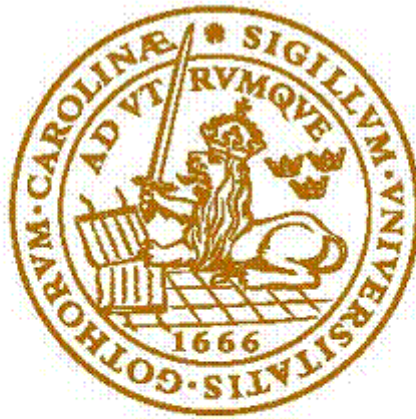


Master Thesis

“Winnie the Pooh versus Foosball – do we still categorize?”

by Daniela Hirsch & Sylvia Morgenstern

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UNIVERSITY**

Supervisor: Sara Louise Muhr

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
METHOD AND METHODOLOGY	5
THEORY	12
DUALISM	12
FLUIDITY	16
MULTIPLICITY	19
THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION	23
EMPIRICS	27
DISCUSSION	74
CONCLUSION	78

Table of Figures

GRAPH 1: ILLUSTRATION OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE CREATIVE COMPANY	28
GRAPH 2: ILLUSTRATION OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE R&D CENTER	54

Introduction

Despite the current attempt of scholars over the last decades to liberate literature from the dualistic, binary-minded gender thinking by presenting multiple concepts of gender identity construction (cf. Pullen & Simpson 2009; Linstead & Pullen 2006), our society is still constructed by the differentiation of women and men based on stereotypes (Nentwich 2006; Billing & Alvesson 2000).

These stereotypes are connected to the human sex which is assumed to be given by nature and, thus, an individual is born into it (Garfinkel 1967; West & Zimmerman 1987). The sex is accompanied by a masculine or feminine gender which includes different character traits as well as rules and roles. The society defines and assigns which traits and behaviors are appropriate for each sex and thus appropriate for each gender (Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009; West & Fenstermaker 1995). In our contemporary Western world, the male sex is assumed to be, amongst other, technical-oriented and rational while females are regarded as creative-oriented and emotional (Pullen & Knights 2007). Since our society considers rationality as more valuable than emotionality, men are seen as superior to women (Pullen & Knights 2007). Through this creation of stereotypes and gender behavior, a dualistic thinking is produced (Deutsch 2007).

The dualistic perspective is also reflected in the field of management and leadership as society differentiates between leaders and followers. The role of the leader is mainly executed by men whereas women take on the role of the follower. The traditional organizational hierarchy is based on this role assignment (Bowring 2004). This is mirrored within the traditional bureaucracy and leadership style which is viewed as masculine. Nowadays, the masculine structure and leading fashion is contrasted with a feminine leadership, which is also regarded as visionary, and a feminine bureaucracy also called post-bureaucracy. Feminine bureaucracy is characterized by a flat hierarchy and decentralized control. Additionally, the visionary leadership is marked by community building and, thus, the involvement of employees (Billing & Alvesson 2000; Ashcraft 2006).

Dualism is criticized by West & Fenstermaker (1995) because it demands either masculinity or femininity within one individual. But since gender is socially constructed and societies differ in culture and norms, multiple forms of masculinity and femininity should be allowed (West & Fenstermaker 1995).

Due to the critique of dualism the new fluidity perspective has evolved which allows a broader spectrum of possibilities to live out gender. Within this approach, sex is not regarded as naturally given but, as well as gender, it is viewed as a social construct (Salih & Butler 2004). Hence, a certain sex does not imply a certain gender but both genders can be performed by one individual (Butler 1990). Furthermore, gender is not a state of being but a dynamic performance that is depending on the social context (Deutsch 2007, Kerfoot & Knights 1998). By using the term “performance”, it does not mean playing or acting but evolving in “linguistic and discursive terms” (Salih & Butler 2004, p. 91). This demonstrates the difference to dualism.

As an extension of the fluidity concept, the perspective of multiplicity does not narrow the performance of gender to a single mode of masculinity and femininity. Instead, it allows the existence of multiple forms (Linstead & Pullen 2006). One individual has the ability to represent diverse gender identities at the same time. The construction of gender identities is influenced by the individual’s exposure to his/her experiences (West & Fenstermaker 1995). Moreover, multiplicity strives for the removal of gender categorization. The concepts of fluidity and multiplicity try to allow more freedom in order to live out individual gender identities. Our analysis, though, will show that due to social influences, people still fall back to gender stereotypes (Deutsch 2007; Pullen & Simpson 2009).

After a critical reflection of the gender literature we, as a further step, point at important issues that we identified. These issues will be discussed in the theoretical contribution where we then concentrate on the inevitable correlation between dualism and fluidity as well as dualism and multiplicity. As an example of the overlapping of duality and fluidity, we accentuate the phenomenon of excess which emerges at the border of dualism to fluidity (Borgerson & Rehn 2004). In addition, we highlight and clarify the differentiation between multiplicity and gender equality which is commonly equalized within the literature.

The understanding we gained from the gender literature inspired us to do a critical gender-based analysis within a technical occupation which is commonly considered as male dominated (Kelan 2010; Chambers 2005), and a creative occupation which is mostly favored by women (Chambers 2005; Kelan 2010; Billing & Alvesson 2000). Our analysis is based on data consisting of observation, interviews and field notes.

A part of our studies has been done within a creative department of a large media business company in Denmark. This unit employs more women than men and therefore presents an interesting research site for stereotypes. The same counts for the Research &

Development Center of a knowledge intensive firm that we visited in Germany where the majority of the workforce consists of men. Our original intention was to investigate how or if a gender distinction is estimated and lived by our interviewees within two opposite fields. This original research purpose was though extended and was further evolved during the analysis and resulted into two continuative questions: “In which situation is gender threatened or protected?” and “When do people feel the need to gender leadership?”

In our analysis we explored that, on the surface, the creative unit behaves according to the expected stereotypes such as using empathy and being creative. Also the office design reflected a strong feminine culture, since Disney books and toys were visible everywhere. But after a closer analysis that goes beyond the surface, we explored that women adapted and performed to a certain extend masculine behavior. This was visible within the management team as well as on the lower level. Within the management team, on the one hand, we experienced a masculine ethic as well as a rational and strategic focus. On the other hand, at the lower level, the wish for more male influence was expressed.

Also within the analysis of the Research & Development Center the distinction between the stereotypical behavior, superficially, and the performance against social norms, beyond the surface, became evident. The male majority within the organization that showed a strong technical affinity confirms to the stereotype. Moreover, the management team demonstrated a masculine behavior, expressed through rationality, instrumentality and goal-orientation. Additionally, all interviewees regarded long working hours as normal. A deeper analysis though unfolded the feminine orientation regarding leadership and bureaucracy. Hence, we identified a visionary and community supporting leadership style and an organizational structure based on a flat hierarchy and power decentralization, amongst other.

After a close analysis of the two cases we identified the two discussion questions, mentioned above, which made us distance ourselves from the binary thinking and critically reflect upon it. In the creative unit we identified a gender conflict between management (masculine) and the lower creative level (feminine) which causes gender identity struggle of some of the management team members. In the technical company, in contrast, we could not discover any signs of gender conflicts as the technical occupation is so strongly masculine defined by society, so that it is not questioned. This does not apply to the creative company.

Withdrawn from our analysis and discussion section, we point out a variety of implications which are formulated as a practical contribution. This includes explaining the

positive and negative aspects of communication, mentioning the benefits of post-bureaucracy and feminine leadership, e.g. job rotation, relationship building and an integrative work style, as well as recommending a mixed use of feminine and masculine skills. Furthermore, we show the relation to the discussion section which indicates the influence of identity struggles.

In the course of the thesis, we will first bring up a description of the methodology that our analysis is based on. By the means of our methodology we took a critical perspective on the gender theory as well as on the assessment of our interviewees. Afterwards, we will turn to a presentation of the different perspectives articulated in gender literature (traditional as well as critical) which are then applied to our both cases. After our case analysis we reflect upon the findings of our research in a separated discussion section. Finally, we will end in a conclusion that also comprises practical implications taken from the case analysis as well as from the discussion.

We will now present the methodology in order to give a first understanding of what our thesis is about as well as of which perspectives our analysis is built on.

Methodology

In the framework of our thesis we conducted a study with qualitative focus. Qualitative research focuses on the ‘why’ of empirical results (Ereaut 2007). We therefore concentrated our study on interviews and observations to emphasize the investigative character of our approach and to be able to achieve in-depth results. The interviews were conducted to understand and to attain insight about the feelings, emotions, values and beliefs of the interviewees. Additionally, observations and field notes were made to complement this “inner” picture of a person by the “outer” picture, which is presented in the environment, the social as well as the cultural context. Furthermore, it is an essential element of qualitative analysis to be as open as possible towards the empirical data to enable different, multiple perspectives and interpretations of the material. When analyzing the interviews, the observations and the field notes a critical reflection and openness towards the interpretation of the empirical results was attempted (Ereaut 2007; Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000).

The study is based on 18 interviews at two different empirical settings, carried out over a period of one month. We conducted ten interviews in the, rather female dominated,

creative unit of a Danish media company. Two of these interviews were held by phone. The duration of the interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes, interviewing seven women and three men at various hierarchical levels, of different ages and varied stages of life. As a second setting we chose the technical, male dominated, Research & Development Center of a knowledge intensive firm, located in Germany. Three of these eight interviews in Germany were also held by phone, the rest were made in the German company, where we spend a week of observation as well. These interviews took between 45 minutes and 60 minutes. We were scheduled to interview seven men and one woman. However, the interview with the woman had to be canceled. Hence, without exception, we interviewed only men. The respondents in this setting also differed, similar to the creative unit, in the hierarchical level, age and stage of life.

All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. The German excerpts used within this paper are our translations as native speakers of the German language. The remaining interviews were conducted in English and, therefore, transcribed in English.

It was essential for our studies to interview as many employees as possible from different areas with various backgrounds within the units to acquire a broad understanding and overall picture of the culture and structure of the two companies respectively units. As both companies are located in two different countries we have to acknowledge the cultural differences that are accompanied. But, as the course of the thesis will demonstrate, the occupational identity, in our case, is stronger than the country identity. This means that, during our interviews, we could not explore obvious cultural differences between the countries but we realized strong occupational identities within each company. The cultural differences are, thus, less of a problem for the overall analysis and conclusion of our thesis.

As mentioned above, the focus of this study is a comparison between a technical occupation which is commonly considered as male dominated (Kelan 2010; Chambers 2005), and a creative occupation which is mostly favored by women (Chambers 2005; Kelan 2010; Billing & Alvesson 2000). As this distinction can be understood as an obvious stereotyped gender differentiation (Fournier & Smith 2006; Kelan 2010; Billing & Alvesson 2000) our emphasis was to critically analyze how or if this distinction is estimated and lived by our interviewees.

Following the interviewing style of Ashcraft (2005) our interviews were minimally structured, asking the interviewees questions about their background, their position and tasks in the company, the relation to their colleagues as well as their life outside work. By doing this we created a comfortable climate, talking about their feelings, emotions and experiences and building up an atmosphere of trust. This interview style follows the ‘romantic position’, which Alvesson (2003) is actually criticizing. These interview techniques are supposed to build up an atmosphere of trust and an access to the “inner world” (their feelings, emotions and beliefs) of the interviewees. Alvesson (2003, p. 16), however, claims that these techniques distort the realistic perception of an interview and the objective position of the interviewer towards the study. This distortion is caused, according to Alvesson (2003), because the interviewer participates in the interview situation and takes part in the interviewee’s life in this moment. This tempts the interviewer to see the world with the respondent’s eyes and to take the answers at face value (Alvesson 2003).

We, however, believe in the value of an approach inspired by the methods Alvesson calls romantic. Due to our sensitive research topic, our aim was to create a comfortable situation for the interviewee. Furthermore, we considered it as important that the interview partner felt trust and confidence. In contrast to Alvesson’s critique, we, though, did not take any answer at face value. We wanted to understand the position of the interviewee; therefore, it was crucial that we got more insight about their “inner world”. By doing this we did not get distorted but we achieved the possibility to critically reflect and question the interviewees’ answers, their values and beliefs. We received a realistic picture as we created this trustful environment in every interview, not by sympathizing with certain interviewees. The careful listening to every interviewee enabled us the critical reflection of the statements of all interviewees of the unit and we gained a broad picture of the unit and the interactions and relations between the employees. Furthermore, to avoid being ‘distorted’, we supplemented the interviews with long observations, which made it possible for us to compare the interview statements with real live behaviors.

Additionally, we focused on the gender difference between these occupational fields but in order to keep the intimacy boundaries intact we constructed the interviews in a way to make the respondents feel comfortable. Therefore, no forced, direct questions about this topic were asked. However, as gender was an underlying topic and a continuous influencing factor throughout the interviews we posed questions we knew would lead us to this topic. As an example, questions can be mentioned about the nature of their occupation (technical and

creative), the work load, their relationship to other team members, or, if applicable, their double burden as team manager and part of the management team and the accordant behavior. Only in the end of our interviews we asked concrete questions about the ratio of men and women in the department and the reasons for this division. As we still did not want to offend the interviewees' privacy and we did not want to destroy the trustful relationship between the respondents and us, we posed these questions as "by the way"-questions, which came up due to our personal interest, briefly before we finished the interviews. In this situation, the interviewees did not feel forced and still most of them had an opinion about it.

Furthermore, we posed questions about the leadership / management style of men and women. And, mostly, we asked further leadership-related questions as we realized during our study that people assigned certain characteristics to a "typical" masculine or feminine leadership style.

Since we conducted these interviews at the interviewees' working place we also adopted the role of observers. This was an important part of our study to complement the picture we gained from the interviewees during the interviews. We made notes about the atmosphere of the location and the office structure. Moreover, we examined how the interviewees talked to each other. We observed how gender was used or not used in different situations when the respondents interacted with each other. Every day when we were on the interviewee's working place, we were also invited for lunch, which we understood as a further sign of trust between the respondents and us. These lunches gave us the possibility to make further observations and we revealed discrepancies between what the interviewees said and how they acted. Most of the interviewees talked and acted differently on a location apart from the working desk and we unfolded that, among our interviewees, there were people who networked with the same people they worked with as well as people who went for lunch with complete different colleagues. After every lunch break, we discussed the previous situation and took field notes about the observations we made. We exchanged our views on the settings, on conversations we found interesting as well as on the behavior of the interviewees. In summary, besides the interviews, it was our aim to take part in the daily business environment of the interview partners in order to investigate and observe how they acted as well as to understand their statements and to explore their contradictions.

Examining the literature as well as the interview data we take a critical perspective. With our study we therefore challenge general assumptions of the gender theory and question

the empirical data we gained in the two companies. By analyzing the empirical data we are going underneath the surface and try to find the deeper meaning (deeper structure) in our data. According to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) we acknowledge the existence of a surface structure, which “refers to the world in which individuals lead their conscious lives, where things are natural and existence is [...] rational and comprehensible” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000, p. 136). The focus is thereby on the problematization and examination of the apparent natural and self-evident (Muhr, lecture on research methods, Thursday, 4th March, 2010).

Furthermore, by concentrating on the deeper meaning we challenge “those unquestioned beliefs and values upon which the taken-for-granted surface structure rests” (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000, p. 136). Thus, our aim is to reveal these unquestioned beliefs and values of our interviewees and to use them in our examination to prove or disprove general assumptions of the gender theory. Moreover, we seek to point out the relationship between historical, political and social context (i.e. the different perspectives in literature) and the apparently given, empirical findings (interview data). This refers back to the request of Alvesson (lecture on research methods, Wednesday, 28th January, 2010) to interpret the empirical material by not being limited to it or by not taking it at face value. To put it in Alvesson and Sköldbberg’s words (2000, p. 137): “As researchers we can and must make [...] critical assessments of plausibilities”. We are aware of the influential factors on the empirical results but we also question the way people normally do things, revealing the unusual (Mingers 2000).

Besides that we focus on the analysis of the dialogues between the interviewees, questioning the way our respondents communicate, especially as gender-related questions seemed to present a sensitive topic for most of our interview partners. This relates also to the natural way we posed gender-related questions so that the respondents did not feel forced into this matter. By questioning the communication between our respondents we show a critical, reflexive position towards their statements and do not take everything for granted. In contrast, we seek to reveal the meaning behind the statement of our interviewees.

In addition to the critical perspective we take elements of feminist methodology into consideration for the evaluation of our empirical results and their connection with the literature.

Feminist methodology consists of two different stages, which are historically determined. This shift from the first feminist methodology development to the most recent

one reflects the literature movement from gender stereotyping to gender multiplicity. The first stage presents the roots of feminism, which are based on the women's detachment from the male dominance. This is also proved by Mitchell and Oakley (2010) who regard the categorization of gender (gender stereotyping) and the female exploitation by men as a basis for feminism. The application of a female perspective on social phenomena contrasts the previous male-dominant literature on them. Insofar, this methodology is understood as a mean to give voice to the "oppressed" women in social science (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000). This movement deals with feminist methodology by clearly focusing on gender relations and categorizations. It expounds the problems of gender inequality and criticizes existent methodologies to reach an improved status of women within society (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000; Cassinger, lecture on feminist methodology, Thursday, 18th February, 2010). This development can clearly be connected to critical theory as the **questioning** of the male dominance over the women is in the center of this stage of feminist methodology.

The development of today's feminist methodology therefore becomes more crucial for our study. The underlying purpose is now the questioning of the gender stereotypes, which relates directly to the critical reflection of these stereotypes in our study. Gender multiplicity rather than gender binary is the underlying notion of today's feminist methodology (Fournier & Smith 2006). Moreover, emotions and intuition in general are of great importance to understand the way we know society and point to the important fact that feminist methodology is less about gender differences and more about minorities' standpoints in general. This also refers to the term 'revoicing', which is used by Alvesson (lecture on research methods, Wednesday, 3rd February, 2010). By doing this, we give space to multiple voices. Coming back to our study, this means the evaluation of all interviews and the careful listening and assessment of all interviewees. This leads us to a more diversified interpretation and unfolds multiple perspectives of the different respondents' opinions (Alvesson, lecture on research methods, Wednesday, 3rd February, 2010; Boje 1995; Mingers 2000). Hence, as an example, we put the minor masculine voice in the creative unit in contrast to the major feminine voice and listen to both, revealing the contradictions and similarities.

This example also refers to and is emphasized by Haraway's perspective. By criticizing the subjectivity of male literature as a one-sided perspective on social topics Haraway (1988) supports a feminist objectivity. The objectivity is, in her point of view, given by the consideration of multiple voices and perspectives. From her stance, these minor voices are not necessarily the female voices. In contrast, this can also be, as in our example, the voice

of a man who forms the minority in his unit. She emphasizes the importance of contextual factors such as political, historical or social components and relates them to the consideration of minorities of race, class and also gender (but not necessarily female gender!).

The advancement of feminist methodology contributes to the assumptions of poststructuralism as the gender difference itself is questioned. The poststructuralist researcher questions the obvious and the existence of reality, and instead makes attempts to open up phenomena (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000). The difference between female and male (gender stereotyping) is not made anymore; instead, there is the focus on gender multiplicity. However, this shift / development itself will, as we will see later, be challenged and questioned by our study.

In addition, our study follows the distinction, which Calás and Smircich (1999) have made. In a poststructuralist perspective not only the gender difference is questioned but also the consideration of gender, as a social construction, which can be separated from the denotation 'sex' as a biological term. Moreover, "gender relations are theorized, to observe how both men and women, together, constituted gendered conditions that produced very entangled webs of power/knowledge" (Calás & Smircich 1999, p. 660). Hence, the relationship between men and women, on an equal level as well as on a superior level in the unit, are investigated. This relates to the examination of the respondents' statements about the different leadership styles – masculine versus feminine - and how both man and woman use knowledge or power to perform a managerial task.

In summary, the analysis of our study is based on the interview data and on the literature, pointing out stereotyped versus critical gender thinking which emphasizes amongst other fluidity, gender switching and multiplicity. To underline the importance we ascribed to the different voices of the respondents, the focus of the thesis is on examination of the empirical cases and how the general assumptions of gender theory are challenged by them.

In the following section we will turn to the underlying theory of our topic and will present and discuss the different standpoints towards gender theory.

Theory

“Is ‘the body’ or ‘the sexed body’ the firm foundation on which gender and systems of compulsory sexuality operate? Or is ‘the body’ itself shaped by political forces with strategic interests in keeping that body bounded and constituted by the marks of sex?” (Salih & Butler 2004, p.103)

Within our society, dualistic thinking is a common phenomenon resulting from the creation of stereotypes (Deutsch 2007). People talk about black and white or self and other, to name just a few (Borgerson & Rehn 2004). A prevalent form of dualism is the differentiation between men and women, which the paper will explore further (Garfinkel 1967). This dualistic approach, however, has been criticized from a fluidity and multiplicity perspective. Within the fluidity perspective, individuals float between the two poles, masculinity and femininity, while within a multiplicity perspective a variety of gender identities can be adopted by one individual (Billing & Alvesson 2000). To demonstrate the different concepts within the current gender literature, we start by presenting the traditional dualistic perspective. As critical perspectives we then discuss the concepts fluidity and multiplicity.

Dualism

Within dualism, masculinity and femininity are seen as two poles in which someone is born into and which are accompanied by a specific gender role (Borgerson & Rehn 2004; West & Zimmerman 1987). This distinction arises because of socially created stereotypes and norms, and a general duality in the Western Society is the division between the sex man and woman. This division is accepted as natural since it is expected to be rooted within biology (Deutsch 2007; Garfinkel 1967; West & Zimmerman 1987). It is in this way assumed that each sex has a corresponding gender that embraces matching feminine and masculine character traits. These gender traits then prescribe rules and roles for behavior, which are assigned by society, and which are difficult to resist (Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009; West & Fenstermaker 1995). Reflecting the dualistic view, West & Fenstermaker define gender as “the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s own sex category” (1995, p. 127).

Femininity can, therefore, be seen as the antithesis to masculinity and an individual can only belong to one of the categories because they are related to the biological sex and

therefore expected to be oppositional (West & Fenstermaker 1995; Nentwich 2006; Billing & Alvesson 2000; Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009). Connected to the opposing sex and therefore to the body are differences in abilities, interests and attitudes (Nentwich 2006). Men are seen as rational, authoritarian, aggressive, analytical, technical-oriented as well as goal driven and it is not in their nature to show emotions. Instead, they seek control and autonomy. In situations where there is the danger of losing control, men tend to react in a violent way (Fournier & Smith 2006; Pullen & Simpson 2009; Kerfoot & Knights 1998). Women, on the contrary, are associated with soft qualities. They are described as emotional, weak, irrational, creative and helpful. In a work context, women are assumed to be more able than men to balance risk, and decisions are made partly based on intuition. Women are described to be more involved in their work task than males and they enjoy teamwork. Through teamwork, they listen to colleagues and try to enforce participation with the help of motivation as well as by sharing information and power. When it comes to failures, women are likely to deal with them in a more pragmatic way (Fournier & Smith 2006; Pullen & Simpson 2009; Kerfoot & Knights 1998; Ryan, Haslam & Postmes 2007; Billing & Alvesson 2000; Acker 2000). Within organizations, mainly when it comes to male-dominated occupations, women are seen as less professional than men (Ashcraft 2007). Due to stereotypes, a conceptual hierarchy is created which puts men on top because of their rationality and women as subordinate due to their emotionality (Pullen & Knights 2007).

The field of management and leadership traditionally reflects this binary thinking since it differentiates between leaders, which are mainly seen as men, and followers, a role mostly assigned to women (Bowring 2004). A “masculine ethic”, especially at senior level, determines the conditions necessary for being a good leader. According to this ethic, a good leader needs an analytical ability for abstracting and planning, an uncompromising way of dealing with problems and instrumentality. Furthermore, personal issues have to stay outside of work and working 70 hours is expected to be a normal workload (Billing & Alvesson 2000; Brockband & Traves 1997). These are all masculine traits that lead to the exclusion of women when it comes to being a successful leader. Therefore, a hierarchy is constructed, in which women can only be followers because they will never be able to provide the essential characteristics due to their sex. Women are assumed to be conflict and risk averse and fear success (Billing & Alvesson; Brockband & Traves 1997; Bowring 2004). Within the dualistic approach the explanation for a female minority within management positions is that men and women are just different (Brockband & Travis 1997).

Within the hierarchy a so called “glass ceiling”, a hidden barrier that is preventing women from going up the hierarchy, is perceived by females. Men, on the contrary, enjoy the “glass escalator” which supports them in accelerating up the hierarchy (Ryan, Haslam & Postmes 2007). When women break through the “glass ceiling” and become a leader they often experience a “glass cliff”. The leadership positions women get assigned are often more risky and doomed to failure than positions that are offered to men. Reasons for “glass cliff” situations can be sexism within the workplace, or women being used as scapegoats for dubious situations. In addition, women lack support networks in leadership positions, especially when entering a male-dominated area as men tend to favor their male friends. Although aware of these disadvantages, women tend to accept leadership positions because there are so few leadership opportunities. The “glass cliff” is often caused by, and perpetuated by, gender stereotypes that people believe in (Ryan, Haslam & Postmes 2007).

Nowadays, the current leadership is defined in feminine terms. It is portrayed as non-hierarchical, participatory and flexible. Furthermore, it is marked as relational and builds on networks and shared responsibilities. People are asked to be creative and in return gain the possibility to learn and develop (Billing & Alvesson 2000). There is, moreover, a joint relationship between the leader and the follower due to the community-orientation (Elliot & Stead 2008). This type of connective leadership is labeled as feminine or post-heroic (Billing & Alvesson 2000, Elliot & Stead 2008). However, the labeling of feminine leadership itself underlines dualism and stereotyping (Billing & Alvesson 2000; Acker 2000). In this way, feminine leadership values are assumed to be the beliefs, behavior, feelings and mindset of women. It is as such a woman-centered perspective, which highlights female differences (Grant 1988). As gender is fixed and unchangeable within the dualistic perspective, it serves as a justification to bring more women into management (West & Zimmerman 1987, Grant 1988).

The dualistic split between feminine and masculine is apparent in leadership literature, in particular, in the approaches of transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leaders use direct control and power. Here, the leader-follower relationship is marked by an exchange process where the leader offers rewards or sanctions depending on the follower’s performance and compliance (Jackson & Perry 2008). On the contrary, transformational leadership is a visionary approach where the leader is seen as a “manager of meaning” who supports the followers to make sense of the given situation (Jackson & Parry 2008).

Not only can leadership be labeled as masculine or feminine, but also types of organizational structure (Ashcraft 2006). Ashcraft (2006) defines the two forms of organizational structure: bureaucracy and post-bureaucracy; the latter also referred to as feminine bureaucracy. Traditionally, organizations consisted of a hierarchy, where the decision-making power is centralized at the top. The purpose of this organization is a strict instrumental one, for example performance optimization, and therefore the optimal workforce consists of a homogeneous group that has an impersonal and rational relationship. There is a strict division between private and work life. Specific work tasks are identified and standardized so employees only have to follow the defined work steps (Ashcraft 2006). As within the field of leadership and management, a shift within the organizational structure towards post-bureaucracy is noticeable. In post-bureaucracy structures, decision-making power is decentralized and practiced in a collective manner. Furthermore, there is no strict hierarchy and the rotation of tasks among people is preferred. The goals of the organization are less instrumental but rather more of a moral nature, also resulting in a different type of workforce as people are chosen on the basis of personal experiences and skills. The aim of this structure type is to build a community where people can combine work and private life, show emotions and develop personal relationships with colleagues. Although the employees may have heterogeneous backgrounds, within the company they share the same values, ideals as well as a common culture which makes them a homogeneous group in understanding and interpreting work tasks and goals (Ashcraft 2006, Sandberg & Targama 2007). Similar to leadership and management, the labeling of organizational structures strengthens stereotypes, reinforcing dualism as we differentiate between structures described with masculine attributes and structures described with feminine attributes (Ashcraft 2006).

A critical perspective on the concept of dualism argues that gender, like race and class, are context dependent due to social and cultural differences and therefore there is no single mode of masculinity or femininity (West & Fenstermaker 1995). Moreover, because of stereotypes, men are by definition not allowed to be emotional, show empathy or care about others since that is feminine. The same applies to women, since it is not suitable for a “real woman” to show masculine traits. This restrains men and women and disables equality (Billing & Alvesson 2000; Knights & Kerfoot 2004). So, if men and women are only allowed to act out gender traits that are related to their sex, how can women demonstrating masculine behavior in male-dominated areas be explained? As a last critical aspect can be mentioned that gender should not be seen as something fix but as a process (Kerfoot & Knights 1998).

Fluidity

Duality has been criticized for disregarding the context dependency of gender and therefore the emerging possibility of being both masculine and feminine. Furthermore, dualism is accused of ignoring the possibility of men adopting feminine traits and women adopting masculine traits (Billing & Alvesson 2000; Knights & Kerfoot 2004; West & Fenstermaker 1995; Kerfoot & Knights 1998). By incorporating some of the criticism about gender dualism, a new gender perspective, the concept of fluidity, has evolved. Fluidity means floating between two poles - floating between masculinity and femininity - where certain character traits can occur and overlap (Borgerson & Rehn 2004; Fournier & Smith 2006). The concept of fluidity assumes that gender is detached from the body, i.e. a certain sex does not necessarily imply a certain gender. Hence, gender is not seen as oppositional but complementary – men and women may certainly be bi-gendered (Billing & Alvesson 2000; Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009). This concept therefore represents an alternative to dualism and essentialism where gender is not a state of being but a performance (Borgerson & Rehn 2004; Fournier & Smith 2006; Pullen & Simpson 2009, Butler 1990). Since it is socially constructed, it is also dependent on the context and adapts to changes in social norms. Thus, gender is not static but dynamic in its nature because it is created within social relationships (Deutsch 2007; Kerfoot & Knights 1998). Given its fluidity between both sexes, gender switching is a possible phenomenon where individuals move between masculine and feminine behavior (Pullen & Simpson 2009).

One of the most influential scholars who supports the fluidity perspective is Judith Butler. Butler (1990) introduces the term “performativity” when discussing gender and sexuality. She denies the pre-existence of a natural body and claims that the body, as well as sex and gender, are socially constructed by discourses and norms (Salih & Butler 2004). All three elements are performed, whereas performativity does not mean playing or acting but evolving in “linguistic and discursive terms” (Salih & Butler 2004, p. 91). This indicates that gender is something we “do” rather than something that we are, caused by a social discourse (Butler 1990). An example is Butler’s metaphor of girling the girl:

“A girl is named a girl in an ultrasound examination or at birth. This naming functions as a performative act and creates the girl as a social reality. However, this process is not complete until the girl responds to the label ‘girl’ by citing subject positions that are deemed

appropriate for girls. The girl needs to create herself constantly as a girl through citing gendered subject positions” (Butler 1997, in Kelan 2010, p. 181).

When a girl is born she is not treated as neutral but is discursively constructed by society and therefore becoming a gendered subject (Salih & Butler 2004). Thus, Butler claims that in contrast to dualism, neither sex nor gender can be assumed to be naturally given but both are discursively constructed by social norms and culture (Salih & Butler 2004).

“Doing” gender also means that an individual, who has performed as a man, can now choose to perform female activities and behavior. The same applies vice versa for women who can perform rather masculine behavior (Butler 1990). Thus, “[...] individuals are active agents who organize their behavior to express gender” (West & Fenstermaker 1995, p. 127).

According to West & Zimmerman we are “always women or men, unless we shift into another sex category” (1987, p. 139). An individual feels the desire to shift into another sex category because of the social pressure and different environments. People start acting appropriate to gender stereotypes, knowing that they are judged according to what is defined as a suitable masculine or feminine performance (Deutsch 2007). Since gender is a performativity, we also perform it at the workplace. For example women working in a male dominated occupation perform gender in a particular way to gain acceptance. This can also account for men working in a female dominated occupation (Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009). In order to shift into the other sex categories individuals “do” gender with the aim to avoid the gender inequality and stereotypical thinking they would experience otherwise (Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009; Deutsch 2007). Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty (2009) describe certain strategies that can be applied to “do” gender. One strategy is to act like one of them. This means that an individual tries to blend in by performing either masculine or feminine behavior and not allowing special treatment. Masculinity or femininity can be performed with looks, self-presentation and by accepting that there are certain expectations (Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009). Further strategies for “doing” gender are to accept that there is a gender inequity, trying to justify the discriminating actions or to gain a reputation and respect that makes gender differences inessential. Some individuals just try to see the advantages of the job over the disadvantages that gender inequality entails. Last but not least, people could distance themselves from their own sex and the accompanying traits, enjoying being around the other sex (Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009). An example can be the “Queen Bee Syndrome”, described by Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty (2009). This syndrome describes how women enjoy being masculine and enjoy being around men. Furthermore,

these women criticize other women for using their feminine traits and think in a stereotypical way about women outside of their “male” occupation (Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009). But while the women engineers “do” gender in a masculine way in order to be accepted, they “undo” the female gender in a bad way by devaluating it (Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009). If a woman, for example, is successful in her managerial position, she is most likely judged as not feminine. As soon as she displays her femininity she is not considered as a good manager (Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009). Therefore, it is necessary for women to adapt to the male culture or they will remain in less important positions. If a woman does not want to adapt to the masculine values, she has to risk being isolated from the group (Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009). While the dualism approach explained the minority of women in leading positions with the difference between men and women, the fluidity approach argues that men and women are the same but that the social context supports men in management positions (Brockbank & Traves 1997).

Regarding organizations and the management within the fluidity approach, women can adopt a masculine way of managing and men can use empathy to feel with their employees. In the case of women, they tend to be too severe or too hard; much more than men would be (Brockbank & Traves 1997). But as a matter of fact, individuals enter social relationships with certain beliefs about gender - beliefs that are created by social cultures and norms. This makes it difficult for people to behave against what is stated as normal by the norms without being questioned by others (Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009; Kelan 2010).

Furthermore, considering leadership styles for practicing female leadership, it is not particularly necessary to get more women into leading positions, since men can also practice these values (Billing & Alvesson 2000).

Fluidity can be compared to Nentwich’s bandwidth repertoire. The possibilities for being a man or a woman are increased but differences still remain. Only the sex is seen as less exclusive, leading to a critique of the fluidity approach (Nentwich 2006). It does not eliminate the two poles or solve the problem of gender inequality but only erases it from the agenda (Borgerson & Rehn 2004). The stereotypes still remain since women who are acting in a masculine way are seen as inauthentic. Still, there are dominant forms on how to perform masculinity and femininity but as they are socially constructed, one should be able to find variations (Fournier & Smith 2006). “Doing” gender creates stereotypes and inequality because “doing” one gender devalues the other (Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009). Studies continue to focus on how the gender binary remains within workplaces. They remain because

when “doing” gender, individuals try to fit in and thus, do not challenge the binaries (Kelan 2010; Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009). However, it is questionable whether gender inequalities can be addressed without using gender binaries (Fournier & Smith 2006).

According to the “doing” gender approach, gender is constructed and therefore one should also be able to deconstruct it (Deutsch 2007).

Multiplicity

Billing and Alvesson (2000) already underlined the importance of a dynamic gender. Men and women construct their gender in social relationships every day (cf. Tylor & Cohen 2008). So, by adjusting to contemporary situations, they “do” or “undo” gender (Deutsch 2007). The phenomenon of “doing” / “undoing” gender has already been explained in the previous section about fluidity and we will now turn to an extension of this concept, called gender multiplicity. As we will show below, there are close connections between these concepts and it is difficult to differentiate one from another.

In order to understand the comprehensive and controversially discussed concept of multiplicity, we will start with presenting the idea of gender identity. Gender studies have developed from the binary thinking of gender to acknowledging that gender is dynamic (Billing & Alvesson 2000; Acker 2000). “Dynamic” in this context means that gender moves between two poles and subsequently surfaces the idea of “doing” or “undoing” gender. Men and women switch their gender according to the social environment (Linstead & Pullen 2006; Deutsch 2007; Borgerson & Rehn 2004). If one follows this thinking, gender identity is constructed through the belonging to one of the alternative categories (male or female). But Linstead and Pullen (2006) started to rethink this idea and argued that a person is exposed to varied experiences during a day. These often contradictory feelings and emotions impact on the identity construction of a person and may influence it (West & Fenstermaker 1995). Thus, Linstead and Pullen (2006, p. 4) regard gender as a “simultaneous, intensive multiplicity”. Pullen and Simpson (2009, pp. 561-562) support this concept stating that gender identity is constructed between self and other: it can be seen as a process. Gender in its multiplicitous nature is understood as the “constant change of becoming” (Linstead & Pullen 2006, p. 1291). Reflecting the idea of multiplicity, the process of becoming gender can then be understood as the construction of different identities (feminine as well as masculine) in one person at the same time, and are socially generated by the environment.

The close connection between multiplicity and fluidity, however, needs to be mentioned here. Linstead and Pullen (2006, p. 1291) do not exclude one or the other by saying “that masculinity and femininity as labels refer to characteristics which may exist side by side and simultaneously in bodies which may be inscribed as either male or female”. Therefore, the authors do not separate multiplicity from dualism or fluidity, but rather consider it as an extension and an additional way to understand the different roles men and women can enact.

The distinction between fluidity and multiplicity, though, has to be also emphasized. Multiplicity is the construction of several gender identities (masculine as well as feminine identities) in one person at the same time. Furthermore, there is **no** sex categorization anymore (West & Fenstermaker 1995; Linstead & Pullen 2006; Deutsch 2007). This is an important distinction in contrast to fluidity. The approach of fluidity can be regarded as the social construction of sex, sex category and gender. This means that a sex categorization still exists but is understood as the underlying basis for performing gender, meaning that men and women can show female behavior as well as male behavior. They can “do” or “undo” their own gender, but certainly not at the same time (this is then multiplicity!) (West & Zimmerman 1987; Butler 1990; Salih & Butler 2004).

To claim that gender is multiple and changing is not new amongst scholars, reinforced by the research of Fournier and Smith (2006). However, whereas these authors strongly criticize Metcalfe and Linstead’s (2003) perspective towards multiplicity as being too concentrated on female multiplicity in a male environment (which refers back to female gender stereotypes), Fournier and Smith (2006) themselves are still talking predominantly about the different **masculinities**. According to the authors, these can be performed by women and men. We argue that Fournier and Smith (2006) do not expand multiplicity on both genders, meaning that they exclude femininities. As a similarity, they, though, see the exposure to different social and cultural surroundings and can classify masculinity accordingly (cf. Billing & Alvesson 2000; Mishkind et al. 1986; West & Fenstermaker 1995). According to our argument, this marks the masculine identity and can change it over time. They though complain about the historical reduction of masculine multiplicity to **one** form of masculinity and femininity. This **one** form is expressed by the perception of stereotyped male traits such as being aggressive and goal-driven and by stereotypical female traits such as

caring of others (Fournier & Smith 2006, p. 146; Chambers 2006). Hence, the constant shift back to dominant male and female forms relates to traditional binary thinking. This fixed picture contradicts the idea of gender (identity) understood as a changing or becoming process (Fournier & Smith 2006; Linstead & Pullen 2006).

Billing and Alvesson (2000) go beyond the differentiation of these gender concepts by only speaking about varied characteristics which can be assigned to any person, independently from sex, class, age or race (cf. Kelan 2010; this is also supported by Linstead & Pullen 2006). Therefore, a woman can more simply be described by femininities than masculinities. Moreover, the authors are aware of the social construction process of gender as “complex, multifaceted, and heterogeneous” (Billing & Alvesson 2000, p. 152; cf. West & Fenstermaker 1995 and Nentwich 2006). Even if these scholars attempt to detach our thinking from the traditional dualistic concept and its branches, their claim of a multifaceted construction process draws parallels with the concept of fluidity (the definition of Linstead & Pullen (2006) even mention the term fluidity). In an effort to extend the concept of multiplicity it is however acknowledged that both gender traits (feminine and masculine) can be exercised and are embodied simulatenously. This goes beyond the concept of switching gender or “(un)doing” gender as this concept indeed accepts the performance of both gender ‘categories’ but **not** at the same time (Deutsch 2007; Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009; Pullen & Simpson 2009; West & Zimmerman 1987).

This perspective can be contrasted against the view of Kelan (2010). She builds on the concept of “(un)doing” gender and fluidity and argues that gender can take on “new and more multiple meanings, which ultimately lead to more legible identities” (2010, p. 186). The possibilities, which arise by “doing” and “undoing” gender, inaugurate “multiplicity” and challenge binary thinking. This process can also be understood as a pluralization of gender (Butler 2004; Bowring 2004; Linstead & Pullen 2006). The same question, however, arises again: “What is the difference between fluidity and multiplicity?” Using Kelan’s perspective, multiplicity is described as one way to “undo” gender and reveals the option to bring contradictory things together to something new. Nevertheless, Kelan (2010) also admits that multiplicity can only occur to a certain degree due to the binary framework through which gender is perceived and understood. This is reminiscent of the definition which Borgerson and Rehn (2004) provide for the term fluidity: moving between two poles of dualism (masculine and feminine).

From a critical perspective one can argue that multiplicity is not much different to fluidity. Most of the scholars present the concept of multiplicity as an additional idea of constructing gender identity, which can be deviated from the concept of fluidity. Our society, however, represses these concepts and still considers the construction of gender only in a dualistic context as a natural categorization of man and woman (Billing & Alvesson 2000; Acker 2000).

To highlight the concepts mentioned above we present Linstead and Pullen's (2006) triple subdivided concept of multiplicity as a summary of this section but also as a demonstration how close these different concepts relate to each other. Furthermore, it shows the development of gender thinking and the process of gender:

Multiplicity of the same connects binary thinking with multiplicity. It criticizes the radical resistance of women claiming to be equal to the men, which in turn emphasizes the difference of the two sexes as women underline and point their own characteristics as diverse but equal to the men's characteristics (cf. Fournier & Smith 2006; Acker 2000; Deutsch 2007).

Multiplicity of the Third incorporates the concept of fluidity. Gender is socially constructed and can be switched in adjustment to certain situations. So, it "either works to evade the poles of binary or creates third, fourth and fifth corners" (Linstead & Pullen 2006, p. 1292; cf. Pullen & Simpson 2009; Billing & Alvesson 2000; West & Zimmerman 1987; Butler 1990).

Multiplicity of difference and dispersion finally concentrates on the multiplicity itself. The boundaries of gender and identity do not exist any longer. Multiplicity is seen as a process of gender identities and is constantly changing (Billing & Alvesson 2000; Kelan 2010; Butler 2004).

In the end it can be said that there is a future envisioned within organizational reality, where gender no longer receives importance and where individuals are only chosen according to the appropriate skills which qualify them for a work position. This implies that any individual has the possibility to do any job without being judged by society. Therefore, men should be able to work as housekeepers or in childcare and women as technicians or engineers without having to fight for acceptance. Moreover, companies need to be more family friendly

and make part-time jobs an accepted procedure. Only then, the difference between men and women will decrease and gender will be less important (Nentwich 2006).

After the elaborate discussion of the diverse perspectives towards gender literature the following section provides an overview about the similarities / difficulties of these concepts.

Theoretical Contribution

During our examination of the gender literature it became apparent how close these concepts are connected to each other and how similar the explanation basis can be. The overlaps but also the difficulties between these approaches will be emphasized in the following. By discussing these difficulties / similarities of the three different concepts, we want to challenge the current gender literature. This is done through contrasting the different concepts against each other and not simply focusing on one single concept. Thus we want to highlight the correlation between the perspectives.

An obvious overlap between the concepts as well as a red thread through all of them is the binary or dualistic thinking. Every approach has an underlying categorization, also the concept which actually denies it (multiplicity). This categorization refers to our general dualistic thinking. It seems impossible to our society to leave a black/white differentiation behind.

Speaking about dualism and fluidity, Salih and Butler (2004, p. 91) argue that “there is no “natural body” which preexists culture and discourse, since all bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence. This quote shows that a binary thinking is always taken into account. Even if fluidity can be assumed, which in turn leads to the consideration of gender as a process, this idea though refers back to binary thinking in our society. The moment we regard someone as not behaving according to social norms or stereotypes we fall back into this dualistic thinking. Also the phenomenon of switching gender relates to this dualism as an individual always moves between these two poles – feminine and masculine. An individual behaves either typical masculine or typical feminine but in any case, it can be led back to categorizing thinking.

The same counts for dualism and multiplicity. The concept of multiplicity provides the possibility of several gender identities in one person, which can be exercised at the same

moment (Linstead & Pullen 2006; Pullen & Simpson). Moreover, in an ideal case, there should not be any categorizations as everybody can do everything (Deutsch 2007). But to discuss gender, we need categories (feminine versus masculine) to refer to. This reflects the dualistic thinking. How do we know that a person acts in a masculine or feminine way, or has certain typical feminine and masculine traits if not by saying that this is typical masculine or feminine? According to this argumentation, there cannot be any multiplicity without a dualistic basis as it is natural for our society to think in dualisms and, for example, distinguish between black and white, self and other, man and woman

As an example of how close the concepts are connected to each other and how easily they can be mistaken, the following will emphasize the difference between gender equality and multiplicity: Gender equality can easily be mistaken with gender multiplicity. According to the concept of multiplicity, gender categorization shall not exist anymore as one can perform several gender identities (masculine and feminine) at the same time (Billing & Alvesson 2000; Linstead & Pullen 2006; West & Fenstermaker 1995). Therefore, there shall be no categorization given. But, on the other hand, Deutsch (2007) argues that the devaluation or even avoidance of gender categorizing might lead to a reduction of gender difference and, thus, to gender equality. Hence, one can assume that gender equality might lead to multiplicity. Our argument however refutes this assumption. To make the distinction between gender equality and multiplicity clear, a brief explanation shall be provided.

Whereas gender multiplicity can be defined as the simultaneous assignment of male and female gender characteristics to one person, gender equality can be understood as the identical perception of woman and man. As an example Deutsch (2007) can be alluded. She argues that a reduction of gender difference can be achieved by avoiding the use of stereotypes to assess other people. But this claim is only an attempt to reach gender equality but does not relate to the idea of multiplicity. Multiplicity can be observed even in gender inequality as a woman can act in a more masculine than feminine way but still stays biologically a woman and can still be discriminated.

The discussion about gender (in)equality also refers to Nentwich's (2007) use of the difference repertoire which tries to level out the hierarchical differences between men and women, which originally favor men (cf. Ashcraft 2005). The emphasis on feminine skills and traits, though, underlines again gender stereotypes, which in turn produces gender difference. Thus, the only connection between gender multiplicity and gender (in)equality is therefore the

reference to gender stereotypes, and so dualistic thinking, which both cases/concepts are based on.

A further overlap can be observed between fluidity and multiplicity. As literature showed, scholars disagree or at least contradict in some points when it comes to the definition of fluidity and multiplicity. Whereas most of them still agree on fluidity as the movement between two poles – masculine and feminine – and on the idea that gender can be performed (cf. Borgerson & Rehn 2004; West & Zimmerman 1987) they disagree about the definition as well as the examination of multiplicity.

Linstead and Pullen (2006, p. 1291), as an example, even mention in their definition for multiplicity the term “fluidity”, acknowledging multiplicity rather as an extension of the fluidity concept than as a single concept. This is proved by the quote “recognizing on the one hand that the essential fluidity of gender and sexuality may be labeled in whatever ways a society finds useful and on the other, that masculinity and femininity as labels refer to characteristics which may exist side by side and simultaneously in bodies which may be inscribed as either male or female” (Linstead & Pullen 2006, p. 1291). Billing and Alvesson (2000) even neglect a clear differentiation by saying that a woman can simply be more described by femininities than masculinities (this involves multiplicity). Fournier and Smith (2006) on the other hand connect multiplicity as far as possible with masculinity.

Another difficulty is that fluidity and multiplicity are often described by the same term. Hence, “dynamic” and a “constant change of becoming” as well as the consideration of “gender identity as a process” are essential elements and terms for both concepts (Billing & Alvesson 2000; Deutsch 2007; Linstead & Pullen 2006; Pullen & Simpson 2009). It is apparent that multiplicity cannot exist without fluidity; furthermore it is a necessary precondition to achieve multiplicity and this complicates the differentiation even more (cf. Kelan 2010).

Whereas most of the academics treat dualism as either a natural concept or a problem within our society, Borgerson and Rehn (2004) started to make us aware of the positive side of dualism as it can be regarded as an encouragement to challenge the closure and black/white-thinking within our society and to critically reflect upon it. Furthermore, Borgerson and Rehn (2004) also show how close the concepts are connected, pointing out the

phenomenon of excess which “emerges at dualism’s limit, yet points out the impossibility of closure” (Borgerson & Rehn 2004, p. 467). This excess can be understood as the excessive use of stereotypical gender characteristics. Borgerson and Rehn (2004) describe this process as the danger of being too gendered and Hochschild (1983) explains this process by mentioning the example of stewardesses who excessively underline their femininity, e.g. by their appearance. This refers to the notion of the “hyper-woman” – a woman which excessively uses feminine stereotypes to become “more than a woman” (Borgerson & Rehn 2004, p. 467). The example underlines the interdependence of the concepts of dualism and fluidity; moreover, it becomes apparent that fluidity is restricted by the dualistic barriers/poles where in-between fluidity occurs. Hence, excess is a phenomenon which challenges this localization of fluidity.

In the end of this contribution we want to explain our intention for this section. Of course, we are not the first ones who start to critically reflect upon these different concepts and their overlaps as well as difficulties. Borgerson & Rehn (2004) as well as Fournier and Smith (2006) already discussed these overlaps to only name a few. We, however, think it is important to provide an overview about the difficulties of differentiating dualism, fluidity and multiplicity from each other. Moreover, we realized how important the dualistic concept has been for the following concepts. The constant reference to dualism describes the further development to fluidity and multiplicity. Also within our empirical analysis this reference to dualism will become evident, thus, making it not only a theoretical matter, but as well an issue that is apparent in praxis.

Hence, we support Fournier and Smith (2006, p. 159) who argued: “Denying the power of [...] dualisms because they are constructed involves pulling the grounds for critiques from under our feet”. This again demonstrates the importance to challenge the dualistic closure within society.

After discussing the different perspectives of gender literature we will now present our cases and demonstrate the coherence between theory and analysis.

Empirics

As we did our study in two different companies where one can be regarded as very feminine (creative unit) and the other one as very masculine (technical unit) it seemed likely to do our research on exactly this stereotypical gender differentiation. We wanted to examine how or if this distinction is estimated and lived by our interviewees. Do they behave in a very stereotypical way according to their company – thus, either very feminine or very masculine? Is there a contradiction between their behavior and what they say respectively their self-perception? How does this dualistic categorization / differentiation affect their work? How is the managerial role played out, based on gender stereotyping?

In the following, we will first present the case of the creative unit. We will then turn to the case of the technical unit and conclude the empirical section by pointing out the common findings of both cases.

Case illustration of the creative unit

Our point of departure is the creative unit of a Danish media company which is concentrated on media business for children. The unit contains of 40 employees (including freelancers) in Denmark and of nine employees in the UK. Most of the employees are editors as their main business is the editing of products for publishers in over 25 countries. A main part of the creative work is done for the publisher of the parent company; only a small part is created for external publishers.

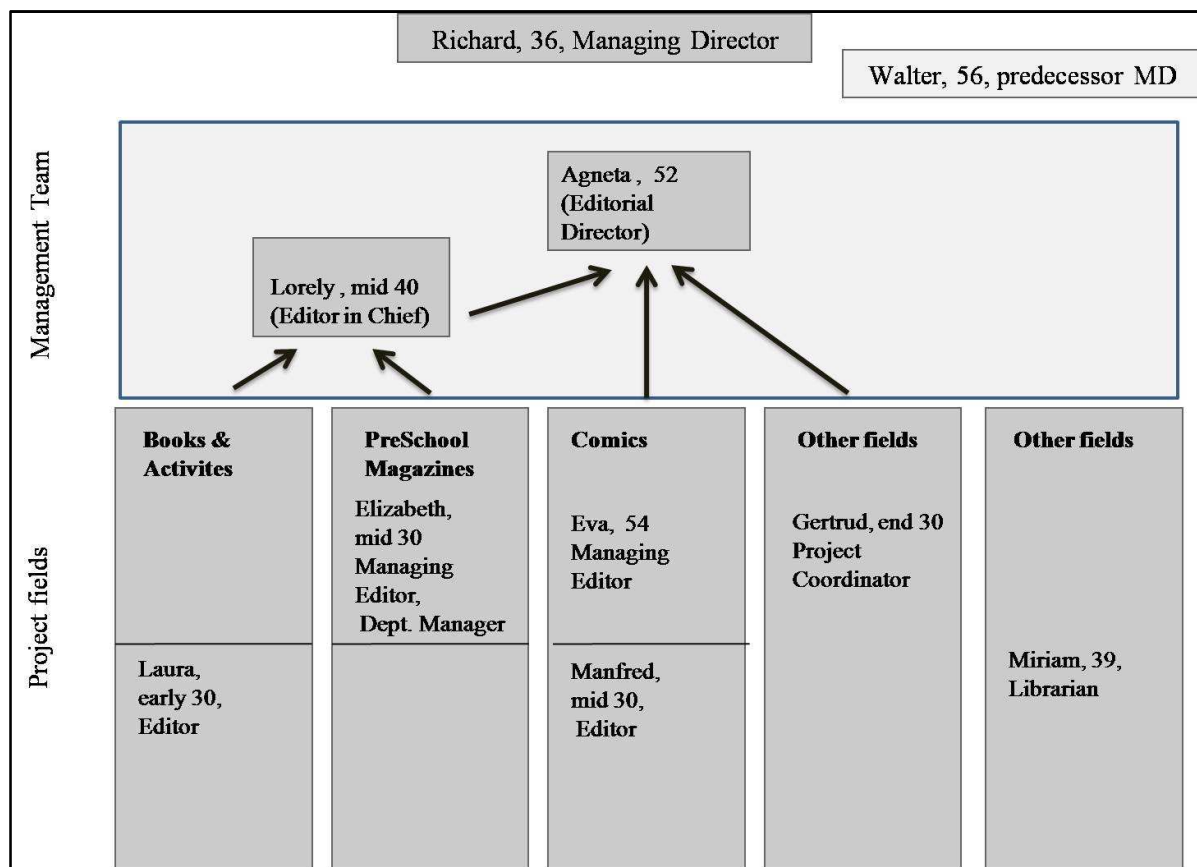
Looking at the organizational set up, the unit has a three layer structure, including the managing director, the management team, and the employees below. The employees are assigned to the three different project fields *PreSchool*, *Books & Activities (B&A)* and *Comics*. There are still other project fields, as the production team or the technical team, but they are irrelevant for this case illustration. It only has to be mentioned that these project fields are mostly run by men. Hence, in the following, we will only focus on the three relevant project fields mentioned above.

Regarding the second layer, the management team consists of seven people where the majority is men, including the managing director who is running the management team. The flat hierarchical style, which the creative unit is following, is also mirrored in the structure of the management team. The relation between the editor in chief and the editorial

director can be mentioned as an example, as the editor in chief Loreley (mid 40) is reporting to the editorial director Agneta (52) even if they are on the same level in the management team. So, below the management team, there is a sub-hierarchy where Agneta is responsible for all the project fields. But then, there is a further sub-division where Loreley is responsible for the *B&A* project field as well as for the *PreSchool* project field. *PreSchool* is located in the UK, thus it has its own boss Elizabeth (mid 30). But she is reporting to Loreley too in order to guarantee a quick information exchange in the Danish office. The *Comics* project field is led by the managing editor Eva (54) and she is again reporting to Agneta.

In the following, we will present a graph to illustrate the complex structure of the creative unit. The arrows show who is reporting to whom.

Graph 1: Illustration of the structure of the creative company



It becomes obvious that the management mostly contains of men, whereas the employees below are mainly women. This structure underlines two original claims. First: The creative field is a domain which is favored by women. Second: Men can be found on the top,

whereas women are located on the lower levels. These claims are also supported by our interviewees.

“Women favor in general creative business, in many cases in the industry publishing in general, not only here but publishing as a whole. Women show their skills in more creative parts which men maybe do not have as such.” (Richard, 36)

This quote shows that creativity can be assumed as a feminine characteristic. It seems to be denied that men could show interest in reading as well as the overall topic of books. Furthermore, a structure where men are superior to women is also perceived by the respondents.

“Women are more into books. I think it’s not a boy thing, only on the top level.” (Loreley)

Part of the organizational set up is also the office structure. Here, it can be differentiated between a big office with several desks, called the carpet area, and closed offices with one to four desks, called the non carpet area. According to Gertrud (end 30) the division was based on hierarchical decision making. This clear distinction also underlines the differentiation between the project fields *PreSchool*, *B&A* and *Comics* and the other project fields which form an interface as they work with many different fields on different projects. The physical separation of these groups emphasizes their middle position between different fields as well as their perceived outstanding position.

Gertrud describes her position in this way:

“A couple of times I had it really hard here and I was being between the departments [here the project fields are meant]. Often then, I was the outcast. I wasn’t one of them or the other. So, therefore, when they had their different department gatherings, parties or whatever, I was excluded and it really took me off.”

And further:

“Since we moved here [in this office] I have seen only a little bit of the people living in the non carpet area if I don’t go there myself. So, it’s not that often that you have people in the office

that actually come down here but I go down there because I figured that's the only way to see some people.”

This outstanding position is also underlined by the fact that the ‘outcasts’ are used to go to lunch in their outstanding group. Every time, we accompanied the unit for lunch, the people from the interface project fields ate by their own. This shows again the distinction between *B&A*, *PreSchool*, *Comics* and the other fields as e.g. project coordination.

Besides the office structure which is remarkable and underlines the specific position of the three relevant project fields (*B&A*, *PreSchool*, *Comics*) it was obvious that there is something different which unites the employees at the creative unit and this is the atmosphere of the whole office. The office provides the climate and environment of a playground or playroom as we will describe below. This can also be proven by the story which one of our interview partners told us. She brought her daughter to the office one day and when she finally wanted to get home, her daughter did not want to leave anymore as the girl wanted to continue playing with all the toys.

As the employees cope every day with different Disney characters and make products for children, one can find these characters all over the place. A big swing with the three little pigs hangs down from the ceiling in the middle of the hallway; one can find cuddle toys in every corner. Books and magazines from Bob the Builder over Winnie the Pooh and Mickey Mouse to Barbie create a childlike atmosphere and underline the purpose of this unit: creativity. Every office room saves signs of creativity: a picture of Donald Duck, a mouse pad of Toy Story or even Mickey Mouse-watches which are worn by the editors. But also the conference room, where we conducted several interviews, is “furnished” with Barbie books or Bob the builder activity products. The place emphasizes the underlying gender stereotypes, shown by the pink and fluffy toys for girls and the blue and “cool” toys for boys. Not only the office rooms themselves but also the name badges on the door show creativity and the strong identification of the employees with their occupation. Everybody chose one Disney character for the badge on the door which he/she mostly identifies with.

The strong interest for children's product is only one part of the unit's culture. Richard describes the atmosphere for us like this:

“The company is more female culture shaped.”

And this “feminine” culture is also demonstrated by the core values. Passion as well as dedication builds important elements of the culture which can already be found in the look of the office. On the web page the company describes their strong dedication in this way: “We always bring our hearts to work. We live for stories; to create them, and tell them in the best possible way to as many people as possible. This passion is the heart and soul of everything we do.” But also further values such as being friendly or reliable show a feminine culture.

By quoting excerpts of the company’s mission it shall once again be emphasized that the direction of the company is strongly creativity based: “[...] The passing on of stories feeds imagination, encourages curiosity, stimulates ideas, and is the basis of all knowledge and development. Storytelling is the essence of everything we do [...]. It is our promise to the world.“

One can assume that these feminine values and skills, but especially a more feminine approach, are lived by the unit but the analysis will demonstrate that masculine traits can also be found in a feminine company and how these traits are lived or handled in a female dominated unit.

To show the differentiation, we start by discussing the behavior of the unit according to gender stereotypes. This includes a typical female behavior of the women but also a typical masculine behavior of the men. Afterwards, we point at the contradictions of this unit by demonstrating how the interviewees act against their gender stereotypes. Moreover, we underline how this behavior against the norm can cause gender identity struggle among the respondents.

As already mentioned above, creativity is seen as a typical feminine characteristic. This is also proved by our interviewees as the following perspectives show.

“It’s a women’s business. [...]But even the men are sometimes very much in contact with their feminine side. It’s just a soft business [...]. This is because the values and what we do, the output, is hard and a core thing for, you know, the creativity. Then it [is] dominated by women and soft values.” (Agneta)

And also the possibility of “being allowed” to be creative makes women choosing this business:

“You are allowed to be excited about a pink colored book. That got me very interested.” (Laura, early 30)

But it is not only about creativity; this interest is also connected with the business these creative people work for: making products for children. The connection between creativity and the production of children’s toys enforces the desire of women to work in this field.

“I don’t know, I think publishing in general is a female occupation; editorial work is a detailed work. If you think of book publishing here I think every book publisher here in the UK has predominantly female workers. I guess because it is children’s publishing and because it is for PreSchool children. And I think that is the thing that this is a kind of female subject. I think maybe there is a little bit of that. That it felt like that is a female thing to work for products for young children.” (Elizabeth, mid 30)

Interestingly enough, even the men with creative background in this unit regard creativity as a typical female interest. Especially Walter (56) admits this connection but it does not seem that he feels offended by this stereotyping differentiation. As we will show in the following, Walter is a very interesting character, considering his creative history but also his strong masculine identity.

“This [the female majority in a creative business] certainly relates to the field of children and comics to a certain degree. Everything which relates to children and creativity can be seen as the women’s business. Men are not accepted in this field. It’s not their business. Thus, in this area, the masculinity is questioned.” (Walter)

Walter is aware of this struggle between being creative and masculine but he seems to feel very confident about this as he has already worked in this field for over 35 years.

Our respondents not only show a strong interest for creativity at work, most of them also spend their free time on doing creative things at home:

“They [women] are only interested in creative things. They are very much into their own creative things at home as well, arts and making jewelry and stuff like this. So, that is also very creative.” (Eva)

In Elizabeth’s case, both her boyfriend and she work in the creative business, therefore, they spend most of their lifetime with it. But, even if she admits that she does not have any spare time, nor for creativity, she still would like to spend more time on her hobby respectively job:

“Between us [her boyfriend and she], we both feel, that we would like to do, because we’re both quite creative people so all our creative energy is going into our work whereas what we would like is, in our spare time, to channel some of this creativity into our home life, e.g. getting involved in furniture projects. I think there are things that we would like to do and should do.”

Also the few men in the creative unit do not use their free time for anything else than an activity which relates to creativity:

“So I do read comic books in my spare time and play computer games. This is my creativity.”
(Manfred, mid 30)

Another trait, which is considered as stereotypical feminine and which is strongly related to the creative interest, is the passion and dedication which women accomplish their working tasks with. But, especially in the case of creative work for children, the respondents see the need to be passionate about it:

I think that in this business you have to be very passionate about what you do, you have to feel it. I think it goes for all jobs that you have to feel for what you’re doing but it will be different if you make soap, you know, or if you are creating something. Because if you don’t put your heart in it, no child is going to read your magazine.” (Agneta)

Laura sees the importance of being passionate but is also aware of the demanding work load:

“Maybe it is a girl thing. We want to be very good in all the things we do and want to do a good job. But when I have to do a lot of things I can’t give 100% to all and so, I have to let go a little and that is hard. I’m emotional attached to my work.”

Besides the creative vein, which can still be discussed about whether it is a typical feminine trait, there are other characteristics which let them immediately think of stereotypical female traits. These are empathy, caring for other, but also being a “people person”. Relating to our respondents these feminine characteristic traits are widely-used among the employees:

“I’ve been working in more soft values which is managing people, because we work with so many freelancers and we are from so many different places and so many different cultures.”
(Agneta)

Especially Agneta showed us her empathic side when she talked about the management decision to reduce the workforce. As part of the management team she had to back up this

decision towards the employees. But the way she dealt with it demonstrates her empathic involvement with the employees who had to leave:

“I actually traveled around the world and told them all, even if they were freelancers, because they have been a big part of making the magazine if not for them there would not have been a magazine every week. So I think that they deserved that someone told them face to face but that was difficult probably the most difficult thing I’ve ever done. [...] I knew I was not going to work with them anymore but I knew I had a relationship with them and it was the ending of something. That was really hard.” (Agneta)

There seems to be a common understanding of empathy and care for others as an essential part of work, even if it is in different situations or for different reasons. Hence, Miriam (39) is using empathy to connect to the people from different countries to facilitate the work with them:

“Empathy is a big part of the work. Most of my business relations are mail correspondence with people in Italy or USA etc. and I have never seen these people. So in order to create a relation I’m writing the most irrelevant things to them, not only the business facts but introducing something nice as well.”

This is also supported by Gertrud:

“I think it’s just being open, listen to what’s going on around you and being ready to help and react.”

Elizabeth’s empathy, on the other hand, is expressed by her care for the office in England. Moreover, it seems that she feels protective for them:

“And I think it will be my job to try to protect what we’ve got here because I think we’ve built up something.”

Another characteristic which is regarded as typical feminine in the gender stereotyping literature is unrealistic planning as well as the insecurity dealing with the job:

“I’m still learning because I’ve actually been managing editor for two years only. But, I’m learning to delegate. And that’s a difficult thing to do. A sort of time management is difficult. I’m always a positivist in timing concerns. I always think that it would take half the time what it actually takes. It usually takes twice a time or three times. And it’s the same with having expectations of others as well. I always think “oh, yeah, you can easily do this” not realizing

that other people also have to spend some time doing other things than maybe just the tasks that I send them” (Eva)

The insecurity towards job skills is emphasized by Elizabeth when we asked her why she was promoted for the manager job.

“I think it could be.. it is certainly true that it wasn’t just because I was the best editor because I think I’m an okay editor but I’m certainly not a brilliant editor.”

Insecurity is considered as a typical female problem but, if it actually comes to failures, traditional gender literature also takes into consideration the pragmatic handling of critique by women.

“This is not to create problems but you get tunnel vision when you work with your own products for so many years so it’s good for you having a colleague saying “uhhh I love this story but uhh the other one was really long or really boring” or whatever. [...] That it’s okay to be critical but it is difficult because these people put their hearts in it.” (Agneta)

Eva sees this in an even more extreme way:

“We can be rudely honest and tell each other what we think which is an essential thing to do that. Because we have to strive to get the best possible material out there and we want the publishers to like what we are doing. So, that means that we have to be quite critical with ourselves and with each other to get the best possible. And we also end up helping each other.”

As this creative unit is seen as part of a feminine company with a culture shaped by women it can be assumed that the leadership style is also female marked. In the following we focus on the feminine traits in the leadership styles which are used by the female managers. But, since Richard, as the head of the management team, pointed out the difference between management and leadership, we provide a definition for both. According to Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) *management* includes administrative work, control and provision of stability, whereas *leadership* contains visions, strategies and development. If one follows this distinction, management is seen as a rather masculine orientation, whereas leadership can be associated with feminine traits.

Richard emphasizes this distinction as follows:

“I’m asking the management team to, those of them who can’t already, to stop controlling. I don’t want them to manage, I want them to lead. And then that’s difficult.”

This differentiation according to gender stereotypes shall in detail be underlined below. Even if we will in the following talk about leading styles which can be applied for feminine as well as masculine traits, this differentiation shall still be kept in mind as Richard makes this distinction for his own leading style as well.

Before we turn to masculine leading elements we present the female elements of leadership.

Loreley considers empathy as an important part of a feminine leadership style.

“Although you can find men who have this empathic side, I think it is a female thing. They have the sixth sense. But if you take Richard, he is very good in sensing these things but women are much better in this. It’s not that we cannot make decisions. We can do this. It’s an extra, we get a more varied picture“

Furthermore, she points out that delegation as well as freedom is more essential than control which can hinder the productivity and motivation of an employee. This again reflects the differentiation between management and leadership. Miriam is, furthermore, mentioning another crucial element of a female leadership style.

“You need to **trust** people to give them information because they can use it against you.”

Also Elizabeth underlines these elements of a feminine leading style. Moreover, she highlights the relationship to her colleagues as well as their need to develop:

“I’m making sure that the setting goals for people are fine with most of the goals and motivating them; [...] I think providing a really strong awareness for a framework, if you like, and for what our structure is and what we are here to do and I guess it’s about recognizing the creative activity that happens here. [...] So, I want to encourage everyone here to develop their own as much as possible, make their connections / network with other people and to get in touch generally in the company as a whole.”

Besides the feminine leading elements, there are also masculine ‘leading’ elements which have to be mentioned. As this unit consists of men as well as women in management positions we now concentrate on the masculine stereotypes which are lived by the male respondents.

We start by presenting masculine leading traits and then turn to male stereotypes in general which we observed while interviewing the men in the unit.

Speaking of masculine leadership, traits as being rational, being distant as well as the pursuit of a hierarchical structure become obvious and are supported by our interview partners:

“We definitely need somebody if not on the top then at least very on the top that has a business background. Because otherwise we would go backwards in a sense that you have to be able to direct a budget I mean we would be a ship without paddle if we don’t.” (Manfred)

And further:

“I think we need to change stuff here. Both the way we work but also what we are producing. Again we can see that the market is shrinking. So we have to produce more, cheaper and it also has to be better because of competition. And that is very very difficult.” (Manfred)

Richard as well as Walter take an important position in this discussion as they both are / have been head of the unit. Moreover, Richard took over Walter’s position, hence, a direct comparison between the personalities and the leadership styles can be drawn.

Both regard the keeping of distance as essential if one has a leading position. Nevertheless, it can already be seen that each of them is handling this distance differently.

“I don’t want to be part of that. If they [the employees] go out just as a team or friends which a lot of them actually do meet outside of work, I can’t allow myself to become their friend. Even though I like them a lot, I can’t allow myself to do that. I have to have a distance. I need to be able to make strong, difficult decisions from time to time and if I’m too closely connected with anyone I can’t do that without having feelings and I can’t. That’s not allowed, not when I have this job [...].”

Compared to Richard’s almost “nostalgic” perspective on it Walter assesses distance as more practical and necessary and also takes into account the hierarchical role of a boss.

“I always had the opinion that these people are grown-ups who know their jobs better than I do. [...] Furthermore, I always have some problems to socialize directly with employees as I don’t want to ignore their bosses. [...] I still know my thoughts when I was a subordinate. And I didn’t want to have my boss going out with the team. This time is often used to change opinions about the boss and not about having the boss next to you.”

After mentioning the pragmatic feminine way of handling critique, it is considered as masculine in dualistic gender literature to see the dealing with critique as problematic. A remarkable example for this trait is Manfred's statement. He pretends that critique can much easier be dealt among guys but on the other hand, he describes how emotional he can become when being criticized:

“Sometimes I get totally furious and I but usually within an hour or two I turn around because I mean I can deal with critique. Sometimes I take it very personal but that's for a very short amount of time. [...] I know I have a temper and sometimes I like to think of myself as a bit smarter than I actually really am.”

Hence, there is a contradiction between his statements. He seems to be aware of it as he further tells us that he tries to deal with critique by listening to Heavy Metal or taking a walk. Nevertheless, it also shows that women handle critique in a much more pragmatic way, taking criticism as an encouragement to improve themselves or their work.

Another stereotypical trait which is regarded as typical masculine is the business-oriented, respectively rational focus:

“I think right now that the best way forward is someone making the decisions and basically saying this is what we want, do it rather than discussing it because the question we have right know we never ever if you ask them to do it by their own powers will work, it will never happen because they will not change their minds. People do not change their minds and they don't think differently. Their mind set doesn't change just because you ask them to.” (Richard)

Richard views an achievement of change and improvement within the unit only by means of a very rational, focused direction. The same rationality is used by Manfred to describe his job. This completely contradicts the passion and dedication women mention when they talk about their jobs.

“You're sort of like a coach, there is this amount of talent, weak spots, strong points, how do I have the person to produce the best possible work? So you have to be bit of a psychologist at times then you also have to know your stories so you have to have a basic craftsmanship yourself.”

A further stereotypical characteristic of men is the opportunism which is used to achieve certain goals. According to stereotypes, women tend to do something for other people to

underline their helpfulness and to create a friendly atmosphere, whereas men seem to use it as a tool to push their goals forward. In Manfred's example he uses the way of socializing with other people to get them to know and to experience how he has to talk to them to achieve his goals.

“I think it's nice to go out and grab a beer after work and because then if you've been out with somebody and you had a beer, maybe you had a disagreement on how to do something. Very often in another environment you just sit there relaxed, you can get past that and so find another angle or if you meet next time you both are more in a positive mood. So you can really build bridges and you learn something about each other. People are very different from you and I think that's interesting, it's nice also. [...] “So I'm really working on how to get my things through here and you also have to have a personal angle in order to do that.”

As a last masculine trait “masculine ethic” is alluded. Whereas women seem to spend longer hours in the office as they feel dedicated to their work and want to stay longer, men only stay longer in the office, as they feel the socially constructed pressure to do it. They think it is expected from men to work longer, especially, if they achieve a certain position in business. Hence, women work longer “voluntarily”, men feel “forced” to do it.

“I think you do it inevitably [spending more hours in the office]. You cannot do anything else if you want to achieve or you have already achieved a certain position. You can't completely switch off from work [...].” (Walter)

After demonstrating the different gender stereotypes we observed in our interviews, we will now turn to the interviewees' behavior against their stereotypes / norms. Women cannot deprive themselves of being affected by the masculine influence at work. Moreover, we will show how different persons (men as well as women) among our interviewees face gender identity struggles to find a way to perform their gender. This especially applies for our respondents on the management level.

Starting with the critical analysis of the interviewees' behavior against stereotypical norms, it is remarkable that, also in a female dominated company, most of the management team consists of men. On the lower levels, on the other hand, one can find much more women. This division mirrors the distinction between leaders and followers in the dualistic literature. According to this theory men are born as leaders whereas women cannot provide the necessary qualities such as an analytical ability or the rational way of dealing with

challenges. Therefore, they work as followers on lower hierarchical levels. However, it has to be mentioned that this categorization can only be applied to a certain degree to the creative unit. It is obvious that the management team includes mainly men but even the women in the management team require more masculine characteristics for their leadership style. Hence, women also realize the advantages of masculine traits, especially on the management level, and combine them with their own feminine skills. The actions and behaviors according to this understanding will be demonstrated below. Though, before we start to talk about masculine and feminine leading styles in management positions, we turn to the lower levels, mentioned above. Here, a strong claim for having more men can be assessed.

“Perhaps we need more males because actually I think it is a good thing to have both sides. It is good sometimes that you have people that don’t think the same, just that don’t act like you do and perhaps it could be needed. Because different sex has a different way of thinking.” (Miriam)

Also the men on the lower levels share this opinion. However, Manfred recognizes differences in the behavior:

“I mean it’s different [having more men] but I think it’s very nice. Probably that’s a reason why I often eat lunch with a couple of the guys, it’s probably to get some balance cause of the working environment. I like it sort of to be half men half women and I think it makes a good working environment. [...] Sometimes you can be more direct [towards men] without it being a big problem because it’s just about the work, it’s not about you, it’s not personal. I mean I don’t say women are like that and men are like that but it gives sort of a bit more open. Your humor is sometimes a bit more childish, rude? [...] That’s a bit different when you are working with guys.”

Manfred sees, in addition, the danger for women to become too involved in their work, thus, he argues that men are much less worried about their work and can therefore handle it easier. Laura who is sitting in the same office as Manfred acknowledges this behavior as an advantage but, in her point of view, the claim for more men should also depend on the work they actually deliver.

“[About the different working styles] They have to focus at one thing at the time and they are also very good at taking things easy and taking a rest and I think that is a big difference and that women can learn from that.“

And further about the question of a mixture of men and women:

“That totally depends on how they would contribute to the work and culture.”

Even if she admits that she would like to have more men, due to a different working style, it becomes obvious in her attitude towards the other women in her office that she is enjoying the majority of women as they all share the same problems. This common understanding would not be found by a man.

Also a critical stance towards creativity as a feminine “thing” can be assessed in our interviews. Especially Eva denies evaluating creativity as a prevalent feminine trait. However, her explanation refers to dualistic thinking as she uses stereotypes for her justification:

“No, not all. I mean lots of the women here they are not so typically female. They are only interested in creative things. They are very much into their own creative things at home as well, arts and making jewelry and stuff like this. So, that is also very creative.”

She argues that creativity is not feminine and, moreover, that the women in the creative unit are not typical feminine but she justifies this creative interest with making jewelry at home which again is seen as a rather feminine domain. This relates back to a gender stereotypical categorization.

A further characteristic which is also adopted by women is a rational, business-oriented attitude towards work. As an example Gertrud can be mentioned. She is very excited about her job but she also knows about the few possibilities she would have if she lost this position. This relativizes her statement and also shows her rational, unemotional evaluation.

“I GOT the job. I love the job but I [pause] I mean I like it. [...] Let’s say it this way, I think it would be difficult for me to find a job in Denmark. So therefore and also I like it, I do like the job. If I was laid off I would be very depressed but I would more than likely try to get started on something new. But I think it would be very difficult for me to find a job.”

Elizabeth, on the other hand, realizes in her new position as head of the England office that her focus now has to shift to a more rational, business-related view to stay competitive:

“[There is now the need of] a more strategic focus, to know what obviously needs to move forward. That’s very different to me, a sort of look at the company from a broader perspective whereas I have been used to working more directly on products in creative work.”

Her struggle to find a balance between rationality and creativity will further be discussed in the paragraph about the challenges on the management level as her example shows the difficulties of accepting and performing characteristics from both sexes.

Being opportunistic is already a trait which was mentioned by Manfred but, as the interviews show, also women tend to create a friendly climate to achieve their own goals. Whereas quotes above still demonstrate the helpfulness of women, we realized during our interviews that also female employees behave in an opportunistic way “to get their things done”. This is supported by Gertrud and Miriam. Both work on a position where they are dependent on other project fields and, hence, they “manipulate” their colleagues. As an example: Gertrud is baking cookies as she knows that it will be easier afterwards that the project fields deliver on time and comply with the deadlines. In a similar way, Miriam explains her behavior:

“When you try to make a relationship with people even when you don’t know them, they get a better understanding of you being a real person, trying to do a job. For example if you can’t deliver on time they understand better when they think they know you and therefore I try to make a connection.”

Before we turn to the analysis of men and women in management positions, a last formerly, masculine characteristic shall be investigated. “Masculine work ethic” represents the socially constructed pressure men feel, especially on high hierarchical positions, to perform as best as possible. Besides an analytical ability as well as a strong qualification to plan and to solve problems, which are necessary for a leader according to the dualistic literature, it also prescribes the working time. In accordance with this work ethic, men should stay long in the office and exclude their private life completely from work. This ethic has so far been applied to the men in the unit, but during the interviews with our female respondents it became apparent that a former passion or dedication towards work sometimes gives way to a felt pressure to work longer. This shows a “masculine work ethic” which is now also adopted by the female employees.

“I sometimes take work home but I try not to because of my children and my boyfriend. But I have to do it sometimes. And if I don’t do it I think about it a lot, it is a big part of my mind and sometimes I wish it wasn’t. I’m conscious about that I need to have a good balance.” (Laura)

Elizabeth justifies the fact that she has to work long with her change to a new job position, as she still has to get used to her new tasks in her point of view. Moreover, she blames herself for taking too much time to do her tasks. This relates to her insecurity about the job mentioned above.

“No one never asks me to work late. Generally, here, people leave on time. There are a couple of people which I think stay very late. I think that has more to do with their working styles. So, really, I have no reason to work late. Maybe it is still the transition process [after she took over the now position of running the UK office]. Probably the things I’m doing taking longer than they need to take.”

As this paragraph has shown, the female employees in the creative unit adopt masculine traits and combine them with their feminine traits. Their behavior changes and they act either feminine or masculine according to the situation. E.g., our female respondents behave in a cooperative way but, if they need something, they change their behavior turning to a more opportunistic attitude to achieve their aims. This reflects the concept of fluidity. According to fluidity, traits are not assigned to one specific sex anymore. Moreover, both men and women can perform masculine as well as feminine traits. The moving between masculine and feminine behavior mirrors the phenomenon of gender switching. As we lacked in our interviews men on lower levels, who also behave in a feminine way, we now turn to the examination of the behavior on the management level. We will investigate how women (Loreley and Elizabeth) and men (Richard and Walter) in management positions deal with gender switching as well as the phenomenon of “(un)doing” gender.

Especially on the management level, women start to realize that there is a need to combine feminine traits with masculine traits and that it can complicate decisions if one is too involved. Furthermore, also the men in the unit show feminine traits, especially in their leading style. The special challenge of women taking on a leading position and being too emotionally involved in their work will be discussed below.

Loreley is a classical example of a woman who faces the challenge of performing masculine as well as feminine traits, especially due to her position in the management team. As she

forms a minority within this team she acts in a very masculine way to gain social acceptance. Hence, she is “doing” male gender and “undoing” her own gender in a competitive, masculine environment (gender switching). Especially her leadership style is marked by a rather male dominated environment:

“Sometimes we cannot discuss things because they have to be done in a certain manner and then, there is no need to discuss.”

She is aware of the necessity of a clear, goal-oriented strategy in order to survive in a competitive market. But also her relationship towards her subordinates can be described as masculine. She offers help or advice but, on the other hand, she expects that her team members are able to solve their problems by their own as she does not follow a controlling style but she pursues a style marked by responsibility delegation and freedom. Whereas these characteristics are mainly applied to a feminine leadership style her explanation sounds very rational:

“I’m not their mother; I mean we are all adults. [...] They have to ask me for help. That’s the only thing I can do. That’s the way it has been. You can always sense how a person is feeling but she doesn’t have to tell me her/his whole life story”

Her new position includes a shift from feminine, creative tasks to masculine, managerial tasks. This is reflected in her sometimes rational working style but also in her appearance as well as her acceptance to work more. Her look underlines her masculine orientation as she wears short hair and she mostly has black and white clothes on. Also the fact that her dress style predominantly consists of trousers and vests enforces this impression. Whereas her appearance and her behavior is mainly masculine marked, it becomes evident during our observations that she struggles a lot with the double burden of being a mother and a manager. Interviewing Loreley about this she denies these problems. She only sees as a limitation that her family planning and her working planning were not aligned to each other.

“The only disadvantage I can mention from my perspective was that it took me so long to get number two. That is difficult for your career perspective. [...] In the moment, I’m not on full speed – but that’s the way it is”.

Moreover, in our interviews she tells us that there is not any problem to leave the office earlier to see her children at home. However, interviewing her colleagues, it becomes apparent that Loreley is facing the problem of “masculine ethic” as she often feels the pressure to stay longer in the office due to her management position.

As Loreley is one of the female managers where a masculine leading style is most obvious we asked her about the possibility to link a feminine and masculine leading style. She admits that a combination would be advantageously, however, she does not consider the elements of a feminine leadership style as a single leading style. According to Loreley, it can rather be regarded as an additional element of a masculine leading style:

“It’s not that we cannot make decisions. We can do this. It’s an extra, we get a more varied picture. But sometimes, this rational style is much better. It’s both sides I think. I’m very honest and don’t speak differently to different people. It is a job, I wouldn’t die if I didn’t have this task anymore.”

Loreley’s rather rational perspective also allows the possibility of multiplicity in an organizational environment. She does not differentiate between men and women, she differentiates according to the qualification:

“I don’t care if it’s a male or female I’m working with as long as they are clever people. That’s also a reason why I don’t think that these quotas are good to have a certain amount of women on the management level. I don’t think it is fair if the woman is not that clever as, e.g. a man.”

But as her example shows, it stays questionable if this multiplicity is realizable. Also Loreley still struggles with the social acceptance of her colleagues due to her position. This is proved by her behavior of switching between male and female gender but also by her insecurity towards her working hours.

As another female example on the management level Elizabeth can be mentioned. She just took over the position as head of the British office and it seems that she is struggling a lot with the new challenges. These include giving up feminine traits to adopt a more masculine leading style. In Elizabeth’s case, she realizes that she cannot be too involved in the problems of her employees in order to keep a distant overview.

“The main change for me is to my natural way of working to avoid to sort of think what can I do to solve this problem. So, people are coming to me and my initial reaction would be: let’s try to solve the problem for them because that is what I’ve always done and now, I’m realizing that I should help other people to solve their problems for themselves. So, I’m trying really hard to do that. To empower people to make their own decisions and take their actions for themselves. And I guess this is the biggest challenge.”

She is aware of her feminine traits as a benefit, especially in comparison to her former, male, boss. However, she also fears that too many feminine leading skills can hinder her position as a leader:

“I guess, in terms of speaking with people in the team, I possibly show a sort of understanding and I probably do have the kind of crossed female traits of both, if you like. I probably live this a little more than [her former boss] did but in the same time I maybe do too much for people. I make more cooperatives but that is not necessarily a good thing because I maybe end up being too worrying and sometimes I should step back. And I certainly don’t have the same level of authority maybe that [her former boss] had.”

Hence, Elizabeth’s approach to her managing position is deferred compared to Loreley’s approach. Whereas Elizabeth struggles to figure out how she reacts best towards the unit and her colleagues, Loreley tries to adjust to a male environment. Moreover, she denies any problems caused by a potential gender categorization.

Besides the women who face the need to adopt to a male environment due to their hierarchical position, also the men on management positions struggle with their behavior. This relates to the fact that the company is female-dominated and that it has a strong creative focus which is perceived as a female characteristic. Hence, also men deal with problems to adjust to a female environment but on a male-dominated level.

Our examination of Richard and Walter will show how differently they both react to this challenge. Moreover, they can be directly compared to each other as Richard succeeded Walter on the position as head of the creative unit.

If one compares Richard to Walter, it becomes apparent that they both differ a lot. This already begins with the appearance. Whereas Walter looks very masculine with his chunky figure and his beard, Richard, in contrast, is a bit smaller and always well-dressed, if not styled, which is rather feminine assessed. Whereas Walter spends hours on his Harley

Davidson in his spare time, Richard likes the life with his wife and his dogs in the countryside. Hence, already on the surface there are clear distinctions. Walter seems to be much more stereotypically masculine than Richard. In addition, the name badges shall be alluded which can be found on the office doors of our interviewees. Also the choice of two very different Disney characteristics supports the distinction mentioned above. Whereas Walter sees himself as Balu from the jungle book which underlines his chunky, bearish appearance, Richard considers himself as donkey from Winnie the Pooh. This shows his small, insecure self-perception. This observation as well as their behavior shall now in detail be examined.

Richard comes, due to his education, from the business side and, thus, from the rational side. He recognizes the need to be competitive, even as a creative unit, and provides his employees with a strategic framework to achieve the business-related goals. When we interviewed him we realized that he shows a strong rationality towards the business side of his position. Besides these very masculine traits, however, he also shows a lot of feminine characteristics. He can be regarded as a people person who shows empathy and care towards his employees, e.g. he feels with the mothers in his unit and tries to give them the time they want to spend with their children. Moreover, he tries to find a solution which suits them best. Analyzing Richard's profile he gives about himself, it become apparent that he points out the feminine traits as strengths. Furthermore, he is aware of the communication problems between his business perspective and the creative perspective of his employees:

“My strength with people is that I connect with people well. They do not necessarily understand what I'm saying business wise, they may laugh at me a little bit because I still say things they don't get. But what has come out of it is that they know they have someone who's protecting their interests and who has a plan. I think that has stick with them. There is a plan, there is a meaning. We have a way forward, we do have a target and they themselves have been involved in setting their target. So I think that's where I can connect with them is on the human level which allows me to do what else I have to do without really getting into trouble. So I think this, I don't know if that's a personal skill, you have to ask about this, but I think personally that might be why it has worked despite the fact that we speak a different language.”

The last phrases of his quote show that the involvement of his employees is very important to him. He wants to spread the feeling of being committed to the unit and its strategy. This approach shows elements of a feminine leadership style as the delegation of responsibility as

well as team work are the elements he is emphasizing. Moreover, he makes a clear distinction between (masculine) management and (feminine) leadership by concentrating on leadership. Nevertheless, this quote also demonstrates his insecurity and struggle as he wants us to ask his employees how they assess his leading style. Whereas this insecurity is only slightly observable in the quote above it is enforced by his self-perception as he regards himself not behaving according to social norms, respectively to traditional, stereotypical expectations. Additionally, he considers the creative business as not a typical traditional masculine business. He is caught in his binary thinking which dictates him the difference between masculinity and femininity:

“Traditional men are more Excel people, more cynical, more.. they make decisions in a less sensitive way. They don’t take people’s emotions so much into consideration. They do not always see beyond the task, beyond the decision. They just say this is what we do, don’t take it behind the people. I think women are much more people-oriented in general. And this is actually what I think is needed to merge business and creative management, is a stronger understanding of people. [...] For some reason I have that but I don’t think that a lot of men does. [...] Normally a lot of people I meet at divisional level when I’m taking part in divisional management meetings, I really had a difficult time to make them understand what I’m saying. Because they think I’m too soft, I’m too kind, I’m too people-oriented. They wouldn’t think like that, they would say we need to save 10 percent of this and this and never mind the people. A rough way of saying it. It’s not like this in reality but you know.”

Richard is facing a rather female environment when he is running his unit, hence, he is practicing his feminine leading skills. However, the moment he leaves this area and he encounters a male environment, as in the divisional meeting, he struggles in performing his gender identity as he assesses his behavior as not according to the norms, at least compared to his male colleagues. He cannot see himself in this male environment; furthermore, he switches his gender and “does” his own gender in an excessive way to adjust to his male colleagues.

“Where I’m actually thinking I can’t find a way to compensate for who I really am is when I’m with a division management team. I really had a difficult time relating to the very cynical way that they communicate. The really classic, male-oriented way of communicating. I had a difficult time relating to that, always have actually. I can give you a personal example which is strange but maybe gives you an idea what I’m talking about. I’ve been almost a professional soccer player when I was younger and one of the reasons, not that I quit but all the time it was

really difficult for me to relate to the very tough environment, meaning I couldn't relate to what they said to each other. It just became more and more irrelevant to me that they were just not communicating and talking about things that I was interested in. And I think you can a little bit relate or compare it without being a 100% like that it's when you meet with a lot of men, in a male culture, I just can't relate to them, it doesn't make sense for me. I can **pretend** that I can relate and I think that I'm pretty good at that so that they do not notice but I'm thinking in my head what they are talking about or I disagree but I do not necessarily say that I disagree. "

Richard struggles to perform the male behavior which he thinks is expected from him. Hence, gender fluidity can be observed as he acts in a more feminine, and for him more natural, way towards his employees, but switches his gender when he encounters male colleagues from his hierarchical level. In the interviews it becomes obvious that he feels insecure, additionally, this insecurity makes him get external help to find an audience to talk about his identity problems.

Also if Richard favors a more feminine leading style which concentrates on the people, he is aware that a rational assessment is needed to survive in a competitive environment:

"Where it can be difficult is when you have to make difficult decisions. That they [the women] are a little too emotional, that they get a little too emotionally involved with their own people. Can, I don't say it will always be like that but it can. They may be slightly less business-oriented than what you would want them to, but on the other hand it's a good thing to have the interaction between very business-oriented and very people-oriented. If you get the right mix."

During all our interviews Richard presents himself as a manager who is strongly connected with the binary thinking of society. He cannot separate himself from this dualism which complicates the handling of his gender identities. According to norms he considers men as more business-oriented and women as more empathic and people-oriented. Richard tries to combine both things but struggles due to an expected resentment by his environment.

As Richard's interview was the first one we conducted, we also posed questions about his leading style to his employees in order to achieve a broad picture about him as a leader.

In the following, excerpts from the employees' interviews show their opinions about him:

"Of course, he is a marketing guy who also personally different is. I don't like power point presentations or details, or long-term budget planning. I'm more hands-on whereas Richard has

the theoretical background. I think this is a difference which also has impact on the way of leading employees and on the way of dealing with your colleagues.” (Walter)

Already Walter’s opinion about Richard shows the difference between both types. This shall in detail be explained when we come to the analysis of Walter’s leading position as well as his gender performance.

Most of his colleagues though appreciate his leading style as well as his background and know about the importance of having someone who can communicate with every side.

“I think it is good that we now have a business person because that we lacked before because he is very good in this. My older boss didn’t have this background. But if you have this it makes it easier to communicate with our customers and you can speak their language as well which isn’t natural to us.” (Loreley)

“I think it’s shaping the company into the right structure but it seems to me that he is a little bit blind for what it is we are producing for what market and make up some pitfalls and dangers ahead that he might not see in that area. But he is very open about communication. I find it easier to talk to him than any boss I had previously. So as a person I would prefer him to somebody who might have a creative background, simply of the way he is approaching the direction of the company.” (Manfred)

Hence, in the perspectives of his subordinates, there is the willingness to follow a strategic direction, moreover, they understand the necessity of having someone with a business background to combine these controversial fields. However, they complain about his lack of creative knowledge as well as about his sometimes too focused business view which makes it more difficult for them to understand him.

“I think, Richard has been a very positive influence on the company. When you first meet Richard he couldn’t be more different to Walter. Actually, now, I get to know Richard a bit better I can say that there are a few similarities I haven’t noticed at first. I think that both are the same. They just do things in a different way. I think, Richard is very open and I think people here and I feel I can go to him with the things I worry. I think that was the difference. I think, Walter was so distant towards here, at least. I think, we hardly saw him and so, that didn’t help to make us a part of the company whereas here with Richard we think, he is coming over for visiting, you can speak to him on an eye chat. And that would probably not happen in the past

that we feel just getting in touch with him. I think people believe in him, we feel that he brings the company forward. I think people stand definitely behind him.” (Elizabeth)

These excerpts demonstrate that, with a few exceptions, no one really complains about his feminine gender identity. It shows that Richard’s concern is unnecessary and that he is supported by most of his employees to pursue the rational decisions he has to make with an empathic leading style. Nevertheless, this seems difficult to him as he is still influenced by the underlying binary thinking of our society which hinders the performing of the gender identity he feels most comfortable with.

Coming to Walter’s leading style it is evident that he has much less problems to live his gender identity. He has a creative education which might facilitate the use of feminine traits. However, on the other hand, he follows a rational, distant leading style which can be regarded as more hierarchical driven than Richard’s style. Walter’s creative background is marked by a hands-on, learning-by-doing orientation. Furthermore, in contrast to Richard, he does not feel comfortable with the strategic decision making processes. Instead, he is much more engaged in the single creative processes of his employees. As he did already every job himself, he knows exactly which steps are necessary or which ones are important in the overall creative framework. During our interview he seems to be very self-confident, also regarding his leading style. The way he leads people is more distant which creates the view of him as an introvert leader among his former employees.

“I think Richard is much more an extrovert whereas Walter is an introvert. There are little things about the company what the possibilities and limitations are – there they were very similar. The general direction of the company I think they probably have a quite clear agreement on. I think that both are strong characters. And I think that both do well with dealing with Disney. They maybe treat it in a different way but I think they really are great spoke persons for us to enhance the commitment to the company. And I think Richard is really appreciating having Walter to ask for advice. [...] Richard knows how to promote us in a way that maybe Walter never did. We saw the things only from London whereas the Copenhagen department is much bigger and I think we were hidden, not recently but in the past. And I think maybe Richard with his company background understands the importance building up these networks.” (Elizabeth)

Elizabeth is recognizing the differences as well as the similarities of Richard’s and Walter’s working styles. And, even if they are different leaders, they both succeeded in their leading styles to run the unit. Richard points out the different approaches regarding himself as more

pro-active which is also considered as an element of a feminine leadership style. Moreover, he is aware of the connection between leading style and educational background.

“Walter had been managing [the creative unit] successful for 10 years. But successfully meaning very introvert, meaning doing whatever was needed but not really focusing outside proactively, just doing reactively what’s needed not looking at how could this become a more dynamic company with a more customer driven development, set up with more document processes, workflows and all of that. And Walter is an editor that explains of course why his approach is different.” (Richard)

The quotes above show that Richard and Walter differ a lot in their leading style. Whereas Richard can be regarded as the caring boss with the business background, Walter can be seen as the distant boss with the creative background. Both approaches seem to work, even if the “people-approach” of Richard is more accepted by the employees. Nevertheless, they also appreciate Walter’s creative background and, thus, his knowledge which makes it easier to communicate to him. In terms of handling the gender identity, Walter feels much more comfortable with his masculine identity as his creative background allows him sometimes also the use of feminine skills. Nevertheless, he is performing his identity in a very excessive way, which is underlined by his appearance and his very masculine hobbies such as motor cycling. Richard, on the other hand, switches between his female and male gender identity and still struggles as he feels not understood by society. Due to his binary thinking he feels that he cannot be the person he wants to be, at least if he encounters a very male-dominated environment. However, it has to be mentioned, that within his unit he is completely accepted and his concerns are unnecessary. In a broader picture, though, it has to be said that society’s underlying dualism still hinders the performance of fluidity or even multiplicity as every differentiation refers back to gender categorization. Hence, a shift towards a more open society is still necessary as the examples of Richard but also of Loreley show to only name a few.

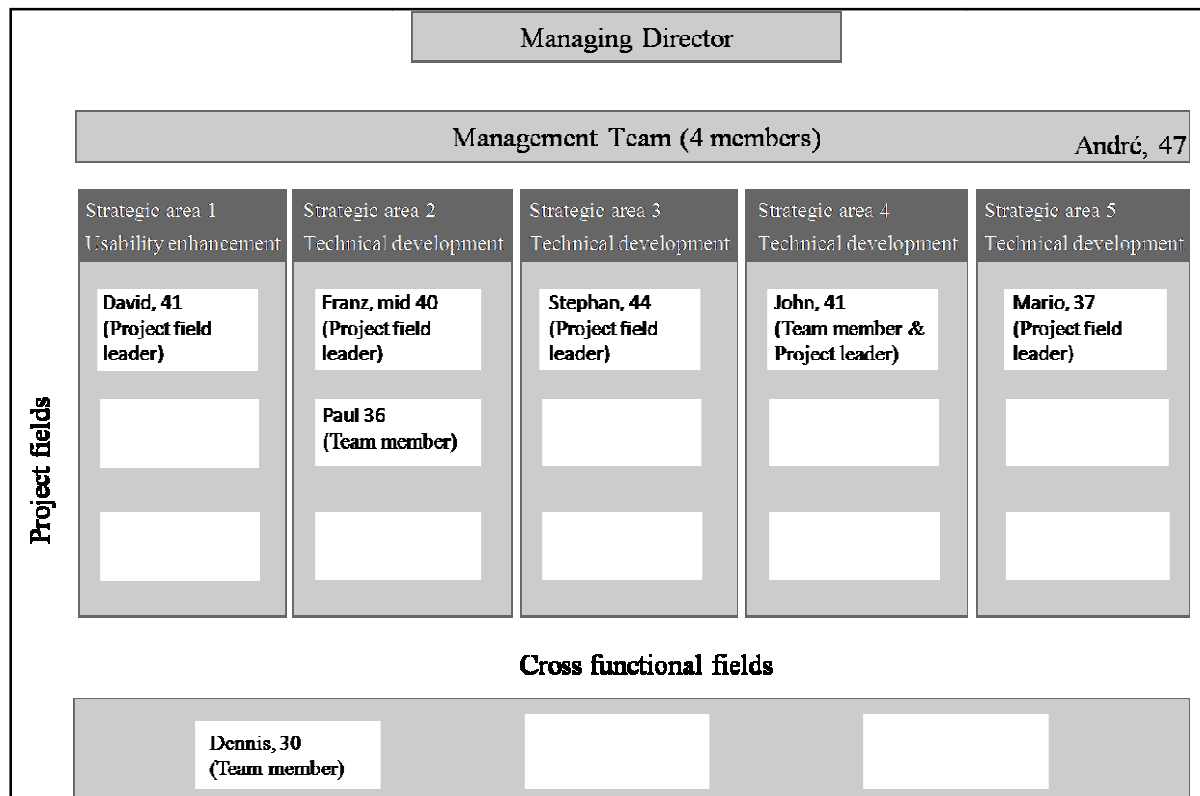
Case illustration of the Research & Development Center of a knowledge intensive firm

The second business we examined is the Research & Development (R&D) Center of a German telecommunication company. The R&D Center mainly engages in the development of future-oriented topics and technologies which are expected to be commercially launched within the time range of one and a half up to five years. It employs more than 300 experts and

researchers which consist of national and international employees, postdoctoral staff, postgraduates and students. As with the creative unit the work is done for the parent company.

Looking at the organizational structure, the R&D Center comprises at the top layer the management director and the management team which consists exclusively of men, including the management director. The workforce is assigned to five different strategic areas, whereof four areas are concerned with the development and enhancement of various technical matters and the remaining strategic unit concentrates on improving the usability of products. Each strategic area is guided by a coordinator. This is not an official position within the organization but is delegated by management for reporting purposes. Each strategic area consists of different project fields, supervised by a project field leader. Every field works on one or more projects. Additionally to the project fields that belong to one strategic area, there are cross functional fields. One of these fields, that is of interest for our research, deals with including the user perspective into the technical work of all the strategic areas. The project work is a core variable within the R&D Center and each assignment supports the aim of developing innovative products. The described structure of the R&D Center points to a flat hierarchy. The employees we interviewed represent the different layers of the hierarchy. André (47) is part of the management team and the only one we interviewed from the four members. The majority of our interviewees were project field leaders mixed from all strategic areas. Franz (mid 40), Stephan (44) and Mario (37) are project field leaders from very technical-oriented project fields while David (41) leads a project field that is rather concerned with including the experiences of the users who tested the prototypes. John (41) and Paul (36) are project field members that are very technically affine while Dennis (30) is a project field member and PhD student that works in the cross functional field. His project field is dedicated to include user's perspectives and needs and combine them with the work of all strategic areas. In the following, we will present a graph to illustrate the complex structure of the R&D Center.

Graph 2: Illustration of the structure of the R&D Center



Regarding the office set up, the Research & Development Center is composed of open and communicative structures. The modern offices are spread across six floors and are designed as open offices. Instead of many small rooms with only a few tables, each floor is an open space with many desks. Regarding the seating, the R&D Center follows the approach of “hot-desking”. There are no fix assigned tables within the open office but employees must book it via the intranet or the touch screen hanging on the wall in the hallway. This touch screen can also be used for finding colleagues or booking one of the various meeting rooms that are available on each of the six floors. The meeting rooms serve for dynamic exchanges, brain stormings or the presentation of results. Within the hallways of the office one can see technical prototypes that are used as decoration. One floor of the building is mainly reserved for the exhibition of technical prototypes in a specific setting. This means one can experience in a realistic environment where and how these prototypes actually will be used in the future. The reception includes screens that show videos of projects. Additionally, the office has a cafeteria with a foosball and a PlayStation that can be and is used by many workers. A bucket with different kinds of chocolate is also available for everyone.

As already indicated with the open office, project work, foosball as well as PlayStation, not only professional qualifications but also a team spirit is essential for the work. A friendly atmosphere is underlined by the fact that everyone is called by first name except the management director. It has to be mentioned that in traditional German companies it is not common to call all colleagues by first name. Moreover, they have a casual dressing style, only the management team wears suits. In the cafeteria hangs a piece of paper that states ten unofficial principles which give a further good impression of the culture of the Research and & Development Center. Accordingly, the first and most important principle encourages the employees “to create a playground culture”. The creation of a playground culture is also supported by the office structure and by the prototypes that are displayed and which can be tried out at any time by the workers. Additionally, “being visual” within their work and “thinking by doing” is promoted where “quantity of ideas shall come first” and “refining as a second step”. Workers are asked to “think opposite” and to “involve various people” in their projects. They should always “redefine their problems” and “create own principles”. The last two principles state that “innovation requires hard work” but still, it is important that they “have fun” with what they are doing. The friendly culture is not only a vision but also lived by the workers who have a good relationship to their team mates. Franz acknowledges a respectful and collegial atmosphere which is as well perceived by his team members.

“We have a good, constructive atmosphere and collegiality together with respect. This is also acknowledged by the employee feedback.”

Also Dennis’ team has a friendly atmosphere and they enjoy going out after work:

“Yes we do things with the team after work, definitely. We also have some activities like twice a year such as cooking evenings but we also did this with project teams, not only with our project field but with people with whom we worked together, that we rented a place for cooking.”

The friendly atmosphere is further described by John:

“We go out from time to time but it's not like every day or even several times a week. That is a few times a month. It used to be more and now it's a few times a month. I don't know whether to say a few times per month is distant or not. I would say it is not distant. We are cooperative with each other, we know each other personally, and we are also invited to birthdays and so on.

We even visit each other at home, we know the marriage partners etc. No, that's not distant at all.”

Additionally, Stephan mentions the reliability of his colleagues which enhances trust and thus the collegial culture:

“We have a very good cooperation, I really have to say. And we can also rely upon each other.”

Superficially, the structure and work force of the R&D Center underline stereotypical claims and go along with what we expected before starting the interviews. Already when entering the office we observed that mainly men were sitting at the desks, which confirmed our first obvious stereotypical statement that men dominate the technical units. Also our interviewees were exclusively male. As mentioned within the description of the R&D Center the office design is very modern and also the decorations such as PlayStation and foosball are quite masculine. Within the dualistic perspective, society created a masculine stereotype which claims that a technical affinity and capability is typically male. Also all of our male interview partners' enjoy working with technical features at work as well as privately.

“But I was even an amateur programmer for years. And so, then, I constantly tried things in my private time. There is also a prototype hardware platform. That's what I tried at home first, just out of pure interest.” (John)

Stephan as well discovered his affinity for technology when he was younger:

“Let's say it this way I've previously turned my hobby into a profession. I've wanted to study electrical engineering and automatic control technique. And at the University of Stuttgart there was one subject that called itself automatic control technique and process automation but that wasn't lived properly because the professor suddenly retired and then I switched to data processing or data switching and I did a lot of handicraft work at home, especially electronics. And then I turned my hobby into a career and have learned from it.”

Paul differentiates it a little bit. Like the others he likes to engage in technology in private life but the intensity differs depending on how technical the different projects are since some project requirements are so technical-oriented that he needs to do something different in his spare time.

“Whether I deal privately with technology depends on how much it plays a role in projects. When what you do currently is very technical, then the hobbies are rather the opposite as compensation. In the past I have done more, but that has changed because I do enough within the R&D Center.”

That the technical area is mostly a field for men has as well been recognized by some of our interviewees. As already stated within the theory, also Stephan sees the reason for fewer women in technical fields as a social matter and even thinks that they are scared of technical topics.

“I think it is to a certain extend a social thing. We have, especially in EU projects, we have relatively many women in the technology area, relatively. What surprised me entirely is Spain, as there are currently many women running around on campus of the University Carlos III de Madrid and are studying technical subjects. But then again the Catholic education is noticeable. After finishing their engineering studies they get married and then they stay at home. No this is surprising, because there are so many women in technical study courses, but then they apparently disappear from the scene because it is very Catholic. Then they stay at home on the stove with the Bambini. But then I have two women in my team, one programmer and one which is responsible for business issues. I mean to a certain point women are a little bit scared of engineering.”

Others react a little bit insecure when explaining why there are so little women within the Center such as John who points out studies that have been made. The few women that are in his team have a hard time expressing and asserting themselves within this male-dominated domain.

“Yes, well, here at the R&D Center: why is this so? Um, yes, you probably also have read the studies about why there are not many women in technical fields. Good question (laughs).”

And further:

“We had a woman, and she has, I believe, felt pretty intimidated. And she was just not able to assert herself. I also worked seven years in the United States, in Chicago, and we had more women but not so many. We had a woman as a project leader and she was able to assert herself excellently, but she was not a software engineer. And the other woman was also a minority, and

then also as a woman in a male dominated field. Yes, she was not able to assert herself. But I have not experienced a woman who can properly assert herself and defend her ideas.”

Also Stephan admits that the women within his team have to be able to handle some macho slogans.

“Yes okay, sometimes I have a stupid saying. We still haven’t introduced a macho-checkout yet, but I would have to pay a few times in there.”

On the contrary, Dennis who works in the cross functional field that deals with enhancing the user friendliness of products indeed recognizes the minority of women in the organization, but this is different within his field since they are not concerned with technical matters.

“There tend to be more men in the R&D Center but in my team it is not like that. That could be because we are less technically on the way.”

A further stereotype that we identified through our interviews relates to the management team. Here we could find a connection to the male stereotype and to the masculine work ethic such as goal-orientation and instrumentality.

Stephan criticizes that for the management the value creation comes first and thus reduces the ability of discovering disruptive topics because not everything may turn into profit within the first years. Thus, this statement shows the profit and goal orientation of management and therefore the masculine behavior becomes obvious.

“Yes that (Management) is also a particular thing. We are supposed to make innovation and we also have an 80/20% regulation, so 80% is to be truly assessed according to the context of Value Tracking and should yield a value and 20% are disruptive. But this means our measure is not really lived, honestly, because disruptive issues for me are concerned, among other things, with research content and do not necessarily end in a startup, and our management has defined that the 20% should end in a startup and there is of course a little risk that certain disruptive issues would not be pursued because they do not end in a standard, or perhaps would end in 20 or 10 years in a improvement of the control platform, but from which I can’t start a firm. And these issues that are generating no or insignificant Value Tracking now or in the next five years are dropped. Because they would normally fit into the 20% disruptive technologies but disruptive business is wrong. Research & Development here is not primarily there for... from my point of view, to generate completely new revenue only. We are there to reduce OPEX and CAPEX in

the future, we are here to make the company's life easier in 5-6 years and this cannot, honestly, be announced in value or money supply and since this is not possible, we are not allowed do it and that is a mistake."

David states that the management does not want long descriptions of projects but is only interested in the rational and instrumental facts such as cost and success factors.

"I can talk to the manager 20 minutes about the elements of a project, what achievements we have in there and what technology we use and why we use this one and not the other. When they are now only interested in how promising it is and what it costs and then they are not interested in the rest."

The same has been experienced by Mario who knows that complex aspects have to be presented short and concise, focusing on the important aspects.

"Um, that means that complex facts have to be presented "Management like", which means, in short, concise and succinct and, um, putting the most significant statement up front. One must be able to recognize what is the most relevant, the relevant for the addressee."

Part of a masculine ethic can be found within the whole organization and not only within management. Working long hours or taking work home is no exception within the Research & Development Center. Hence, Stephan sees his work/life balance as a catastrophe. This is partly due to the pressure given by the management but also because of certain responsibilities he has as a project field leader. Since he wants his projects to be successful it may be necessary to invest some time.

"A disaster. Let's put it this way, it is to a certain extent the pressure from management. Then, sure, an interest as well but also the responsibility. When I take over topics then I also want them to be successful. And that's why .. okay, let's say it is like this, I'll take the work home with me in the evenings, however, I don't do it in the evening but in the morning. I look at my emails in the morning. Okay last night I wrote a couple of emails, simply because I am such a top management coordinator, this is a rotation position."

David also underlines the pressure given by management.

“Occasionally, management sends out emails at nine o’clock in the evening, saying they will need this to be finished tomorrow morning.”

André sees long hours as a normal phenomenon within the R&D Center. When it comes to the importance of work in his life, it captures 50% which is not visible in his work/life balance. In this respect the work takes up more time and it is also very common that tasks come up unexpected.

“50 percent but this is not visible in my work / life balance. I’m always taking work home and I work on weekends. That comes with the job and we exaggerate a little here at the R&D Center. This regularity is too much. In this respect we overdo it a bit.”

And further:

“The trouble is that tasks always come unexpected into the Center and very, very suddenly and you never have the feeling that it is calm, perhaps between Christmas and New Year and for me not even then.”

Like André, David thinks it is normal that, sometimes, one has to work longer hours and that this is completely understandable:

“I can fully understand that if there is the necessity and something is not going too well that I have to do something. Then you just have to do it. But this is phase dependent. There are times when there is stress because this is not going well or something needs to be prepared quickly, then it just takes longer and you just can’t go home that early.”

Franz is concerned that people work too much because of the many interesting projects:

“I see it as a danger within the R&D Center that because of too many interesting topics people have the tendency to be overwhelmed. I’m also in danger but I try to keep the balance.”

After our first expectations of finding male characteristics were confirmed we had a closer look at the structure and behavior of the people. By looking underneath the surface we could experience that the Research & Development Center reflects certain stereotypical feminine behavior. The first and most obvious stereotypical reflection relates to the

organizational structure of the firm. Within our theoretical framework we defined the organizational post-bureaucracy which is also labeled feminine bureaucracy. According to the feminine bureaucracy there is a flat hierarchy with decentralized decision-making power and the organization is seen as a community where people can combine work life and private life as well as build up relationships with their colleagues. These features can be identified within the Research & Development Center. The Center consists of a flat hierarchy where decisions are not only made by the management team but in cooperation with the project fields.

André explains that he cannot know every detail and therefore cannot tell which projects might be more important than others and thus gives the decision-making power back to the teams that approached him, to come up with an own solution first.

“You need to make people understand that they themselves have to deal with the money, almost like pocket money. I attempt to decentralize power in the context of given circumstances. Not pre-prioritize. Money is always a scarce commodity, so it is better to give people autonomy over their own numbers and potential and only intervene in borderline situation. You can’t let the needs of people get to close to you, let them handle it by themselves.”

André further alludes why decentralizing the decision-making power is important to him:

“I can’t decide which projects are important and who should get more money, because I lack the technological side. Therefore, the project areas should agree among themselves and then come to back to me. I try to delegate a little decision-making power back to the people by saying try to get the money first from somewhere else because I can’t do anything today but maybe in six months if you do this and that or if you do something yourself first. Maybe get the money from someone else and then in half a year you can make a deal. The people must decide for themselves and deal with it themselves.”

As mentioned before, there is a good and amicable atmosphere within the teams where the members know each other very well. This community atmosphere is also marked by the open office structure where everyone is visible and can be contacted at any time. Not even the management team has a closed office but is situated among the other workers. Also the many meeting rooms give space for interaction. But the interaction and exchanges can as well take place in a rather relaxed situation, for example during a game at the foosball or at the PlayStation or just while having a coffee and some chocolate in the cafeteria. The many possibilities for interaction and exchange are recognized by John:

“What I like about my job is the interaction with other people, these exchanges.”

Lastly, within his strategic area, Stephan introduced the job rotation of the coordinator position of his strategic area. Thus every member has the possibility to experience what this position demands and how important the legwork from others is. This, again, is an approach which is used within the feminine bureaucracy.

“I was the leader of a strategic unit last year, but we rotate this position. I’m dependent on the assistance of my team leaders and if everyone has experienced how it is to be in my position, more willing to react quicker and to give me input rather than saying ‘Yes, he sitting there up front but he still can’t give me orders’. But if everyone knows that next year I will occupy this position, then they are more likely to help me out.”

Femininity can be further discovered within the feminine leadership style of the project field leaders we interviewed. The leadership style goes along with the organizational structure. According to the theory, within feminine or post-heroic leadership the leader is portrayed as participatory and flexible. As well as within post-bureaucracy, this leadership style includes sharing responsibilities and building a community through networking. Hence the relationship between the leader and the team is very close. Employees are asked to be creative and receive in return the possibility to develop themselves and to learn.

The close relationship between project field leader and team is very well described by Franz who cares about his team and also considers the private life of his colleagues. He sees his colleagues not only as workers but as human beings:

“I, on the other hand, offer or intend to give my team the most possible freedom / space. I see my team members as whole people and not just as workers. I also respect their private needs and take them into account and support my team members in difficult situations e.g., if someone cannot come by short notice or must leave early.”

What is important for him is to be integrated in the team and not to be reserved because of his position. Giving his team members a great freedom to be innovative and creative is also part of his leadership style and thus an indicator for the feminine leadership style used. Instead of leading with objectivity and distance, which would be rather viewed as masculine, he prefers being understanding and helping.

“I strive to be like everyone else. I see myself as part of the team and want to be a *primus inter pares* (Equal Rights for all). I know that this can bring difficulties, for example in the enforcement of unpleasant things, because distance and objectivity would be better. But I prefer to react rather with great understanding for affected colleagues.”

In return he expects work dedication from his team members as well as creativity and independence. While only independency could be seen as a masculine trait, job dedication and creativity belong to the female stereotype.

“From my employees I expect the identification with goals and identification with the content of the project field. But I think this is present. In addition, I expect commitment, independence and creativity. Autonomy needs to be there in that respect that no one only waits to get tasks assigned.”

When it comes to describing what Franz sees as necessary characteristics for being a good leader, he expresses a mixture of feminine and masculine traits. The abilities to structure and order complex contexts are viewed as typically male traits as well as setting priorities and develop them. But then, on the contrary, it is also important for him to be integrative and to communicate with the team as well as to motivate them. He wants to use the close work with management to provide his team with more transparency. These are in turn stereotypically traits of the female leadership style.

“In addition regarding the work with employees, being integrative and to motivate is important. Since I work close to the management I want to create transparency and inform my team about what happens in the Research & Development Center. Communication into the team is an important aspect. As a leader one needs the ability to structure complex contexts and bring them into an order that is to set priorities and bring about developments.”

Another example for the feminine way of leading is how Stephan sees his role as a leader. He emphasizes a close relationship with his team members where trust and honesty are important factors. In order to achieve trust he sticks to his colleagues when things go wrong and also expects it the other way around from his team members. Being able to trust and to rely on each other are thus important elements and relate to post-heroic leadership.

“Being honest with the employees, then, ultimately, to have the backbone to stand in front of the people when it comes down to avert any duties, to stand by them when something has gone stupid, just to take responsibility for the people. I have, in the end, responsibility for the people, I have to lead them and if something goes wrong to a certain point it is also my fault and I should not blame the people, trying to pass it on. As someone who leads a team, or a project, I'm not the type of leader who... to say it with a vulgar expression ‘the shit is rolling down the mountain’ I don't like that. I just think if one takes responsibility you should also ensure to stand up for it.”

And in return:

“[What he expects from his team] That they also stand up for me and do not fall in my back when it counts. So this is a very important characteristic that you trust each other, that you can rely on each other and, yes, even good cooperation.”

But even though he sees an atmosphere of trust and the ability to rely on each other as important, he keeps a distance to his team when it comes to private life. Within working time they talk a lot and colleagues know stories of his private life but he regards it as inappropriate to go out with them after work. This can be interpreted as a rational decision in order to stay neutral and emotionally detached since emotions should not be part of evaluating people. Thus work life and private life should be separated which relates back to the masculine stereotype.

“[Whether he goes out with colleagues after work] Less. I also have a little problem when, yes, you have to judge people, you need to tell them what they have done badly, so therefore I keep a distance. I'm very open with my people during working hours, so I tell them things about my private life, of course. And we have an extremely open relationship, they know everything that annoys me, and so on and I notice it when they are angry about something, only in the evenings and at free time I try to keep a distance.”

As well as Stephan, David points out that a good relationship to his team members is necessary. He sees it as a necessity to know the colleagues in order to identify where people are good at and where rather not or to notice it when they are having trouble. In addition, it helps to identify how to talk to people and not offend them. In order to gain trust a certain authenticity is necessary.

“I had several team leader positions, once for a team that had really bad values and then for a team that had good values and I see team leadership or project leadership when there are more than 2-3 people involved is relatively equal regarding the requirements and skills. It has a lot to do with communication, with a lot of people, many characteristics of people, one has to pay attention and see where are people working well, where are they working badly. So a frivolous claim or frivolously said something one person may take it personal then he performs badly and nothing works. So communication is important for both for a team leader and for a project manager and an authenticity.” (David)

Furthermore, David wants to provide his team members an environment where they can learn and develop. In return he expects that they trust him and tell him if there are problems.

“Employees have the ability to learn and to develop but therefore trust is necessary to tell the leader if there are problems and to know that there are no major consequences.”

But again, like Stephan, when it comes to including people in the private life and going out after work, David sees it as inappropriate when you are a leader. A good and close relationship to the team is fine within working hours but should not be extended beyond. He explains that having a close relationship after work with some of the team members creates mistrust and chatter. Thus we can also experience a masculine behavior when it comes to not mixing up private and work life.

“You can’t actually if you are a team leader or as a manager, you can’t actually have friends within the team. Because then they may think "just look with him he can do well, with him he talks a lot, with him he always disappears when he has news tells him in the hallway but the others are not allowed to hear it" You then create relatively quickly an atmosphere of mistrust and a two-class society. Actually, you shouldn’t have buddies in the team anymore. So that no one can say to him he is especially close. Clearly there are also times when colleagues represent me who have the information they need in order to represent me and to overlook the situation in my absence. But you have to be careful and clearly separate it. Otherwise, they say he always gets the good tasks and we have to deal with the bad ones. So you really have to pay attention.”

With respect to his colleagues David expects honesty in so far that they tell him if there is a problem or if deadlines cannot be kept. Therefore, he sees it as necessary to create a culture where mistakes are allowed. This in turn gives the employees the possibility to learn and to develop which is a characteristic of the feminine leadership style.

“[What he expects from his colleagues]: Well, honesty. If someone has a problem or he can’t make it, he has to tell it and not just a few days before the project is finished, saying I knew it before that it wouldn’t work. You must create a culture where one can also say uncomfortable things where everyone knows that went wrong now and I maybe made a mistake, but I always have the possible to talk to the project leader or the team leader or with whomever. You need to fix it and this doesn’t work with such pressure mechanisms where one says that everything has to work and must be out by next week, that doesn’t always work, usually not.”

As already mentioned by Franz before, Mario considers motivational skills as necessary for being a good leader. Furthermore, a leader needs to be open and have the ability to look beyond the own horizon and see the big picture. He also underlines the importance of enlarging transparency through communication into the team. Something that Franz has mentioned as well.

“A certain degree of openness is necessary, certainly a high ability to work in a team, um, we are also internationally active, yes. Um, so intercultural skills are certainly necessary. The ability to look beyond the own horizon, to be open for other areas that do not belong to the own profession.”

And further:

“Of course you have to motivate. But, um, what actually for me is even more important is to mediate reasons, the reasons and necessities to team members. That when a decision is made one can explain why and how it has been decided this way. So that no one perceives it as some sort of force majeure but that one can make the understandable to colleagues. And, um, trying to justify why and how the decision was made now in one or the other way. This, in my opinion, helps more than any flat motivation slogans.”

The ability to look beyond one’s own horizon is also an expectation he has of his team members. In addition they should be able to work autonomous on the different projects by identifying the problems and solving them. He delegates some of the decision-making power to his team members which is part of the feminine leadership style as well as feminine bureaucracy.

“So primarily I expect independence (from his team). I don’t want to be asked for every little thing, or, um, yes, to demand things or to make votes. Because then you can’t achieve anything. I expect that team members have the ability to work independently, also make decisions independently and to push certain processes forward on their own. Um, then, looking beyond their own horizon is of course also important and, um, yes, even the understanding of a larger context.” (Mario)

When André told us what he expects from his colleagues, we identified a mixture of masculine and feminine traits:

“From my team I expect a high level of self-responsibility, autonomy, assessment of circumstances, pragmatic thinking, a mixture of visionary and pragmatist. You must get along on one side with the regulations of the company and at the same time make innovations like the last five Nobel Prize winners. We must have both.”

From the description of the leadership style we can already identify some stereotypical feminine characteristics which our interviewees embrace. These shall now be further explored.

Among our interviewees we identified the feminine traits common sense, people skills and communicative skills because Dennis, John as well as Paul view these characteristics as important in order to find out how to handle their colleagues and how to talk to them. Dennis does not only emphasize the communication with colleagues but also with potential users of the products that are developed within the R&D Center.

“Information from the user must be transferred in an understandable and convincing manner. Therefore, one needs communication skills and the ability to deal with users.”

When it comes to working with rather technical-oriented teams, he does not experience problems, since the benefits for both parties are well communicated:

“There are areas where the leaders think very technical but where the members appreciate the user benefit and try to include the field of usability within the whole innovation process. Therefore, I didn’t encountered difficulties communicating with them.”

John mentions the need of common sense and people skills in order to gain the information he needs and to identify the right questions to ask.

“Yes, exactly, good human understandings as you need it in many other areas too, especially, when you have responsibility for other people. I think my point was there that the group of software developers, at least I get this impression, are not so detailed in their communications. One must know how to ask questions in order to get the necessary information. So, in other areas it seemed to me as if the people are a little better in the communication.”

John’s point of view is also emphasized by Paul:

“This is very individual, you really have to look how the people are and adapt, you have to look and listen to find out how you can proceed. I have a friendly attitude to deal with people and so far it always had positive effects. Important thing is your own attitude.”

Additionally to people skills and common sense David mentions the necessity of a gut instinct in order to detect what functions and what does not.

“There are things where you need experience, because you need to have a gut feeling for what works, what does not work, what is good, what is not going well.”

Also openness as well as adaptability and the willingness to learn are characteristics lived by the interviewees. Paul sees an open mind as necessary because of the many different characteristics that people have within the company. He has to be able to work with all of them and to create synergies.

“I think the diversity within the R&D Center is very important, to work with many different characters. Therefore, you should be open minded in order to be able to work with these many characters and to create synergies.”

Dennis mentions the skills to learn and to adapt to other people as well as to fields where he has no knowledge of. This is necessary in order to work with others but also to understand their message and to see the big picture.

“In one project, it was once so at the beginning I had to put myself in the other position and try to learn and work it out by myself and try to understand the technical processes and to get the big picture.”

This opinion is also supported by Mario:

“Um, yes, absolutely, as I told you already that you need the trait or ability to adapt to the addressees, um, of course. I don't only mean it for the two areas, management-like area and professional area, but also for other areas you need the ability to adapt to other communication partners.”

A further characteristic that is assumed to be feminine is a desire for harmony. Franz has this desire and therefore, he needs to eliminate conflicts as quick as possible.

“According to my nature I like harmony, perhaps even more than other guys. I have to resolve conflicts immediately, or I feel uncomfortable. In general, I see it as best to address the things openly and to resolve it but it also costs power and effort.”

Several of our interviewees are very dedicated to their job. Referring back to the theory and stereotypes, our society defined job dedication as a feminine behavior. John, for example, likes his job so much that he accepts the traveling that is connected to it. The variety that his job has to offer outweighs the disadvantage of traveling back and forth.

“It [the job] is quite important. Even if I do not need to work so much, I must travel a lot and I could find a job here where I live, find another job where I don't have to travel so much. But that is for me especially here at the T-Labs, very interesting and that means I prefer to work with the R&D Center. It is very complex, always back and forth. I appreciate the variety very much.”

Mario even considers his job as the most important in his life:

“It [the job] is very important. But it also changes from time to time a little bit, that I'm sometimes more, sometimes less focused on the job but in general I consider my job as the most important in my life.”

A last feminine behavior, we want to mention, is the pragmatic way in which most of our interviewees deal with critique. This is a typical phenomenon prescribed to the feminine stereotype. David and Dennis see critique as an instrument for development as long as the critique is presented in a constructive way.

“Yes that's part of the job that projects are rejected, but I've also experienced it and it was understandable for me. Perhaps I was a little sad, and thought uff that would have been a great project but it's not like someone says "no" or "no next", as with Bohlen or so, or come back again next week. But their arguments are always backed up. It is more like "Yes, we see it critical because..., can you please clarify the aspects A and B, and then you already see while explaining that it is not all good. And I never experienced arbitrariness, where I say “you ass”, “you do it just because you don't feel like it”. No, it wasn't always beautiful but understandable in any case.” (David)

“If there is criticism then it is constructive and justified. Rather a means to progress.” (Dennis)

Mario has the same point of view about critique as David and Dennis. But he first had to learn that critique is necessary in some situations. All three agree that stopping or delaying a project is not meant as humiliating but that there are good reasons behind it.

“Um, yes, over time you can deal with it easier and you accept it and see it just as a side effect of a large group. And sometimes it is simply necessary. So, sometimes you see that the decision to stop a project or at some point not to pursue with a project, is the right thing.” (Mario)

After illustrating the female traits we explored within the structure, leadership and also while interviewing our male interview partners, we now analyze two project fields that are not based on developing new technologies but on enhancing user needs, user friendliness and identifying user experiences. As described before, the Research & Development Center consists of five different strategic areas, whereof four are technically oriented and one concerned with usability. Within the strategic area of usability there is a project field that is dedicated to exploring the experiences users make when using new technical devices. This project field is concerned with user interviews and user tests to identify what works well and what has to be improved before launching the product. The second project field works cross functional with all five strategic areas. They identify different user perspectives and user needs which support the creation of new innovations that come from the user side. In order to

reach the aim of higher user friendliness as well as the inclusion of user needs and experiences, a closer contact to the user is necessary which implies the use of people skills and empathy. Within both project fields more women can be found, which may be related to the fact that it has little to do with technology. Our interviewees do not differentiate between the two fields and give them the general label “usability”.

“In principle, we have many women within the Center but this comes from the Usability area. There are a lot of women but they also work on different matters than technology.” (Stephan)

Dennis who is a member of the cross functional field explains the uniqueness of it:

“The Center is rather technically placed and within the usability area they look to find a way to connect the technical fields with user information. As you look first at what all the people want, what are the needs and then we work with them very closely to attain innovation results, which are closely aligned to the user.”

He also explains the different methods that are used within this field which underline the femininity:

“With the help of certain methods, for example ethnographically, we look what needs can be found in a particular environment. Methods are among others, to go home to the user or go to concerts to look how they consume and what do they want at all. The next step is to generate ideas and develop usage scenarios within workshops with the help of the data and then concepts are drawn. Afterwards, we make a selection together with the users. There is a constant user perspective in the innovation process.”

The unique about these two project fields is that they build a whole feminine “island” within the technical based R&D Center that connect technology with usability and user experiences. Both project fields are very respected by the other fields that are more concerned with technological matters, because they offer new perspectives and introduce social methods that are not common within the technical areas. Some interviewees expressed the wish to also have more women in the technical fields because they see it as a necessity in order to get broader perspectives and lateral thinking.

“There are more women in the field of Usability. I think this brings interesting impulses. The methods they use are rather from the social field as from the technical area and that provides insofar an added value that the problems are also sometimes viewed from a different angle. You also need lateral thinkers who not only work the same way and there are many people within the Center that have forgotten how to think outside the box, who basically do the same for years and don't think of something new. Therefore, I find the other very exciting.” (John)

John sees himself as a person who likes to try out new things but he feels that he cannot live it out in his team which only consists of men. Since his male colleagues always want to do the things as they always do it, John thinks that having more women in the team could change this.

“Yes, particularly in the technical area, I think it's actually quite good to work with women. Because they have a slightly different view than men and those macho things simply don't work when a woman is included. I'm looking for more innovative thinking and for trying new things. And I find the most acceptances of those ideas when a woman is on board rather than just being with the boys. Then it is mostly just like "Yes, why that? We have always done it that way, "and so on.”

The whole analysis of the interviews within the Research & Development Center shows the domination of stereotypical and therefore dualistic thinking. This can especially be seen within the last part where the interviewees think that they need more women in order to receive more perspectives and lateral thinking. They do not see that, according to fluidity, also men are able to perform feminine characteristics and, even more important, they do not recognize that they already do perform femininity themselves. Within the company we can explore the fluidity approach in many areas since we acknowledged many factors that go against the stereotype of what would be expected of a technical-oriented company. At some point we even discover bi-gendered behavior. Two examples are Stephan and David, who both, on the one hand, comprise feminine traits and practice a feminine leadership but, on the other hand, when it comes to private life they switch to a masculine behavior and separate private life from work life. This is because of the rational reason that they need distance in order to give critique or make decisions or because others could misinterpret the situation. Another example is Franz who turns out to be bi-gendered when he talks about the necessary abilities for being a good project field leader. The necessary traits he described are a mixture of feminine and masculine traits. Additionally, we recognized that the feminine behavior and

also the feminine leadership style receive positive feedback from the colleagues. Only Dennis goes in the direction of multiplicity by stating that not the sex is the most important aspect but rather the different backgrounds of individuals.

“I think that it is an advantage in any case (a good mixture between men and women) but the most important is the background of the person. We have many perspectives because we have business administrators, sociologists, psychologists, etc. in the team.”

But as already mentioned in the theory, a complete multiplicity is not achievable as long as social norms and stereotypes exist. As long as they are not abolished one will be confronted with the differentiation of sex into male and female.

Regarding the concept of fluidity it can though be said that our interviewees who perform feminine characteristics are not seen as behaving against the norms. Hence, at least, the possibility of perform masculine and feminine gender is given.

After analyzing both cases, a predominant similarity of relating back to gender stereotypes as a justification basis became evident. This shall now be explained in order to illustrate the connection between the two, on the surface, different companies.

Firstly, we observed a female minority within the R&D Center. The same can vice versa be applied to the creative company which employs fewer men than women. The respondents justify this observation by referring to social norms and stereotypes which create binary thinking. Within in this binary perspective it is not appropriate for women, according to their nature, to work in a technical environment. The same relates to men who should not be working in a creative domain. Regarding the technical company, the interviewees mention as reasons the fact that women are scared of technical matters but also allude the social constraints which complicate the work in a technical environment. With respect to the creative unit, it is obvious that creativity is regarded as a feminine field, but, besides this, it is also the work for children which scare off men. This combination questions the masculinity and hampers the access of men to this domain.

As a second commonness regarding stereotypes as a justification basis, we observed in both units a stereotypical explanation for the wish of having more colleagues from the opposite gender. Hence, the technical unit mentions as benefits from a female increase the access to new perspectives, the diverse views of lateral thinkers (innovative thinking) as well as the use of social approaches instead of technical approaches. The creative unit, in contrast,

regards the strength of men to think in a rational way, the attitude to “take things easy” as well as the pragmatic view towards work as advantageous and important.

After the analysis of our cases and the presentation of the companies’ similarities we will now reflect our findings in a critical gender discussion. Afterwards we will sum up the major results as well as a theoretical contribution of our thesis. Furthermore, we will provide practical contributions, which we withdrew from our analysis as well as from our thesis, and mention both our limitation and further research perspective.

Discussion

Within this section we refer to the critical perspectives in gender literature (concepts of fluidity and multiplicity) and by challenging the dualistic view we distance ourselves from the binary thinking.

In the creative company we experienced that some of our interviewees struggle with their gender identities when they behave against the expected stereotypical norms, particularly when it comes to leadership. This has been different within the technical company since they embraced a feminine attitude without acknowledging it as such. Thus they seemingly have the freedom of performing both genders. These observations made us rethink the dualistic perspective that at first seemed to be obvious in our interviews and which now leads us to the underlying questions of our discussion “In which situation is gender threatened or protected?” and “When do people feel the need to gender leadership?”.

Although the creative unit shows a very feminine stereotyped behavior on the lower level this picture though changes when it comes to the management level. There, the prevalent endorsement of masculinity can be observed. This can also be applied to the management team in the technical unit. Furthermore, both companies consist of male dominated management teams and they both follow a rather masculine leading style (even the female managers in the creative unit try to adopt masculine skills and thinking to become more competitive). These characteristics include being goal-driven as well as being profit-oriented. Furthermore, there is a strong interest in rational and instrumental facts such as cost and benefit. Also, the formulation of a strategic framework and the structuring of complex contexts are necessary to set priorities. Additionally, long working hours are understood as

expected and are seen as the norm. Regarding the relationship towards subordinates many managers try to keep a distance. Since the management thinking is described in what is perceived as masculine terms, it is also assumed that men are more qualified for executing the management tasks. This is justified in the stereotypical categorization.

Moreover, rationality and instrumentality are particularly seen as necessary in order to keep the company running. Without these rational traits, the creativity / innovation lived by the lower levels would not be sufficient in order to “survive”. This masculine behavior is regarded as essential and cannot be substituted by any feminine behavior. In extreme words, management can be considered from the creative side as the “death” of creativity / innovation. Since management assesses the value of a creative / innovative product according to strategic factors, e.g. profit and cost, the possibilities to live out creativity / innovation are limited. As already alluded above, the masculine management aspect is apparent within both firms, but within the R&D Center it confirms to the masculine stereotypical thinking of the occupation and, thus, seems less “surprising”.

The two discussion questions, mentioned above, are connected with the belonging to an occupation. Due to our social construction, technical occupations are masculinized and men working in these occupations have such a strong masculine occupational identity that they do not have to work so hard to confirm it. Thence, the gender is not coded. No one threatens the masculinity and tries to look beyond the surface to maybe identify things that go against gender stereotypes. Thus, the technical occupation represents a playground for men that offers the opportunity to try out different behaviors and that does not include the threat of being socially questioned regarding sexuality and gender performed. For this reason, no gender identity struggle is generated.

The possibility of performing different gender identities applies to the concept of fluidity (Fournier & Smith 2006). According to this approach many femininities and masculinities can be lived out by one individual. This is confirmed within the R&D Center because no one is criticized for using seemingly feminine traits such as empathy, creativity (innovation) and emotions. It is not regarded as an “anti-stereotypical” behavior but as an alternative masculinity. This means that even when they perform femininity it is still referred to some kind of masculinity. Fournier & Smith (2006, p. 144) relate this to “masculinist ideologies”.

Moreover, the behavior of our interviewees is not labeled as feminine by anyone in the company. Only because of our labeling it is perceived as a feminine attitude. As an

example, we compare the leadership style used by our interviewees to the description of the term “feminine leadership” in literature.

Since both the technical occupation and management are masculinized by society it allows for fluidity as men can adapt feminine behavior without being disapproved for their attitude, thus, they can play with gender and its options without it threatening their masculinity. Their occupational masculine identity is so strong that it is not questioned as feminine even when they perform “human values” (e.g. intimacy) as well as “people skills”. However, it can be questioned if women would have the same possibility of performing fluidity within such a masculine environment. In our expectation, which is build upon the gender literature, they would mainly behave in a rather masculine way, devaluing their feminine side. Within our theory section this is confirmed by Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty (2009). According to them, women working within a male dominated field feel the pressure to adapt in order to gain acceptance from their male colleagues. Thus they “do” masculine gender but by doing so they “undo” their femininity by depreciating it. In our paper, though, it remains non-researched since we only had male interview partners.

In the creative unit, though, the contradiction is more extreme as the company is dominated by women while the leading positions are carried out by men. Whereas the technical occupation of the R&D Center is clearly assigned to masculinity by society this assignment is not as evident for the creative occupation. Even if we as well as gender literature already make the distinction and regard creativity as a feminine occupation there still has to be acknowledged that this occupation went through a change. Relating back to former times the creative domain was mainly occupied by men. However, within in the last decades there was a shift, at least in some fields as, e.g., the publishing / media industry, towards the “female occupation” of creative positions. Thence, no apparent affiliation between occupation and gender is as visible as in the technical occupation. With respect to the creative company the feminine focus of the unit is emphasized, e.g. enhancing the fantasy of children, being passionate as well as having a stronger interest in reading books. This complicates the identification of men with this occupation. As a reaction towards this male identity struggle women are kept on lower levels while men occupy the management positions (Alvesson 1998). An empirical support is evident in our case of the creative company. So, masculinity is constructed through gender division of labor (Alvesson 1998).

Furthermore, this gender division is enhanced by a perceived strong contradiction, if not competition, between masculine management and the feminine creative unit. In contrast to the R&D Center there is a perceived codification of gender.

Creative occupations, moreover, are not that strongly feminine constructed by society than technical-oriented fields are masculine constructed. Therefore, it is more difficult to embrace masculine skills in a feminine environment but also to behave in a feminine way within a masculine domain. This masculine domain in the creative unit is presented by the male dominated management level. Since it is so difficult for the management to build up and protect a masculine identity, a feminine attitude is much less accepted than in stronger gendered occupations. Men, confident in their masculinity, regard it as necessary to protect their masculinity in a feminine field and, so, men who do not feel comfortable with their masculine gender identity feel forced to actively “do” the masculine gender. Furthermore, women have the coercion to “undo” their femaleness (Powell, Bagilhole & Dainty 2009; Butler 1990). This answers the questions why it is a bigger problem to embrace the opposite skills, and not gendering it, for the creative company than for the technical company.

As an example of the protective behavior on the management level the assessment of Richard’s identity struggle can be mentioned. In the analysis, Richard’s behavior is assigned to the concept of fluidity as he switches gender according to his environment. But, within the framework of our discussion, Richard’s behavior is more critically examined. From this stance, he is forced to symbolically change gender behavior, thus, within the management meetings he behaves more masculine than it is in his personal nature. Due to the perceived competition between the masculine identity of the management and femininity of the creative occupation Richard feels the social pressure to adapt. This contradicts the concept of fluidity since it implies the free will of floating between the two genders and not a forced performativity.

Hence, a break-up of stereotypical categorization in the creative unit is necessary in order to allow for much more fluidity. Such a break-up would furthermore open up more possibilities for performing different gender identities.

Conclusion

In the last section of the thesis we will provide a summary of our major findings, an outline of our theoretical contribution as well as practical implications. We will conclude by presenting our limitations which can be used for further research.

It can be said that, superficially, stereotypes can be proved within both companies. Men show a high technical affinity whereas women are scared of technical matters and are less present in this industry. The same is applicable to the creative company which is favored by women due to the domain. In both companies management expectations are very rational, strategic-oriented and instrumental. Because of social discourses, the technical occupation is strongly masculinized. Due to this strong masculinization, the masculine gender is protected and not threatened when performing feminine gender. This offers the possibility of performing feminine and masculine gender without any judgment. Thus, it encourages fluidity. Since a strong social gender definition is not the case within the creative occupation, a gender conflict between management and creative level can occur.

But when it comes to the lower levels, a more diverse leadership style can be explored in both companies. Especially the case of Richard shows that he feels much more confident in the use of feminine leading skills towards the feminine-oriented creative team in contrast to his masculine behavior on the management level. The more varied leadership style implies the use of skills and structures which are viewed as feminine. Thus, organizations and people can be bi-gendered which means a mixture of gender traits is apparent. Therefore, the perspective of fluidity is supported and even the beginning of multiplicity is visible. However, consciously the interviewees still think according to stereotypes and have not realized that they embody feminine as well as masculine traits.

By discussing the difficulties / similarities of the three different concepts, dualism, fluidity and multiplicity, we challenge the current gender literature. This is done through contrasting the different concepts against each other and not simply focusing on one single concept. Thus we highlight the correlation between the perspectives. By analyzing the different concepts we identified that every perspective leads back to dualism. This means the constant attribution to gender stereotypes. We do not only explore the reference back to stereotypical categorization in our theoretical analysis but also within our empirical analysis.

There, our interviewees relate back to stereotypes when articulating the desire for new perspectives and ways of thinking. According to them this can be ensured by the opposite gender. Moreover, the explanation for the lack of the opposite gender within both companies was based on stereotypical thinking.

Our thesis problematizes the incidence of fluidity and questions the occurrence of multiplicity in a practical environment. As our findings mentioned above show, fluidity is a possible phenomenon if the circumstances allow it. Thus the less gender defined creative occupation offers fewer options for fluidity than the technical occupation that is defined by society as very masculine. During our interviews, we also discovered first signs of multiplicity, but, as alluded in our theoretical contribution as well as in our analysis, the complete performance of multiplicity is not possible due to the social constraints.

Furthermore, we provide practical contributions which we withdrew from our analysis and discussion and which we regard as useful for creating an attractive and effective working environment.

As a relevant issue we identified positive and negative aspects depending on the scope of communication used and its implications for the work atmosphere. We regard it as an important element because it is apparent within every layer of an organization.

Within the creative company we explored communication problems because different viewpoints are not explained sufficiently and this causes a lack of alignment between different project fields. The implementation of an overall strategic framework is therefore complicated. An improvement of the communication is necessary to align creative and business side. Every party has to be aware of different points of view and of the reaction that can result from it. As an example Richard can be mentioned. He points out the different backgrounds and points of view on products of business people in contrast to creative people. A mutual understanding and alignment of thoughts is necessary to avoid a 'big clash' and to bring the company forward.

As a consequence, a restrained communication can lead to a lack of transparency and a feeling of missing information on the lower levels. Especially Laura and Manfred, as they are not part of the management team, underline the need of a sufficient information flow between the levels which is currently not apparent. Thus, Manfred questions the importance

of some positions in the unit as he, for example, notices that he has no information about what Agneta's contribution is on the management level.

The communication discrepancy can be related to the gendered occupational understanding (management versus creative unit). As already alluded in the discussion section, the management tries to separate itself from the feminine creative part in order to secure its masculine identity. This can lead to the communication problems we stated above.

Another issue caused by the gendered occupational understanding is Richard's gender identity struggle we exposed during our analysis and which is also visible in the communication. Due to his position as a managing director, Richard is aware of the necessity to apply a masculine management language to the feminine creative environment. But, because of his personal nature, he wants to live out a feminine behavior which is limited by his rather masculine educational background (Business Administration).

Within the Research & Development Center there is no apparent gender identity struggle. This can lead to less communication barriers as there is no need to protect the gender identity due to the strong masculinized occupation. Thus, a more feminine approach is used for communication. According to Mario's communication style, when decisions are made they are not enforced on the team members but discussed and explained. In that way it enlarges transparency which may lead to a better understanding and thus acceptance of the decisions made. Furthermore, it can reduce demotivation. Moreover, extensive communication is necessary to convince colleagues of possible benefits which can support their own goals. This may then lead to a voluntary and better cooperation.

We consider communication and transparency as important issues within an overall organizational framework so that we covered them separately above. But, nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that they are also part of the post-bureaucracy and feminine leadership style. Further relevant implications which are withdrawn from the feminine structure and leadership will be illustrated in the following.

When it comes to leading of the lower levels we identify the use of soft skills also by some management team members of the creative unit whereas they mainly follow a masculine leading style on the management level itself. This means when dealing with the creative party they show a more feminine approach.

As a first element of the feminine leadership style and post-bureaucracy we mention the integrative working style. It allows the involvement of the employees which can lead to more acceptance of decisions and processes by others. As an example, Dennis attempts to integrate the colleagues in the gathering of information so that they can work with the results too. When they are included and one considers their opinions, it reduces thresholds. Furthermore, it is useful to find a common agreement about methods and procedures so that they feel like they took part of the development.

Another aspect of post-bureaucracy and the feminine leadership style is the decentralization of decision-making power. Since within knowledge intensive firms the knowledge of the different project fields is so specialized that it is difficult to have a complete knowledge and overview (Alvesson 2004). Thus, decentralization of decision-making can foster better results. André underlines the necessity of a decentralized structure since he does not have the expert knowledge to decide which projects are more important.

The possibility of having close relationships with colleagues is regarded as a further element of post-bureaucracy and the feminine leadership. Hence, relationships are helpful for assessing and evaluating reactions of colleagues. This can be especially useful when articulating critique. The maintenance of close relationships, furthermore, offers the possibility of a more relaxed and comfortable working atmosphere which allows people to be authentic. For example, André does not have to differentiate between a working and a private identity which takes away the pressure to adjust to people's expectations.

After we named the elements which can be found in both post-bureaucracy and leadership we now turn to job rotation which is only part of a feminine organizational structure (post-bureaucracy). Through job rotation every colleague experiences the importance of cooperation which is necessary on every position because they realize the relevance of each job task as well as its obstacles.

In the following, we mention the aspects that can only be assigned to feminine leadership and that we understand as further important practical implications. Within visionary leadership an environment is created where failures are considered as a means to development. Therefore, employees have a more positive attitude towards work as they can learn from their mistakes. But this also requires trust and openness towards the leader and vice versa which has been confirmed by David within our analysis.

Last but not least, we extract from our interviews that a mixture of feminine and masculine traits is desirable, which is expected from the leaders as well as from the followers.

This includes, amongst others, being autonomous, pragmatic and analytical as well as visionary and creative at the same time.

Even, if such an approach is aspired there are still some decisions that are based on too much rationality, especially within top management. Stephan criticizes that often decisions do not include all the information that project participants regard as necessary for a legitimate assessment. Hence, this can promote dissatisfaction at the lower levels.

Concluding it can be said that organizations as well as society in general should be more open-minded towards performing different gender identities and thus, allow more floating between femininity and masculinity. Especially a strong gendered occupational thinking which clearly differentiates between stereotypical masculine and feminine occupations should be eliminated. This will reduce potential gender identity crisis since everyone has the possibility of living out the preferred gender identity as there is no need to conform to social norms and stereotypes. It is therefore only possible if there is no denunciation by society. This already starts with the individual itself. The example of Richard in the creative unit shows that there is already an acceptance by his employees on the lower levels but he fears reprobation by them due to his stereotypical thinking. Hence, he has to distance himself from the stereotypical thinking as well. In contrast, it has to be acknowledged that, within the R&D Center, there is no denunciation of anti-stereotypical behavior. Therefore, everybody can play with varied gender attributes and is not punished.

We had to explore and agree that, in general, management traits have to include rationality as well as analytical thinking, amongst others. These aspects are necessary to ensure the success of the company. But however, these attributes are, due to stereotypical thinking, assumed to be exclusively assigned to men and, therefore, exclude women from executing management tasks. We advocate that our society distances itself from the stereotypical thinking and accepts that also women can perform rationality as well as many other masculine assigned traits. Therefore, more women should have the opportunity of proving themselves on management level. This would further lead society towards more multiplicity and away from dualism. However, we are aware that this shift cannot happen overnight.

As a limitation it must be mentioned that our empirical data has been collected within a very short time period of one month. Hence, the picture we gained is based on a limited number of interviews from which we attained our perspectives. Furthermore, we only

demand for a change towards more multiplicity but we do not provide any guidance on how to achieve it in practice. Therefore further practical research needs to focus on identifying these guidelines. Moreover, even though we criticize the binary trap in the scope of our thesis, a theoretical question which has not been in the focus of our research but needs to be clarified, remains: To what extent are dualism and stereotypes necessary to address the gender topic?

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