward people on the basis of equality (as opposed to equity) –

according to need (Hofstede et. al. 2010, 167).<sup>13</sup> He employs the notion of socialization, ascribing qualities of competition and visibility ('boasting') to masculine societies, whereas feminine societies are ascribed the qualities of modesty and solidarity (Hofstede et. al. 2010, 168). Thus for Hofstede, this is not about men and women, but about the values that shape decisions of men and women. His model also further explores the concept of management within organizations, which has popularly been broken down in terms of gender.<sup>14</sup> I have used Hofstede's chapter *He, She and (S)he* (2010, 135-186) to adopt a selection of values ascribed as the masculine or result-oriented and values ascribed as the feminine or people-oriented, within an organizational context. Therefore his model forms a part of the tools through which I am going to be evaluating the organization's work-culture. The previously discussed equity versus equality, and competition and visibility versus modesty and solidarity are also taken up in my selection, which I will explain further in chapter three.

## Combining Theory

Benschop and her colleagues offer recommendations that are relevant to my research, as they call for more organizational case studies that focus on the entire workforce, instead of managers, in the area of critical diversity theory. They emphasize the importance of the gendered process of identity again, which requires gendered behavior from employees. They also suggest that we should not rest at only deconstructing current issues regarding gendered work practices, but instead offer positive constructions of strategies and interventions to transform these. In a reflection upon feminist organizational theory Benschop also calls for strategic feminist research because of its ability to deconstruct gendered work-cultures but also for the strategies of change feminist theory might offer. Hofstede's culture model adds to this as it draws attention to a country's culture and society in a particular location, and their effect upon organizations

Thus, I argue that a combination of theories of sexual difference and the feminist organizational framework of the gender subtext can lead to possibilities for new interventions as they can complement and strengthen each other. The frameworks both touch upon the subject of femininity, or the feminine, but I believe that reading them together can give new meaning, emphasis and direction towards organizational change. Sexual difference theory stresses how all spaces, and woman's position and space for the feminine therein, are appropriated by the masculine. This implies that workspaces are structured for and by the masculine, which reproduces underlying gendered processes that keep appropriating women to masculinist frameworks and processes in which the feminine isn't valued. Taking this as a starting point, the gender subtext provides us with a more broad-ranging explanation for gender inequalities in the workplace, instead of relating it to traditional gender roles as the organizational gender theory tends to do. Together these theories show how a masculinism is at work within

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<sup>13</sup> The difference here is that the masculine version does not necessitate the same valuation based on the same results, meaning that through visibility ('boasting') a higher performance valuation can be obtained over a colleague who did not improve his/her visibility. Whereas in the feminine version, the same results should lead to the same valuation.

<sup>14</sup> He starts with the history and etymology of the word management. Management is historically an Anglo-Saxon, Western concept derived from the Latin word *manus*, or "hand" and thus meaning "handling" in most Western languages. In French, however, the Latin root is used in two derivations: *manège* (place where horses are drilled), and *ménage* (household), the first being the masculine side of management as it pertains to performance (results) and the second being the feminine side, as it pertains to need (people) (Hofstede et. al. 2010, 166).

work-cultures as all point to the existence of, and the difficulty of locating, these subtle gender inequalities at work under the surface.

The implications of the gender subtext give an idea of, and a direction to how organizations can address and change gender inequality. Like some aspects of the feminist organizational theory discussed in this chapter, sexual difference theory stresses that sameness with men and having the same rights will not do justice to the specificity of the feminine, that is, those will not help women escape the masculine domain. This is stressed by Braidotti:

Recent socio-economic developments in the status of women in western, post-industrial societies have in fact shown that female emancipation can easily turn into a one-way street into a man's world (Braidotti 1989, 91).

This implies that merely inviting women into traditionally masculine organizations will not bring equality, for women will still only be a part of a masculine context. Furthermore, through Benschop's case study research we have found that a discourse of equality itself has a problematic agenda. Through its goal of sameness, it does not address the valuation of different subjects. The traditional version of diversity management seeks to categorize and number, but does not look at the language of diversity and differences or the language of work practices. Whereas through sexual difference theory we have found that it might just be language that contains the feminine in masculine representations and requires attention in order for change to occur. It suggests, therefore, that we must question this discourse of equality and instead focus, affirm and stress the positivity of difference.

The three elements of the gender subtext with the inclusion of intersectionality are useful for exposing gender inequality in organizations, their work-cultures and work practices. Identifying how the masculine has produced the processes of structure, culture, interaction and identity, and keeps reproducing them, is interesting to the project of sexual difference as patriarchal phallogocentric structures need to make way for the feminine, by being shaken at their own foundations. Irigaray suggests that change must be sought from *within* the phallogocentric order, by unfolding the language and practices in terms of who and what they privilege. I believe that the gender subtext can serve as an approach for recognizing such 'naturalized blind spots' as sites for transformation and tangible change. Especially investigating an organizations' perception of the 'ideal worker' fits in with the theory of sexual difference, as being *different* to the norm – that privileges the masculine –, needs to be properly recognized and valued. A work-culture that informs and is informed by the ideal worker – thus resulting in appropriated workplace practices, behavior, managerial decisions and HR and diversity policy implementations –, is not suitable for the feminine or *other* subjects/subjectivities. The notion of the 'ideal worker' in an organization is thus not gender neutral and this norm must be rethought to suit and value the contributions of all workers in their differences. Using the terms of sexual difference theory: the ideal worker must become multiple.

I further feel that the objective, natural self-evidence of patriarchy, identified by sexual difference theory and the organizational theory of hegemonic power, complement each other as forces that reproduce gender inequality. Brought together they can help in working through naturalized assumptions that are now used, and thus create awareness. The question that arises from this is: What does the combination of these two theories imply for diversity management within organizations in the

future? The revision of HR management that Benschop suggests – taking diversity as a starting point for the HR practice –, can be fruitful if it takes as a (sexual difference) starting point that space for the feminine has yet to be created, as *difference* is not the norm. Sexual difference theory helps us understand how work-cultures are masculinist and how the devaluation of the feminine is not natural, but rather a result of a social construct. In answer to my sub-question: How can feminist sexual difference theory be combined with feminist organizational theory to find a place for the feminine in masculine work-cultures? I hope to have shown that taking sexual difference theory as a starting point for understanding masculinist work-spaces, and combining its strategies for change with the organizational theories addressed in this chapter, can provide us with an approach to identify gender inequality and blind spots by using the gender subtext as a tool. The blind spots that are recognized through this combination provide us with the sites of change where space for the feminine can be created. In chapter three I will discuss the research project, during which I conducted the interviews to collect the case study data, which will be presented in chapter four. Chapter five will contain the discussion of my case study organization, through this combined theoretical framework.

## Chapter 3: Introduction to Case Study and Research Project

As part of the third component of this thesis I will analyse data previously obtained from an internship research project at a Dutch-based multinational, using the combination of sexual difference and organisational theories detailed in the previous chapters. This chapter will serve to introduce the case study organization and the methods and methodology of the research project I conducted there. In agreement with the case study organization I have decided to keep the organization and its employees anonymous throughout this thesis.

### The Case Study Organization

The research project was part of my MA internship, and took place at the Dutch branch of a large global corporation that has over 750 offices in over 150 countries and employs around 180.000 people worldwide, of which 5.500 are employed in the Netherlands. I conducted my research for the Board of the Consulting practice and was supervised by a Strategy Manager for that Board. I was also counselled by the former Diversity Officer who introduced me to her value model based on Hofstede's approach to assessing gendered values in the workplace. The Consulting practice contains 883 employees, of which 608 are male and 275 are female. 66 employees have reported they are of a Non-Western background and 69 employees have reported they are from a non-Dutch but Western background.<sup>15</sup>

Before my research project started the corporation had already self-diagnosed its culture as being predominantly masculine and exclusive, through earlier inquiries, and wished to understand how this impacts the organization. The diversity policy and policy papers for the corporates' norms – 'the written norms' – were deemed inclusive in the sense of providing equal opportunity for men and women and eliminating inequalities, but the expectation was that the culture was not there yet. Therefore they asked me to research the unwritten norms, habits and behaviours through interviews to see if and how diversity and inclusion play a role on the work floor. In order to answer this question I conducted 29 interviews that were formatted to contribute to my thesis topic, and I will analyse the interview data as part of this inquiry.<sup>16</sup> The research question for the project was: Looking at the formulated ambition of the corporation and the current situation, which measures and/or interventions are necessary to bring more feminine values into our style of management, cooperation and individual action, or behaviour? I was further asked to investigate the reasons why women are leaving the firm in high numbers (statistically), which the organization refers to as its "leaking pipeline". Through this research project I was able to aim for social change, an important part of feminist methodology, which will be further discussed in the next section.

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<sup>15</sup> This is the formation per December 2015 as provided to me by the current Diversity Officer of the corporation. The recording of employees' ethnic background is done on a voluntary basis: employees are offered to report their ethnic background but this is not compulsory, thus the numbers are not representative.

<sup>16</sup> I was able to conduct 45 interviews of which 30 were selected to properly represent the Consulting practice, however, one candidate of this selection of 30 cancelled, which will be further discussed below. Also, Although I aimed to conduct all interviews face-to-face, I had to do a few interviews by phone as schedule changes sometimes prevented us from being able to be at the same location at the same time. In these instances conducting the interview by phone was a better option to cancelling it entirely.

## Methodology

Most research on organizational culture has been done from a sociological or business administration point of view, adopting a realist epistemology which generally claims that ‘reality exists independently of people’s beliefs about it’ (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002, para 8.4). For this particular study I use a feminist methodology not just to describe different feminine and masculine roles in organizations – as organizational theory generally does as well as Hofstede in his intercultural theories –, but to critically analyse masculine and feminine attitudes and behaviours, going beyond mere categorisation to see how employees felt these to be at work in gendered work practices. Therefore I used an interpretivist perspective to produce knowledge from my respondent’s interpretations, understandings and observations of how certain work-cultural practices can operate in gendered ways, creating marginalisation and even exclusion, in an organisational context (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002, para 8.4).<sup>17</sup>

Ramazanoglu and Holland agree that in order to produce evidence of people’s meanings and understandings one should employ a qualitative approach (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002, para 8.4). According to Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, this is the most appropriate method to uncover the employees’ “lived experiences” at the firm and to get to the “subjectivity” my respondents bring to their situations (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007, 118). With this approach, I aimed to produce critical knowledge that uncovers hidden tendencies and patterns (blind spots), but I have chosen to do an analysis of the interviews using mixed methods that will produce both qualitative and quantitative results. Apart from the qualitative results that will reflect the experiences, understandings and issues of those engaged in the work culture, I also intend to produce knowledge through quantifying the responses as evidence of how employees experience their work environment (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002, para 8.4).

Feminists have criticized positivistic quantitative methods as excluding women and “adding” women to male knowledge (Westmarland 2001, 2). Also, the presentation of statistic or quantitative research as being objective and “true” has been questioned by feminists, as the processes of identifying the topic of research and selecting theoretical literature to review it, are still considered to be subjective choices (Westmarland 2001, 3). Realist epistemology claims ‘knowledge can be produced of a social reality that exists whether or not people are aware of it’ and thereby claims objectivity in inquiry as it is not subjective to people’s beliefs or influence (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002, para 8.4). To avoid these traps of objectivity associated with quantitative research by feminists, I intend to use the interpretivist perspective and mixed methods as counter measures. Hesse-Biber argues that mixed-method research holds greater potential to address complex (intersectional) questions as it is capable of addressing dynamic interconnections that traditional research does not address adequately (2010, 2). In general, a mixed method research design uses both quantitative and qualitative data to answer a research question (Hesse-Biber 2010, 1). Indeed, I believe that quantifying qualitative responses produces statistical data useful in presentation and comparison.

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<sup>17</sup> Interpretivist perspective: assuming that reality as we know it is constructed intersubjectively through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially.

## The interviews

As I had a specific set of issues to discuss with my respondents, the interviews I undertook were structured, meaning that every respondent was asked the same set of questions in the same order (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007, 115-116, 121). The idea guiding this approach was that it would improve the possibilities for comparison as well. The interviews contained three sections of questions divided by topic: (1) sixteen questions on diversity and inclusivity, (2) seven questions on masculine and feminine values and (3) eight questions on gender and cultural diversity and work-culture. As the interviews produced more data than is useful for this thesis, for my analysis I have chosen to only use the questions asked under section 2 and 3 (see Appendix 1), as this thesis' general focus is femininity, masculinity and gender. The questions in section 2 were fixed-choice response questions, as part of the quantitative method, in which the respondents choose from 14 feminine values and 14 masculine values laid out on cards before them. Section 3 contained open-ended questions, as part of the qualitative method. (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007, 116-118). This section of questions spoke to the processes of structure and culture, as identified by the gender subtext theory. The questions focussed on the male/female ratio and the connection between gender and culture. In sum, using the two sections with different types of questions, and thus different methods, allows me to combine numerical and fixed data with my analysis of open-ended, qualitative content.

The cards from section 2 have been based on Hofstede's ascription of values to femininity and masculinity that he presents in an organizational context in the chapter *He, She and (S)he* (2010, 135-186).<sup>18</sup> As mentioned in chapter two, Hofstede presents masculine values as being result-oriented and feminine values as being people-oriented. These values reflect qualities and attitudes towards work practices, and therefore serve as a toolkit for measuring how they may inform gendered processes that give meaning to diversity, as identified by my interviewees. These qualities and attitudes, shown on the cards, especially speak to the processes of interaction and identity of the gender subtext, thus focusing on role orientation and status and gendered performances in the workplace. The values themselves are further explained in appendix 2. I realize that Hofstede's model has its limitations as he still universalizes the terms femininity and masculinity, as well as the qualities and values he ascribes to them. However, through my application of these values in a Dutch context, they are reflective of a national space, rather than being universal entities. Sexual difference theory would on the one hand critique Hofstede's model as being dualistic, however, sexual difference theory can also be critiqued on the same basis.<sup>19</sup> Sexual difference theory rethinks the binary, but does use the binary to develop its point. My use of Hofstede's dualistic model I intend as an attempt to affirm both poles, masculine and feminine, whilst discouraging polarization, as Grosz suggests (1989, 132). Therefore, although this method has its limitations, it was still helpful for my analysis.

I realised before writing this thesis that I cannot distance myself from the case study as I am an employee there. Integral to a feminist methodology, a reflexive approach demands awareness of, and appropriate responses to, relationships between researcher and researched (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). Hesse-Biber and Leavy use Mann and Kelley's definition stating that 'to practice re-

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<sup>18</sup> The organization had worked with Hofstede before.

<sup>19</sup> Some critics have argued that Irigaray calls for a universal definition of Woman (in her claims that women need a subject position of their own), which has led many to argue that the approach of sexual difference cannot account for multiple forms of difference (in and between women and men) (Poe 2011).

flexivity means to acknowledge that “all knowledge is affected by the social conditions under which it is produced and that it is grounded in both the social location and social biography of the observer and the observed” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007, 129). In conducting these interviews I realised that I am part of the organisation, yet as an intern I do not partake in the work activities of the organisation in the same way or at the same level as other employees. Also the respondents did not know me personally before the interview took place. My supervisor and I agreed before starting the interviews that it would be useful to take more of an outsider stance as people might be more inclined to share their unique perspectives by removing the possibility of “shared knowledge”, that is, knowledge a researcher that is an insider might have in common with the researched (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007, 142). Taking an outsider stance might therefore encourage the researcher to ask questions that might otherwise be taken for granted as shared knowledge. This puts me in a complex position, as I am both inside the company as an employee, yet take an outsider stance in my interviews which is not a straightforward position as a researcher.

The nature of my research project was explained in an introductory email sent on behalf of the Advisory Board, after which I approached every respondent individually by phone for informed consent and to make a face-to-face appointment; the interviews were recorded (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007, 120). I chose to begin the interviews along the lines of the participatory model with introductions.<sup>20</sup> My studies imply that I am biased towards the particular topics of masculinity, femininity and diversity, as I have been exposed to a body of feminist literature concerning these topics. The questions were formulated from this feminist perspective, which my respondents do not necessarily share and may not interpret the same way. Thus, my theoretical knowledge of gendered work practices results in bias but also gives me a vocabulary to give meaning to their genderedness, as opposed to my interviewees, who may experience them but not identify or express them as such. Being a white female may have influenced my respondents as some expected a male due to my unisex name. Also, I am working within those power structures that my thesis is in fact identifying, thus I am a part of the framework I am studying. This may affect me in several ways as I may not be valued in certain ways as I am a woman. As a sexual difference approach also reminds me, I am enmeshed within the language of the organizational apparatus that I am working with. Thus there might be blind spots that I am unaware of reproducing myself. Being an intern also subjects me to hierarchical power relations: I was of the lowest hierarchical level of the organisation, speaking to employees at all levels. However, my respondents were introduced to this research project and invited to participate by the Board of the Consulting practice. Which may have instituted that my respondents felt pressure to participate in my research project, which in turn may have politicized their answers in the sense they might have told me what they thought the Board would like to hear. I decided to use an echo probe, repeating respondents’ own words, in order to get respondents to elaborate on their opinions, thereby not introducing a new agenda but encouraging respondents to continue with theirs (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007, 127). The use of cards also took respondents out of their verbal comfort zone, thereby reducing

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<sup>20</sup> *The participatory model stresses the importance of the researcher sharing his or her own biography with the researched. The idea of sharing identities ... is thought to increase reciprocity ... thus breaking down the notions of power and authority invested in the role of researcher* (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007, 128). A strategy I used to make my respondents feel more comfortable, breaking possible hierarchical barriers they might feel due to the invitation sent by the Advisory Board. Also this was useful in obtaining outsider status as I was able to stress the academic purposes instead of the company’s purposes.

the possibility of politically correct answers and self-evidence. With this methodological angle and detail of methods explained, in the next chapter I will turn to an analysis of the data I collected.

## Chapter 4 – Presentation of Case Study Data

In this chapter I will discuss and analyze the data I collected at the case study organization. An introduction to the interviewees in terms of gender, ethnic/cultural background, hierarchical level within the organization, years of employment and the way respondents entered the company and age, can be found in Appendix 4. In selecting respondents I wanted to make sure I had a diverse group as the theories studied in chapter two show how diversity impacts experience, therefore interviewing a diverse group can assist in speaking to the issues I am researching.<sup>21</sup> I also wanted to interview employees from all hierarchical levels to get a broader view on these issues, in line with Benschop and her colleagues' recommendation that it is necessary to see how the entire workforce feels about the workplace, not just (top) managers. Apart from hierarchical level, the number of years employees have been with the organization may affect how they feel about the workplace, and this is included in the discussion of the data as well as whether they started their career with the organization fresh out of college, thereby "growing up" with the company's work-culture (vertical joiners), as opposed to entering the organization and culture at a later point in their careers (horizontal joiners). Following a few realizations that came from looking at the representation, I will proceed with reporting my findings from the questions that were posed to my respondents using the value cards, taking a rather dualistic approach as the value cards were either masculine or feminine and the respondents were either male or female. The third section of the interviews focused on the respondents' opinions on the male/female ratio of the workforce in the Consulting branch, and its relation to the organizations' culture.

### Reflections on the Basis of Representation.

A first remark came forward by analyzing the demography of my group of interviewees in terms of gender and vertical or horizontal joining is that, overall, thirteen out of sixteen males joined vertically, whereas three out of thirteen females joined vertically. Looking at the two highest hierarchical levels, called the "PD layer" (partners and directors), *all* female partners and directors joined horizontally, whereas all male partners and directors, except for one, joined vertically and thus have "grown up" with the organization's work-culture.<sup>22</sup> Table 4.1 shows the relation between gender and whether an interviewee joined horizontally or vertically.

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<sup>21</sup> The selection of interviewees occurred in cooperation with the Consulting practices' resource managers.

<sup>22</sup> By work-culture I refer to the way Benschop and Doorewaard address culture: as a process that pertains to symbols, images, rules and values that ex- and implicitly steer and justify gender distinctions in the organization.

Table 4.1 Gender + Vertical/Horizontal joining					
	<i>Male + Vertical</i>	<i>Male + Horizontal</i>	<i>Female + Vertical</i>	<i>Female + Horizontal</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Partner</i>	4 Board + 2	1	0	3	10
<i>Director</i>	2	0	0	2	4
<i>Senior Manager</i>	1	1	2	0	4
<i>Manager</i>	1	0	1	1	3
<i>Senior Cons./Asso.</i>	1	1	0	2	4
<i>Consultant/Associate</i>	2	0	0	2	4
<i>Overall</i>	13	3	3	10	29

These numbers, set out in table 4.1, may imply that the organization is more appealing to males who have just finished their education, than to females, who join at a later stage in their career. This appears to be especially present in the higher hierarchical layers, meaning it has become more appealing over the years. Analyzing the way employees from a different cultural background joined the company showed that of the eight employees I interviewed, half joined vertically and the other half joined horizontally. This may imply that the organization has an image that it is more suitable to join for white males. It may also imply that the company (unconsciously) favors long term employment of males, or steers more resources to keeping males employed within the company. There seems to be a certain privileging or bias at work here which in sexual difference theory terms we can frame as being masculinist. As the top layers are dominated by white males, this unconscious bias may be the result of *homophily*, which I will explore in some further detail below.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, the two male directors both joined the company vertically but the Dutch director has been with the company for eleven years and the Surinamese director for 26 years. Of the three Dutch senior managers who joined vertically, one female and one male have both been with the company for nine years. The Dutch male director who joined vertically shows that promotion to that level is possible within eleven years, whereas the other female senior manager has been with the company for fifteen years. Of the three managers I spoke to, the Dutch male (age 31) became manager within five and a half years of joining vertically, whereas the French female manager (age 34) has been with the company for nine years, joining vertically, and the other Dutch female manager (age 39) joined horizontally and has also been with the company for nine years and made it to the position of manager.

I do not make these remarks to prove a point, especially as my respondents are only a selection of the entire population of the Consulting practice. However they do stand out, as within my research population it seems to indicate that promotion is easier for Dutch white males. A preliminary connection is that, although it is of course possible that the employees who did not get promoted as fast as others, chose this career course themselves, the theory has shown that such decision-making

<sup>23</sup> *Homophily*: ‘processes by which male managers select other male managers in ways that reproduce an all-male managerial elite’ (Benschop 2001, 1168-1170). In agreement with Aleksandra Gregorič and her colleagues, I would suggest *homophily* can also point to matters of race and sexuality, apart from sex: ‘incumbents often favor candidates who are culturally and demographically similar to themselves ... and will maintain the norms and social cohesion ... of the corporate elite’ (Gregorič et al. 2013, 4).

processes are embedded in broader social contexts. The gender subtext similarly suggests that structural processes – like personnel allocation – can (re-)produce gender inequalities, because they are based in a masculinist work-culture, even if it is not recognized as such.

### Data from the value cards

I will go through the data from the value cards question by question, as the sequence had the purpose of disguising that there was more to the value cards than just being 28 random cards.<sup>24</sup> During the first five questions the respondents were kept unaware of the feminine/masculine division that the cards were meant to portray, which was revealed to them thereafter. For the first question I asked my respondents to pick three cards that they felt represented them best. The division in gender for these possible combinations can be seen in table 4.2, as well as in which part of the hierarchy that male or female is currently situated.

		<i>3 M</i>	<i>2 M + 1 F</i>	<i>1 M + 2 F</i>	<i>3 F</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>PD layer</i>	Male	-	-	5	4	9
	Female	-	-	2	3	5
<i>Under PD layer</i>	Male	-	1	4	2	7
	Female	-	-	4	4	8
<i>Totals</i>		0	1	15	13	29

What can be read from this table is that in assessing themselves respondents tend to pick feminine values. Before the feminine/masculine division was revealed I asked respondents whether they identified as masculine or feminine, stressing that there was a scale. After this I revealed the gender division present in the cards. Twenty of the respondents' answer to this question corresponded with the cards they picked. However, in nine cases (eight males and one female) their choice did not correspond with the cards they had picked: they had chosen masculine yet had picked two or three feminine values. When asked to elaborate their thoughts on this, they resolved the disparity with several explanations: they were very much in touch with their feminine side but leaning towards masculine on the scale; due to advancement and career and aging they got more in touch with their feminine side; they disagreed with the division; the feminine values were a means to a masculine end; or their wife would disagree with them being feminine.

For the second question I asked respondents whether these values were the same compared to when they just started their career. Sixteen interviewees responded that their career had not made a difference to their core values. The thirteen respondents that did choose to select new cards mostly replaced feminine values by masculine values, showing that respondents either behaved or expected they were required to behave according to what are typically defined as being more masculine quali-

<sup>24</sup> As part of the method based on Hofstede's values that he ascribes to femininity and masculinity, as explained in chapter three.

ties when they started their careers.<sup>25</sup> This connects to the gendered process of identity (identification) discussed in chapter two, as this issue arises from how one expects to be identified by others, as being masculine or feminine, and therefore one may perform – “do gender” – in line with what they feel is expected of them.

The third question moved away from the respondents’ own person, and instead asked them to focus on the current culture within their practice. The exact question posed was which values one had to possess, acquire, or show to be allowed a fast track career (employees in the higher managerial levels were asked to imagine how a young consultant currently looking to have a fast track career would feel).<sup>26</sup> Respondents were asked to leave their feelings and hopes out of their responses as they would get a chance to do justice to those later in the interview. It is particularly interesting, to see how the 29 respondents have described the organizations’ work-culture as 71% masculine, which is set out in table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Cards picked by respondents			
<i>Masculine Values</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Feminine values</i>	<i>X</i>
Focus on results	16	Deliverance of perfect work is important	8
‘Boasting’ to be noticed	10	Collegiality and relationships	6
Focus on reaching the top	7	Focus on work content	5
Negotiation and competition	5	Focus on teamwork	3
Winning is important	5	Preparation is key	2
Respect of hierarchy	4	Vulnerability is a strength	1
‘What’s in it for me?’	4	Totals: 29%	25
Short term focus	3		
Focus on solving problems (visible)	3	Combinations	
Vulnerability is a weakness	2	3 masculine values	12
Status is important	2	2 masculine values /1 feminine value	11
Critique is not personal	1	1 masculine value/2 feminine values	5
Totals: 71%	62	3 feminine values	1

Reporting these values in the respondents’ words, they believe that in order to succeed in the current culture and fast track your career one must deliver good results (*focus on results/deliverance of perfect work is important/focus on work content*) quickly (*short term focus*) and make sure your superiors know you are getting results, which they call visibility (*‘boasting’ to be noticed/focus on solving problems (visible)*), whilst at the same time respecting one’s superiors (*respect of hierarchy/status is important/collegiality and relationships*). According to the respondents, in order to reach the top one

<sup>25</sup> Whilst replacing cards, respondents commented that they were more insecure when they started their career: choosing the masculine values *vulnerability is a weakness* and *status is important* twice and *respect for hierarchy* once, and choosing the feminine values *critique is personal* and *preparation is key* ... (See next page)

<sup>25</sup> (Continuation) ... both one time. Respondents also commented that they felt more competitive towards their peers when they started their career: choosing the masculine value *winning is important* twice, and *focus on reaching the top* and *negotiation and competition* once.

<sup>26</sup> This in itself conveys a message that suggests a fast track career is preferable.

must have an ambition to reach the top (*focus on reaching the top/what's in it for me?*) and one must be able to compete against other fast trackers (*negotiation and competition/winning is important*). It was also believed that one must have a thick skin (*vulnerability is a weakness/critique is not personal*). The feminine values that were picked by respondents were later explained to me as being meant as masculine, or as having a “means (feminine) to an end (masculine)” relationship. Thus it would seem that even though feminine values were selected in response to this question, they were considered to represent masculine values, thereby further increasing the masculinism they feel is present in the work-culture.

This was confirmed after the division in the cards was revealed and I asked respondents whether the work-culture at their organization was masculine or feminine. 28 out of 29 respondents answered that the culture was indeed masculine. Five respondents stressed that though it is still masculine they do see the culture is shifting to a greater appreciation of feminine values, while five respondents stressed it is absolutely masculine. The one respondent who said the culture was feminine in his opinion explained:

Old wounds are always kept open here, which prevents people from working together, which means the (bad) relationship is valued over the results you could achieve together. We are so careful in our interactions, in an almost evasive-like manner, we don't speak our minds (Interview Transcript 2, Appendix 3.2, 11-13).<sup>27</sup>

With this comment the respondent appears to be downplaying business relations to cat-fights, and ascribing these, and careful interactions, as feminine and inferior qualities.

For the last question I asked participants how they would like to see the work-culture, asking them to take the perspective of a partner and to select which values they would appreciate if they were in that position (if they were not already partners). The combinations that were picked are set out in table 4.4.

		<i>3 M</i>	<i>2 M + 1 F</i>	<i>1 M + 2 F</i>	<i>3 F</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>PD layer</i>	Male	-	-	4	5	9
	Female	-	-	-	5	5
<i>Under PD layer</i>	Male	-	-	6	1	7
	Female	-	-	6	2	8
<i>Totals</i>		0	0	16	13	29

Thirteen of the 29 respondents picked a combination of three feminine values and sixteen picked a combination of one masculine and two feminine values. The exact values respondents picked are set out in table 4.5:

<sup>27</sup> I have chosen this style of referencing to my data to honour the agreement of total confidentiality with the case study organization.

Table 4.5 Cards picked by respondents			
<i>Masculine Values</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Feminine values</i>	<i>X</i>
Focus on results	13	Collegiality and relationships	16
Focus on reaching the top	3	Focus on teamwork	14
		Vulnerability is a strength	14
		Focus on work content	6
		Deliverance of perfect work is important	6
		Long term focus	4
		'What's in it for us?'	3
		'Boasting' is unnecessary	2
		Honesty is a 'must have'	2
		Focus on preventing problems (invisible)	2
		Preparation is key	1
		Equality is key	1
<i>Totals: 18%</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>Totals: 82%</i>	<i>71</i>

The respondents commented whilst picking cards that the culture should become more people oriented (*collegiality and relationships/equality is key*), allowing its employees to be themselves instead of only recognizing them when they adjust (*vulnerability is a strength/equality is key*) and also stressing a need for more cooperation and visibility of team efforts (*focus on teamwork/'what's in it for us?'*). Preventing problems may not be visible but is preferable to having to solve them (*focus on preventing problems (invisible)*) once they have become visible, and therefore *preparation is key*. The organization should strive to always deliver qualitative work (*deliverance of perfect work is important/focus on work content*) whilst seeking quantity in results (*focus on results*), as the organization is profit-driven, whilst simultaneously considering its continuity (*long term focus*). 'Boasting' is unwanted behavior (*'boasting' is unnecessary*) and *honesty is a 'must have'*, but ambition is healthy (*focus on reaching the top*). Overall 82% of cards picked were feminine and the masculine cards were picked on the basis that the organization is profit-driven, which does not have to change, and ambition is not considered to be a bad thing. The culture as it is currently judged by the respondents (71% masculine cards picked) versus the way they would like to see it (82% feminine cards picked) shows a marked contrast, which suggests respondents feel that the culture should move from masculine – result-oriented –, to feminine – people-oriented –.

### Data from Section Three

Section three of the interviews focused on the current male/female ratio within the company (608 to 275, respectively, per December 2015) and whether the respondents felt a need for that ratio to change. I also asked respondents why they thought there was a leaking pipeline, which refers to the statistical fact that women tend to leave the company before making it to the higher ranks, and wheth-

er they see a relation between the current ratio and the organizations' culture, which was identified as masculine by all respondents except for one.<sup>28</sup>

Twenty-seven respondents shared a common opinion that the male/female ratio is unbalanced or uneven, especially looking at the higher ranks. One respondent commented that the male/female ratio is good and one respondent even commented that there are too many women – both were male respondents. When asked if the male/female ratio should change, the same twenty-seven respondents (93%) answered that it should indeed change. Four respondents expressed that the need for more feminine values at the top trumps the need for more females, saying feminine men can also help make a difference and may also experience difficulty reaching the top. One respondent expressed the need for critical mass and another respondent expressed the need for role models (to show that women can make it to the top).<sup>29</sup> Two respondents commented that no change is necessary; one female referred to the hierarchical layer she is in (lowest) where she finds the ratio is about 50/50. The respondent who previously commented there are too many women said that being a woman is no achievement in itself and should not be a reason to receive preferential treatment, as well as commenting on women's technological incompetence. Nonetheless, the majority of respondents think the male/female ratio is unbalanced and should change.

When asked if respondents see a relation between the current male/female ratio and the work-culture they themselves identified as being masculine, 23 respondents answered that they do. Several added interesting remarks that can be summarized as follows: five respondents (three of them speaking of their own experiences) responded that this is especially true for the women in the PD layer, as there is no critical mass to create more appreciation for feminine values and those layers are "too masculine". One respondent even commented that a woman can only survive at the top if she acts masculine. A female director and a female senior consultant both added the matter of *homophily*. One stated that 'right now I understand partnership is essentially being comfortable with other partners' (Interview Transcript 24, Appendix 3.24, 80-83), and further explained that if that is what it means to be a partner, it is not strange that partners select new partners that are similar and thus comfortable to them, (unintentionally) referring to *homophily*. The other commented: 'people only recognize their own success, as long as the PD-majority of masculine people only recognize masculine success, there is not a lot of room for femininity' (Interview Transcript 15, Appendix 3.15, 52-54).<sup>30</sup> Six respondents answered they see no relation between the ratio and the work culture. Overall I may conclude from my respondents' answers that there is a relation between the current male/female ratio and the predominantly masculine culture at this organization, which will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Though some respondents already voiced some other concerns that might influence women to decide to leave the organization, whilst answering the previous questions (apart from identifying the masculine work-culture as an obstacle for women), I specifically asked respondents why they think

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<sup>28</sup> I was asked to look into this element of leaking pipeline, as part of this research project.

<sup>29</sup> Accepting that feminine and masculine values are based on traditional gender roles, theories of critical mass suggest that when more women enter the workforce, they bring more feminine values. When they reach the point of critical mass, they can no longer be asked to conform to the dominant structure, or be stereotyped, as their values can no longer be ignored (Kanter 1977; Childs and Krook 2008, 727).

<sup>30</sup> In my understanding the respondent uses the term masculine here as referring to masculine values and success reached through masculine values, especially as these terms were brought in through the value cards before this set of questions.

women tend to leave the firm before entering the higher managerial levels.<sup>31</sup> Twenty-three out of 29 respondents underlined the difficulty of combining a high performance job with having children. This was explained in several ways, one being that this means that work-life balance for women is still not facilitated enough, nor completely accepted throughout the organization (some commented that this is the case for men who want to work part-time as well). Two younger male respondents commented that women develop maternal feelings more intensely than men develop paternal feelings, which is a perfect example of appropriation of women's position, as it generalizes her to (certain characteristics of) Woman. One male partner suggests that traditional gender roles are a social phenomenon and not the organizations' problem. In contrast, Hofstede (2010, 137) suggests that societal appropriations indeed affect an organization's culture, and looking through the sexual difference theory lens we come to understand that such a naturalization cannot be excused as it is, indeed, a main force behind the reproduction of gender inequality. Seven interviewees mentioned that women also leave because of personal choice and age maturity, when they ask themselves if this is the life they want and whether they don't want to spend their time differently.

Continuing on this line of questioning, four respondents mentioned that the current male/female ratio itself is perhaps also a reason women leave. The fact that there are hardly any role models for women to look up to and also the abundance of men in the top layer may 'work as a scarecrow, as there are few of their own kind' (Interview Transcript 26, Appendix 3.26, 87-90). Ten respondents made further remarks concerning the work-culture, saying it is not an inclusive culture and there are many behavioral elements such as jokes that can make women feel excluded. Also one male partner wondered if this culture truly values women and is really trying to value the feminine. Along with this partner, four other respondents mentioned the current evaluation system, which ultimately leads to promotions. Several respondents mentioned that apart from results and billable hours being the most important subjects for evaluation, making those results visible or 'boasting' about it is also very important, but this is not a feminine trait according to both the model used in this analysis and the respondents. A last remark that was brought up by three respondents is that the organization is not very good at managing people. One female manager commented that equal attention is not paid to all employees and instead there is favoritism: leaders work with the same *homophilic* teams, meaning women and ethnic minorities are left out. This will be further picked up in the next chapter, in which I will move on to reveal connections that can be drawn between the interview data and the selected theories.

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<sup>31</sup> As several respondents cited more than one reason, there is overlap when I mention a number of respondents.

## Chapter 5 – Feminist Theory Meets Case Study

In the first two chapters I gave a close reading of the feminist debates of sexual difference theory and the organizational debates surrounding the gender subtext and (critical) diversity management. In this chapter I will apply this theoretical framework to the data presented in the previous chapter to address my third sub-question: How can the theoretical framework developed in this thesis be applied in an analysis of a case study presenting a masculinist corporation's work-culture and what does it reveal in the way of practices and potential interventions?

### The Gender Subtext Applied.

To briefly recapitulate, the gender subtext has two main elements: the gendered processes of structure, culture, interaction and identity, and the notion of the 'ideal worker'. In exploring the gender subtext we found that it pinpoints four different processes that can (re-)produce gender inequality, as well as introducing the notion of the 'ideal worker' which in sexual difference terms is disembodied and rigged in a manner that privileges the masculine. I will now proceed to explain the data from my case study through the different elements of the gender subtext.

Regarding the allocation of personnel and hierarchical positions, it is evident from the data discussed in the previous chapter that most respondents feel the male/female ratio in their workplace is unbalanced, especially looking at the higher ranks of management. In asking whether this needs to change, 93% of respondents commented with a clear yes. Respondents felt that due to recruitment efforts in the past decade, the lower hierarchical levels had made a lot of progress in terms of the number of women recruited, however the PD layer is missing its critical mass.<sup>32</sup> Considering the process of career planning, the data hints that the company may be more attractive for male joiners, as compared to female joiners. As well as a staggering amount of men having vertical careers at the company as compared to women, the data seemed to indicate that promotion was easier for men as compared to women. This suggests that the progression of employees is gendered, and the company's attempts to tackle the issue through the recruitment of women does not change the gendered nature of these practices. What this then suggests is that it is the gendered nature of the practices itself that needs to change, in line with what the theory of the gender subtext points to.

One example of a structural gendered practice is that of *homophily*, located in the coordination of tasks and work processes. Quite a few respondents commented that there was a sense of *homophily* present in these activities, as leaders tend to work with the same comfortable group of people thereby not only excluding colleagues along the lines of gender or cultural background, but also not speaking to the client's needs. As one respondent commented: 'The clients' needs should drive who is chosen for the project team, meaning you can never have the same team for every project; a leader should strive to pick the best not pick who he/she knows' (Interview Transcript 7, Appendix 3.7, 30-32). A measurement of *homophily* through the value cards showed that many respondents selected at least one card relating to their preference of values for the work-culture that was the same as the values they selected to represent themselves, however this hardly occurred in the higher managerial ranks, as one might expect. After all, it is in the higher ranks that matters of succession and promotion

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<sup>32</sup> The PD layer refers to the hierarchical layers of Partners and Directors that form the highest managerial ranks.

are handled. Nevertheless, this issue was brought up repeatedly during the qualitative section of the interviews, which demonstrates its presence. Sexual difference theory offers some insights into how striving for sameness will not do justice to the feminine, nor will it contribute to affirming *difference*. Thus the presence of this practice reveals how a masculinist work-culture can perpetuate itself, through the reproduction of a hierarchical privileging of certain values and norms.

Along with these more structural elements, the gender subtext also points to the gendered process of culture, which pertains to the symbols, images, rules and values that in- and explicitly steer and justify gender distinctions. In some of my respondents' answers, it appears they equate masculine with men, and feminine with women, as when the division in the cards was revealed, eight men started defending the masculinity of the feminine cards they had picked.<sup>33</sup> The way that masculine and feminine are presented on the cards may have played a part in this. Nevertheless, a handful of respondents commented that space for the feminine can also be created by subjects other than women, showing a different level of awareness of how gender may operate. When respondents were asked what values were necessary for a fast track career in the current culture, 72% of the total selected were masculine values. After the division was revealed, several feminine values selected were explained as being meant as masculine, meaning there is an overall consensus that the current culture is masculine, which in Hofstede's scheme means it is result-oriented. When asked how they would rather see the culture, mainly feminine values were picked apart from a 'focus on results', which strongly suggests the respondents would prefer the culture to be more people-oriented. Several respondents commented that this corporation was founded on masculine values historically and thus it would take time for it to change, both in terms of space for women and space for the feminine. Thus it appears there is a desire for change, practices remain dominant because of the symbolic meanings given to them. What sexual difference theory suggests is that we start to question and challenge those meanings, in order to activate change.

The gendered process of social interactions, as part of the gender subtext, pertains to role orientation of men and women and unspecified or specified status, understood in terms of visibility. When the respondents were asked to represent the current culture by a selection of cards, several cards that relate to the matter of status were picked: "boasting' to be noticed', 'winning is important', 'respect of hierarchy' and 'status is important'. Therefore it can be concluded that specified status is still an important part of the current culture, which according to Hofstede's model, is mostly a masculine trait. Several women commented on this phenomenon and said their upcoming promotion was dependent on increasing their visibility in the workplace, which they were highly uncomfortable with: 'I am literally advised to start speaking to partners, make sure they know me, boast about my results', stated one interviewee (Interview Transcript 9, Appendix 3.9, 36-38). This need for obtaining visibility is seen by my respondents as one of the reasons for the leaking pipeline in the company (women leaving the organization), because they are not comfortable with this performance, which suggests that this aspect of the work-culture is a possible site for change. The need for status is not a written rule (thereby also related to gendered cultural rules), but rather a naturalized unwritten self-evident

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<sup>33</sup> Whenever this sort of equation did occur during the interview I did not clarify, in line with the echo probe.

necessity: a blind spot, where the old game can be disrupted and space for the feminine can be created by rethinking the value of status as part of this workplace's practices.

In the realm of role orientation, another reason given for the leaking pipeline is women's maternity leave. This can also be connected to the gendered processes of identity and structure (showing the interrelatedness of these gendered processes), as women are potentially reduced to a phallogentric representation of mother, which then affects their chances at career planning. If we look to sexual difference theory, mother is one of the representations Grosz mentions that has been appropriated to women in a phallogentric context (Grosz 2005, 174-176). This context does not refuse the identity of woman, but rather contains women's identity by measuring her according to phallogentric norms, definitions and identities. In this sense, woman's identity is not denied, but rather contained as the "other" or the complement to the phallogentric subject, revealing a hierarchical power dynamic that plays itself out in areas such as family planning. As directly quoted in chapter four, one partner and a handful of other respondents see the problem of the traditional role of motherhood being ascribed to women as a societal problem and not the corporations' problem. Thereby they naturalize the problem with a self-evident societal reasoning that denies gender inequality within the corporation. Also they generalize the concept of motherhood and appropriate it to all womankind: to Woman, in sexual difference terms. This therefore presents another blind spot, which can be laid bare and reclaimed by women, with the potential for change.<sup>34</sup> By revaluating maternity beyond these phallogentric terms, the organization could take steps towards changing the structural power relation between motherhood and career prospects.<sup>35</sup>

This issue revolving around the concept of maternity also ties into the notion of the gender-neutral ideal worker not having a body, let alone a maternal body, and thus does not constitute maternity leave. In fact, the notion of the ideal worker, as part of the gender subtext, is present within the organization in a literal sense, as they have a model of "the Professional" as a guideline for their employees. The previously discussed overwhelming defense of masculinity during the value card questions (in no case was femininity defended after picking masculine cards) may suggest a bias, a favoring of masculinity within the company or a prevalent feeling of expectation that one should perform according to ideas associated with the masculine within this company. Two respondents commented that making it within the company is rather a matter of type: 'if you're self-centered and extremely detail oriented, you can make it here' (Interview Transcript 27, Appendix 3.27, 91-97), and the other 'if you're an insecure overachiever' (Interview Transcript 1, Appendix 3.1, 6-10). However these answers also divorce success from gender and other forms of diversity, meaning they generalize these qualities outside of gendered terms as the notion of the ideal worker suggests.

A particular performance of the 'ideal worker' emerged with the frequent use, by respondents, of the Dutch word "*haantjes*", which can be literally translated as "roosters". This word connotes an

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<sup>34</sup> We see another representation of women's identity in phallogentric terms, brought forward in the interviews by two female partners when they mentioned that of secretary, as to their knowledge, 'all secretaries are women' (Interview Transcript 18, Appendix 3.18, 62-64). In the Dutch language there is a male and a female form for the word secretary, the female version being connoted with a female assistant, the male version being associated with a (male) secretary of state.

<sup>35</sup> I am aware that there is a broad field of maternity studies that take up with these types of issues surrounding, but a longer engagement with this area is outside the scope of this thesis. My aim for highlighting this problem, is to give an example of a site that has potential for change, inside this organization.

identity of a young (white) male who is competitive, loud (or visible) and boasts. It is this type, mentioned by many respondents, that will make it to the top, thus essentially presenting an ‘ideal worker’. The rooster also shows a certain style of gendered social interaction, as these males are capable of specifying status easily, whether deserved or not, and have no problems with making themselves known to partners. One male respondent mentioned that at network gatherings, that are symbolically part of the corporate culture, these types strive to stand out and make themselves known. The same female respondent that was advised to specify her status with partners mentioned that from the hierarchical layer of senior manager onwards, there are only roosters left. The type-casting of the rooster presents another blind spot as it lays bare a one-way power relation: an ideal worker which unattainability is absolute for the feminine and other subjectivities.<sup>36</sup>

The “rooster” also ties into the gendered process of identity (identification), as women may “do the rooster” but peers may not identify them as such. The ideal worker, present in both practices (that privilege men) and in performance (of masculinity), is another necessary site of intervention. From the organizational literature it became apparent that when women copy masculine behavior and communication, this will not be understood as masculine behavior or communication, but rather be perceived as strange behavior or communication for the feminine or other *different* subjects. This appears to be happening within the corporation. Several female respondent from the higher managerial ranks mentioned that they were struggling with ‘staying true to themselves’ or changing their behavior and values so as to be accepted by the establishment, or in such a way for the establishment to be comfortable with them (Interview Transcript 7, Appendix 3.7, 30-32). Essentially, this means they would have to consciously practice *homophily*, however, their *homophilic* behavior will not be accepted as masculine behavior when performed by a woman. Several respondents commented on the practice of *homophily*, especially with regard to performance evaluation and access to the higher managerial levels, thus there is a certain level of awareness concerning this gendered practice already. In fact, many respondents did express a need for more (female and cultural) role models, to create critical mass and to show that it is possible for “different” types to make it to the top.

## Diversity Management.

There was a consensus amongst the respondents that the male/female ratio must change, especially at the higher managerial level, however there was no consensus at all as to how. The respondents are aware there is a policy to address this, but often don’t know the content, but do know that it focusses on equality for women. A general discontent towards positive discrimination was expressed, as well as a general concern that the current approach of diversity management focused too much on numbers. This could very well mean that the diversity strategies within this company do not reach the ‘pride and prejudice’ present under the surface, which has been revealed in my research as being a part of the above-mentioned practices. Through this research, the current diversity management at the corporation shows more similarity to what Benschop classifies as the traditional approach to diversity management. If the company had an interventionary policy, respondents would be aware of the interven-

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<sup>36</sup> The theory of hegemonic masculinities could be helpful in uncovering further power relations between different types of masculinities, revealing that the ‘ideal worker’ present in the type-casting of the rooster, can also be unattainable for men.

tions the company strives towards. Benschop's study of diversity management suggests that the 'how' (strategy) is more important than the 'what' (numbers and categories). This reveals another gendered practice that can be a site of intervention: instead of focusing on categorization and numbers, the concept of diversity itself – how meaning is given to the concept of diversity – must be rethought into a discourse that stresses the positivity of difference and moves towards a valuation of the feminine or subjects that are different to the norm. This should start with acknowledging that space has yet to be created for the feminine and different subjectivities, meaning that a revaluation of *differences* and the meaning given to them, is in order.

### Strategies for Change.

Through the addition of these feminist theories to an analysis of masculine work-cultures, we find that we must take as a starting point that space for the feminine has yet to be created. Analysis through the gender subtext provides us with an opportunity to pinpoint practices and processes that (re-)produce gender inequality. Finding these sites – blind spots – is crucial, as these present the scene for interventions. Once they are out in the open, the old game can be interrupted through stressing the positivity of difference, embodiment and the valuation of *different* subjects. Taking the route of the excluded middle, both poles must be affirmed, instead of measuring one to the other. *Different* subjects must call for their endorsement as speaking embodied subjects and rework the representations formerly available to them to become “subjects in their own right” in the workplace. Diversity management can thus be fruitful when the HR practice rethinks its policies from the starting point of diversity, focusing on its contextualization, rather than categories or numbers. The practices mentioned in this discussion (revealed through the application of the gender subtext in hand with the insights of sexual difference theory) are examples of blind spots, where the old game can be disrupted and the feminine can be revalued.

### Reflection.

My aim for this thesis was to create a combined theoretical framework to understand and explain masculinist work-cultures and to see if there are opportunities for changing the masculinist work-cultures identified here. I believe that applying the gender subtext as a means of investigation and then adding the strategies for change from sexual difference theory can help us understand masculinist work-cultures and lead to intervention. The gender subtext seems to have been developed at the back of studies and used to explain data after it was collected. I would like to suggest that we use the gender subtext as an approach and a tool for evaluating gender inequality within an organization, by taking it as the starting point of research.

Having done this research I would like to reflect that the concept of work-culture, which I took as a starting point, is not comprehensive enough. The theory of the gender subtext shows that culture is only one site for gender inequality, and cannot be kept separate from the gendered processes of structure, identity (identification) and interaction, which are always interrelated. The gender subtext theory identifies the notion of the ideal worker that is also interrelated to the four gendered processes, as the above discussion suggest. My use of work-culture was not meant to exclude these other elements of the gender subtext, therefore I would alter the wording in future research.

I do think I did justice to the recommendations Benschop and her colleagues posed for critical diversity theory and diversity management research, as I combined empirical research with theoretical research and I focused my research on all hierarchical levels of the work population, instead of just the higher management, which helps to identify a broader basis of issues around gendered practices in the case study organisation. Also in this thesis I have observed policy versus practice and I did not only deconstruct the genderedness of my case study organization but also took strategies for change into account, highlighting sites for intervention.

Even though the use of Hofstede's potentially universalizing and dualistic framing of feminine and masculine values had its limitations, it was effective for this analysis, especially as it proved to have an effect of raising awareness. Respondents referred to it as the value game and it participated in revealing to them that a masculinism was at work in their work-culture. In line with Irigaray's suggestion, increasing the awareness of the gendered nature of the organizations' cultural language through the value cards proved to be a step towards greater awareness, and is thus potentially a step towards change. I also found respondents affirming difference in positive terms. When respondents who had picked different values (feminine) than corresponded with their own gender identification (masculine), they seemed to move towards an acceptance, a positive realization and a clear positive defense of the feminine or feminine values in the workspace. An important part of feminist methodology is to activate change, I conclude that, in line with the suggestions of sexual difference theory, this research itself has participated in the potential to activate change.

## Conclusion

The research question for this thesis was: How can feminist theory be incorporated into analyzing masculinist corporation's work-culture and what interventions does it suggest? In order to answer the research question I had three sub-questions. The first sub-question was: How does feminist theory reflect on masculinist spaces and space for the feminine therein? Through my reading of the debate surrounding sexual difference I found the suggestion that every space is appropriated for the masculine. As sexual difference theory suggests, the available representations for women and the feminine have either an identical, an opposite or a complementary function to the masculine. Sexual difference theory suggests deconstruction of the phallogocentric system and Woman, affirming the positivity of difference, the subjects' becoming and the embodiment of the speaking subject, and instead of playing the old game, starting new games from blind spots that occur when patriarchal rationalizations are naturalized or presumably self-evident.

The second sub-question was: How can feminist theory on masculinist spaces be combined with organizational theory concerning the feminine in work-cultures? I found that the deconstruction sexual difference theory calls for is possible through the gender subtext's combination of gendered processes, the ideal worker and hegemonic power. Also sexual difference theory's strategies for change can be combined with the organizational theory to reveal sites for potential intervention. The third sub-question was: How can the theoretical framework mentioned above be applied in an analysis of a case study presenting a masculinist corporation's work-culture and what does it reveal in the way of practices and potential interventions? I found that the theoretical framework can be applied to an analysis of a masculinist work-culture, by using the gender subtext as a means of locating and deconstructing the blind spots that occur when gendered practice are (re-)produced through hegemonic power, as these become sites for intervention and change.

In response to my research question, the combined theoretical framework can be applied in analysis, by using the gender subtext to reveal the genderedness of workplace practices and the reproduction of this genderedness through the workings of hegemonic (naturalizing, self-evident) and hierarchical (privileging the masculine) power. An analysis of practices through the gender subtext also has the capability to reveal the genderedness of workplace performances, as well as how notions of the ideal worker perpetuate gender inequalities. Through sexual difference theory we have found that when phallogocentric narratives smooth over gender inequalities, they are simply perpetuated. However, it is from *within* such blind spots that an opportunity arises to rework that cultural language and rethink the meaning given to practices through revaluing sexual difference. Adding a discourse of equality to the establishment does not necessarily constitute a straightforward intervention, as striving for equality in the terms of sameness does not work, thus striving to be like the 'ideal worker' will not work. Sexual difference theory instead suggests a move away from an (unattainable) gender-neutral and disembodied notion of the working subject to revalue workers in terms of their (embodied) *difference*.

Apart from the reflection on my research in chapter five, I have a few more recommendations for how this research can be extended. I have touched upon the theory of hegemonic masculinities briefly in chapter two, but I have not engaged it any further in chapter five. I realize that the theory of

hegemonic masculinities can add value to this topic, as it can help in deconstructing power relations between men and men, thus elaborating on the variety of masculinities, performed in the workplace. However, the scope of this thesis did not allow space for further work with these theories in its analysis. These theories also connect into the interests of this thesis because they pick up on the work of Hofstede, stressing how cultural and societal appropriations influence the meanings of masculinity and femininity. Thus, in future research into this context I could work with these meanings in more detail.

After the close reading of the theory for this thesis, I would rethink the questions I posed to connect to the gender subtext. Asking specific questions so as to reveal gendered practices thereby lays bare the blind spots needed for intervention. Hofstede's values can be useful for future research, especially as it encouraged respondents to positively revalue the feminine values presented to them. However, it could do with a feminist makeover, to tackle its universal and dualist overtones. In addition to this, in future research I would like to speak to the concept of intersectionality more. Had I been able to use all data that I obtained, I could have explored a more intersectional analysis and focused more specifically on the concept of diversity, however, the scope of this thesis did not allow for that.

In conclusion, sexual difference theory suggests that we move away from categorizing and numbering diversity, and cautions against striving for equality in terms of sameness. It also suggests that we move away from the idea of disembodied subject and instead positively revalue the *differences* in and amongst workers in the organizational context. The multi-layered focus of the gender subtext helps to identify how power relations (re-)produce gender inequalities within the organization, and has the potential of deconstructing the meaning given to these processes, which it proposes are embedded in the cultural language of the workplace. While the analysis provided here remains preliminary, it also provides some opportunities for change that can be taken up by the organization, that start with acknowledging that space for the feminine and different subjectivities has yet to be created in this case. The sites I have flagged as carrying potential for interventions are: the gendered progression of employees; *homophily*; a move away from an "it takes time"-mentality towards active change; rethinking the value of status in terms of visibility; rethinking the 'ideal worker' present in "the Professional" and the specific type-casting of the rooster; rethinking the concept of maternity; and moving from a discourse of equality towards a revaluation of workers in in terms of their differences.

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