Doing Entrepreneurship, Handling Masculinity

Young Women and Gendered Norms of Entrepreneurship

Kim Roelofs

ABSTRACT

Doing Entrepreneurship, Handling Masculinity: Young Women and Gendered Norms of Entrepreneurship

Kim Roelofs

In this thesis, I study how young women entrepreneurs construct entrepreneurship. Specifically, I look at how gender structures entrepreneurial practice for young women and how incubators contribute to the gendered construction of entrepreneurship. The study is based on ethnographic data in the form of interviews and observations. I draw on the theoretical concepts of "gender performativity" and "hegemonic masculinity" to argue that young women entrepreneurs construct entrepreneurship as a masculine gendered practice. Moreover, I use these concepts to show the form of hegemonic masculinity that is constructed in this context. Since women can experience inclusion and gain support by striving for these masculine ideals, I argue that young women handle masculine norms by moving away from an overtly feminine gender expression and, when possible, by adopting a masculine gender act. I show instances where women accentuate their difference from the masculine norm by emphasising their femininity. However, I argue that hegemonic masculinity is not challenged in these instances and that some of these examples are founded on the same essentialised gender identity that causes the marginalisation of women in the entrepreneur world. I describe and analyse a women-only event organised by an incubator and argue that this event does not address the structural marginalisation of women entrepreneurs and can thus be said to sustain it. I conclude the thesis with suggestions for incubators which they can use to improve gender equality in their organisation.

Key words: women entrepreneurs; entrepreneurship; start-up businesses; incubators; masculinity; gender; gender equality; cultural analysis.

SYNOPSIS

Ondernemerschap doen, masculiniteit hanteren: Jonge vrouwen en gendernormen van
ondernemerschap
Kim Roelofs

In deze scriptie onderzoek ik hoe jonge vrouwelijke ondernemers ondernemerschap
construeren. Ik bekijk hoe gender de ervaringen van jonge vrouwen met ondernemerschap
structureert en hoe zogenoemde incubators bijdragen aan de genderconstructie van
ondernemerschap. Deze studie is gebaseerd op etnografische onderzoeksdata in de vorm van
interviews en observaties. Ik maak gebruik van de theoretische begrippen
"genderperformativiteit" en "hegemonische masculiniteit" om te beargumenteren dat jonge
vrouwelijke ondernemers ondernemerschap construeren als een masculiene activiteit. Verder
laat ik met behulp van deze begrippen zien welke vorm hegemonische masculiniteit aanneemt
in de context van ondernemerschap. Aangezien vrouwen inclusie kunnen ervaren en steun
kunnen verkrijgen door deze masculiene idealen na te streven, beargumenteer ik dat jonge
vrouwen ondernemersmasculiniteit hanteren door afstand te nemen van een uitgesproken
feminiene genderexpressie en, wanneer mogelijk, door hun genderexpressie op een
masculiene manier vorm te geven. Ik laat voorbeelden zien waar vrouwen hun vrouwelijkheid
en verschil van de masculiene norm benadrukken. Ik beargumenteer echter dat hegemonische
masculiniteit niet betwist wordt door deze acties en dat sommige van deze voorbeelden
gefundeerd zijn op hetzelfde essentialistische denken over genderidentiteit dat de
marginalisering van vrouwen in de ondernemerswereld veroorzaakt. Ik beschrijf en analyseer
een evenement exclusief voor vrouwen dat georganiseerd werd door een incubator en
beargumenteer dat dit evenement de structurele marginalisering van vrouwen in de
ondernemerswereld niet aan de kaak stelt en daarom bijdraagt aan de instandhouding van deze
situatie. Ik eindig de scriptie met aanbevelingen voor incubators die gebruikt kunnen worden
om gendergelijkheid te verhogen in hun organisatie.

Trefwoorden: vrouwelijke ondernemers; ondernemerschap; start-upbedrijven; incubators;
masculiniteit; gender; gendergelijkheid; cultuur analyse.

SAMMANFATTNING

Göra entrepenörskap, hantera maskulinitet: Unga kvinnor och genusnormer inom
entreprenörskap
Kim Roelofs

I denna uppsats studerar jag om hur unga kvinnliga entreprenörer konstruerar
entreprenörskap. Jag undersöker hur genus formar unga kvinnors erfarenheter inom
entreprenörskap och hur så kallade inkubatorer bidrar till genuskonstruktionen av
entreprenörskap. Studien är baserad på etnografiska data i form av intervjuer och
observationer. Med hjälp av begreppen "genusperformativitet" och "hegemonisk
maskulinitet" menar jag att unga kvinnliga entreprenörer konstruerar entreprenörskap som en
maskulin aktivitet. Dessutom använder jag dessa begrepp för att visa vilken form av
hegemonisk maskulinitet som konstrueras i denna kontext. Eftersom kvinnor kan uppleva sig
inkluderade och få stöd genom att eftersträva dessa maskulina ideal, hävdar jag att unga
kvinnor hanterar maskulina normer genom att röra sig bort från ett uttalat feminint
genusuttryck och, när det är möjligt, genom att forma ett maskulint genusuttryck. Vidare visar
jag exempel där kvinnor understryker sin avvikelse från den maskulina normen genom att
framhäva sin femininitet. Emellertid hävdar jag att hegemonisk maskulinitet i dessa fall
förblir intakt och att vissa av dessa exempel bygger på samma essentialistiska tankesätt som
orsakar kvinnors marginaliserade position i den entreprenöriella världen. Jag beskriver och
analyserar ett evenemang för kvinnor, organiserat av en inkubator, och hävdar att detta
evenemang inte utmanar kvinnliga entreprenörers marginalisering utan vidmakthåller den
strukterella marginaliseringen av kvinnliga entreprenörer. Jag avslutar uppsatsen med förslag
riktade till inkubatorer, med syfte att öka jämdställdheten i deras organisation.

Nyckelord: kvinnliga entreprenörer; entreprenörskap; startup-företag; inkubatorer;
maskulinitet; genus; jämställdhet; kulturanalys.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2017, I was working on a group research project concerning the needs of start-up[1] founders. My group got the opportunity to recruit informants at a large business incubator[2] in southern Sweden. We presented our research aims at one of the events organised there and before too long we had a list with people who were interested in working with us. However, all these people shared a clear characteristic: they were all men. Moreover, I noticed that when my group mates and people in the entrepreneurial world were referring to entrepreneurs, they often used the pronoun "he". What was going on? Where were the women in the entrepreneurial world?

After several failed attempts to recruit female informants for the research project, one of my group mates and I decided to visit another incubator in the area. When we walked in we were greeted by a familiar sight: only men were present in the incubator, except for one of the female members of staff. She told me that it is difficult to recruit women for the incubator programme and that she and her colleagues were not sure how to change the situation. Recognising the opportunity, I offered to conduct a research project as part of my master in Applied Cultural Analysis for them, which resulted in this thesis.

In Sweden, only a small 30% of the total of businesses is owned by women (SCB, 2017)[3]. Initiatives around the country try to increase these numbers by offering special counselling services and events to women. To me, it seemed obvious from the number of women and the special services geared towards them that the marginalisation of women in the entrepreneurial world was an acknowledged fact. However, when I started to interview women about their experiences with entrepreneurship, some of them seemed ignorant of these matters. To be sure, they were aware of the debates around women and entrepreneurship but expressed that they felt that the issue was blown out of proportion and that they had not experienced any discrimination. What was happening? First, I noticed that there was a lack of women, then some of the few female entrepreneurs I met told me that there were no problems.

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[1] A start-up business is a newly started business.

[2] An incubator is an institution, often funded by the government, that provides advice and office space for start-up companies.

[3] Someone who owns a business does not necessarily identify as an entrepreneur or is considered an entrepreneur according to academic definitions. There is no set definition for entrepreneurship and this number is only one of the indicators pointing at the problem of gender inequality in the entrepreneurial world.

I decided that I wanted to investigate the relation between gender and entrepreneurship, paying attention to the bigger entrepreneurial context that seemed so devoid of women.

1.1 Aim

Despite efforts to attract more women to entrepreneurship, the majority of entrepreneurs are men. This suggests structural inequality in the entrepreneurial context and a lack of effective strategies to address the marginalisation of women entrepreneurs. The aim of this thesis is to study how young women entrepreneurs construct entrepreneurship. More specifically, I answer the following questions:

1. How does gender structure entrepreneurial practice for young women entrepreneurs?
2. How do incubators contribute to the gendered construction of entrepreneurship?

I answer these questions by focussing on a group of young women entrepreneurs and an incubator in southern Sweden (see Chapter 2). By means of this thesis, I want to contribute to the creation of a more gender equal entrepreneurial system. Therefore, I give practical suggestions for incubators, based on the insights of this thesis, to increase their gender equality (see Chapter 8).

To write about the topic of entrepreneurship creates the expectation of a definition. However, following Helene Ahl (2004), I do not believe it is desirable to define an essence of entrepreneurship. Similar to her study (see section 1.2), my thesis takes the position that there is no essence to what constitutes women, men, masculinity and femininity (see Chapter 3). As Ahl notes, this would make it "highly inconsistent" to discuss the essence of what constitutes an entrepreneur (p. 37). Moreover, I am more interested in how the informants constructed certain images of entrepreneurship than in defining or working with an objective definition of the phenomenon. This is also in line with Ahl's argumentation; although her methods are different, her research is similar to mine, since she also she studies how others perceive the concept of entrepreneurship instead of trying to find a conclusive definition (see section 1.2).

1.2 Previous Research

In the past thirty years, a field of research has developed that studies the relation between entrepreneurship and gender (Henry, Foss, & Ahl, 2015). Scholars have argued that entrepreneurship can be viewed as a masculine gendered practice, which explains the marginalisation of women's entrepreneurial endeavours. Moreover, this masculinity is often invisible and instead constructed as a gender-neutral norm. In this section, I discuss some key and recent texts on this subject, which are the basis for my own study. I also discuss my own contribution to this area of research.

John Ogbor (2000) argues, following Foucault, that "the conventional discourse on entrepreneurship reinforces and reifies a mode of knowledge production that serves as an instrument for power" (p. 608). In his article, he argues that ideologies that shape the discourse[4] around entrepreneurship stay under-examined, leading to a dominant discourse that privileges Western, male mentality when it comes to entrepreneurial endeavours. Studies that address alternative conceptions are marginalised because they do not contribute to the legitimisation of power of this dominant ideological position. According to Ogbor, the entrepreneur is constructed through discourse as a hero with in-born qualities, the master of nature who can predict the future and act upon opportunities. This is a masculine construct that favours Western males and Ogbor suggests that

> the traditional discourse on entrepreneurship has not only taken the experience of the male specie as a self-evident unit with which to produce knowledge about entrepreneurship, but also the discourse itself has served to maintain the existing dichotomy between maleness and femaleness, and thus the existing societal bias on inequality. (p. 622)

Thus, marginalisation of non-male and non-Western entrepreneurs is reinforced by this discourse. According to Ogbor, this ideological position that privileges Western males leads to a limited understanding of new business creation because ventures and people that do not fit this set understanding of entrepreneurship remain out of focus.

In her book *The Scientific Reproduction of Gender Inequality* Helene Ahl (2004) argues that academic texts on women and entrepreneurship reproduce women's marginalised

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[4] In Ogbor's article, discourse refers mostly to scientific discourse, although sometimes it refers to general and organizational discourse on entrepreneurship in Western society. The term is not explicitly defined.

position in the entrepreneurial world. Through discourse analysis, Ahl shows that these texts construct a model of essential gender difference and that they are blind to the masculinity inherent in the concept of entrepreneurship. To show that entrepreneurship is masculine gendered, Ahl compares words that the authors she researched used to describe entrepreneurs. She does this with the use of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1981) of masculine and feminine gender characteristics. Through a survey, Sandra Bem created a list with characteristics that her informants associated with either femininity or masculinity. The masculinity scale includes words like "self-reliant", "assertive" and "willing to take risks", the femininity scale includes words like "affectionate", "gentle" and "sensitive to the needs of others" (as cited in Ahl, 2004, p. 56). Ahl shows convincingly that the words used to describe masculinity on Bem's scale and the words that describe entrepreneurs in the articles she studied are similar and that the opposites of the words used to describe entrepreneurs overlap with Bem's words that describe femininity. She argues that the academic texts that she studied take a gendered division of labour for granted; the authors do not problematise the system in which (male) entrepreneurs rely on free work in the private sphere. In this way, Ahl shows how academic discourse is blind to the inherent masculinity of the entrepreneurial world. Moreover, she shows how these texts reproduce masculine ideals of entrepreneurship.

In contrast to Ogbor and Ahl, who focus on blind-spots in research on gender and entrepreneurship, other scholars have used ethnographic methods to study the impact of gendered relations on people's experience of entrepreneurship. Attila Bruni, Silvia Gherardi and Barbara Poggio (2004a; 2005) have published texts on gender and entrepreneurship based on ethnographic data. They state that both doing business and doing gender are social practices that are "learnt and enacted in appropriate occasions" (2004a, p. 407). In one of their articles (2004a), and later in their book (2005), they present two ethnographic case studies of businesses that can be said to be a-typical in regard to masculinity: one company is run by two women and the other by five gay men. The authors show that the masculinity of entrepreneurship becomes visible through daily discourse and actions at the two companies. Especially in the company owned by the women, the authors observe that there is a constant shifting between oppositional symbolic spaces that are gendered, for example between home and work: their study shows the double role women must take on when they are entrepreneurs and mothers (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004a). Moreover, because the women and men whom the authors studied enact non-normative forms of entrepreneurship, "when critical situations arise and order must be re-established" they resort to establishing a "correct gender score" (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004a, p. 423). For example, the gay men, who worked at

a magazine, displayed a strong orientation to the market, which the authors interpret as a way of restoring the balance in a symbolic universe of heteronormativity.

As stated above, Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio address the relation between entrepreneurship and motherhood. Susan Marlow (2006) has critically evaluated the potential of entrepreneurial careers for benefit dependent lone mothers. She states that self employment is seen by, in the case of her article, the British government

> as an attractive option for individuals who might otherwise struggle to find jobs given that, excluding those areas where professional accreditations is required, self employment does not present formal entry barriers … Moreover, there appears to be a degree of autonomy for the self employed regarding the arrangement of preferred terms and conditions of work. (p. 592)

Single mothers could thus fit their work around their care taking responsibilities. However, Marlow criticises this idea of "easy access to employment" by drawing on the notion that entrepreneurship is a masculine coded practice and is therefore not readily accessible for these unemployed women. This study exemplifies how entrepreneurship can be researched in relation to motherhood. This is not the focus of this thesis, because none of my informants had children (see section 2.2 below).

A recently published study by Andreas Giazitzoglu and Simon Down (2017) is another example of research that employs ethnographic methods to study the relation between gender and entrepreneurship. They want to contribute to research on gender and entrepreneurship by studying male entrepreneurs instead of women. Through ethnographic research they collected data on how a group of white, male entrepreneurs "perform a style of masculinity which, they [the entrepreneurs] believe, gives their entrepreneurial identities a level of legitimacy and authenticity" (p. 41). Giazitzoglu and Down define four markers of masculinity in this group: (1) a sense of hierarchy and status between the entrepreneurs they studied, (2) pride in earning money and being able to provide for their families through entrepreneurship, (3) the creation of oppositions between the men studied and urban enterprising men and (4) the rejection of men who practise the wrong kind of entrepreneurial masculinity. These markers of masculinity prescribe how the men are to behave in order to be recognised as legitimate entrepreneurs in their social context.

These studies show that entrepreneurship can be viewed as a masculine gendered practice. However, I have noticed that in the case of Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio, it remains

unclear what masculinity looks like in the entrepreneurial context (and what it does *not* look like) and why certain practices are considered masculine. For example, Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio (2004a) state that

> [t]he symbolic meaning of the enterprise is encapsulated by the mythological figure of Mercury, and by the mercurial personality: shrewd, pragmatic, creative, open-minded and adventurous. The features of entrepreneurship reside in the symbolic domain of initiative-taking, accomplishment and relative risk. They therefore reside in the symbolic domain of the male … (p. 407-408)

Different than Ahl (2004), who uses the Bem Sex-Role Inventory to explain how entrepreneurial characteristics can be understood as masculine, these authors connect the (male) god of trade and character traits associated with him to the symbolic domain of masculinity, without clarifying the relation. Moreover, although they show the *effect* of masculine norms on entrepreneurial activity, they do not specify what entrepreneurial masculinity looks like. As my discussion of Raewyn Connell (1994) and her notion of "hegemonic masculinity" in Chapter 3 shows below, masculinity is not singular; instead one form can become the most desirable version of masculinity in a certain context. Therefore, to understand what masculinity looks like in the entrepreneurial context, it is necessary to understand the form it takes, while at the same time understanding how it functions in gendered relations (Marlow & Martinez Dy, 2018). My study contributes to the existing field by using ethnographic methods to study a group of young women entrepreneurs in order to understand what form hegemonic masculinity takes in the entrepreneurial context. Moreover, my contribution lies in the analysis of a women-only event for entrepreneurs and the discussion of how this strategy, aimed at increasing gender equality in the entrepreneurial context, does not address the structural marginalisation of women entrepreneurs. In the last chapter of this thesis, I give practical suggestions as to how incubators can work to increase gender equality.

1.3 Overview of the Chapters

In this chapter, I have discussed my aim and given an overview of previous research in the area of gender and entrepreneurship. In Chapter 2, I present and reflect on my methods and

materials. In Chapter 3, I present my theoretical framework which consists of theories by Judith Butler, Iris Marion Young and Raewyn Connell. In "Chapter 4: The Masculine Construction of Entrepreneurship", I show how the informants of the study constructed entrepreneurship as a masculine practice. I discuss the concepts "independence" and "risk-taking", two concepts that repeatedly came up in the interviews, and show how these are gendered. Moreover, I show what form hegemonic masculinity takes in the context of entrepreneurship.

In "Chapter 5: Moving Towards Masculinity", I discuss the strategies informants employed to handle entrepreneurial masculinity. I argue that they use two connected strategies, which involve distancing themselves from an overtly feminine gender expression and, when possible, adopting a masculine gender act. In "Chapter 6: Emphasising Difference", I discuss examples of women who emphasise their femininity and difference from the masculine entrepreneurial norm. I argue that these examples cannot be unproblematically viewed as a resistance to hegemonic masculinity, because the notion of entrepreneurship is tied up with this masculine definition. Moreover, some of the examples demonstrate views based on a similar essentialised female identity on which the marginalisation of women entrepreneurs is founded. In "Chapter 7: The Role of the Incubator", I discuss a women-only event I attended, arguing that this event separates women from the larger entrepreneurial context and constructs women as a group that must learn entrepreneurship. I argue that through the way this event is organised, the structural marginalisation of women in the entrepreneurial world is not addressed and that the event instead preserves the marginalisation of women. In Chapter 8, I summarise my findings and give applicable suggestions for incubators that they can use to increase gender equality in their organisation. I also suggest some directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS AND MATERIALS

As described in the introduction, this thesis has its basis in a research project I did as part of my master in Applied Cultural Analysis. This project, which we called "work placement" within the programme, was carried out for a student incubator (see section 2.1 below). The aim of the project was to look for ways that this incubator could attract more women to their incubator programme and other services. My analysis for the work placement and this thesis are based on cultural analysis. The methods used are qualitative and ethnographic, aiming at understanding the cultural practices and experiences of the group of women I studied. Although I carried out the data collection, analysis, writing of the research report and presentation of it myself, the incubator staff helped me to locate informants and provided space for me to conduct the interviews.

In this chapter, I discuss and reflect on the two research methods used for this study, which are interviews and observations. I introduce my informants and state the ethical considerations I applied during the research. I also reflect on my role as a researcher and the implications of studying "women as a group". I conclude this chapter with some reflections on the limitations of this study.

2.1 The Incubator

The incubator at which I conducted my work placement is part of a university in southern Sweden. They offer free business advice and a free, one-year incubation programme, which includes an intense period of business advice meetings and access to office space. Students can use the services offered by the incubator up to one year after their graduation from the university. In section 1.1, I stated that I do not use a definition of entrepreneurship in this thesis. However, to understand how the incubator approached entrepreneurship, a definition that Howard Aldrich (2005) poses can be useful. He states that entrepreneurship is the creation of new organisations and he calls people who create organisations "entrepreneurs". "[A]n organisation", Aldrich notes, "exists to the extent that a socially recognized bounded entity exists that is engaged in exchanges with its environment" (p. 458). Clearly, this definition is rather broad, but it has the advantage that it does not focus solely on businesses that aim for profit but also includes non-profit organisations. Therefore, this definition fits the

context of the incubator that I studied: the companies they incubate are diverse and range from businesses that aim at scaling up to one-person non-profit initiatives. Although I want to stay away from essentialising the nature of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, it is useful to keep this definition of entrepreneurship in mind while reading my research, which includes examples from diverse types of businesses and business owners.

2.2 Informants and Interviews

For my initial research project, I was looking for female informants who either had a strong interest in entrepreneurship but had not necessarily set up a business yet or women who had just started working on their businesses. Three of the women I interviewed were not working on a business at the time of the interview, although two of them had worked on business ideas in the past. Four women had been working on their businesses for about a year and one of them for four years (of which one full-time) at the time of the interview. Three women were working on their businesses full-time, two of them had a full-time job besides working on their business and three women were students. The women were in their 20's and early 30's and all of them had at least one master's degree or were in the process of obtaining one. All the informants came from different countries, one of them was from Sweden, four of them from other European countries, two from South-America and one from Asia.

Regarding their high level of education, it should be noted that this group of women is in a privileged position. With one exception, the job market is open to them and entrepreneurship is not a career path taken out of necessity, but because they want to. The exception was one informant who explained to me that it was hard to find a job in the area in which she had her degree and that she had therefore decided to start her own business. None of these women had children at the time of the interviews, which resulted in little reflection on the part of these women on combining their entrepreneurial career with their role as mother, a theme that is addressed in other studies on women and entrepreneurship (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Marlow, 2006).

The interviews that I conducted were semi-structured; I had prepared a set of questions for the informants but often asked them to elaborate more on their answers or I came up with new questions during the interview. Moreover, during the data collection I changed the questions that I asked my informants because I became more aware what kind of questions generated rich answers on the topic I was studying. In this sense, I learned about interviewing

through conducting the interviews and I refined my questions throughout the data collection period.

As stated above, the focus of my work placement project was to find ways that the incubator could attract more women entrepreneurs to their incubator programme and other services. For this reason, my interview questions focused on the *needs* of the informants; for example, I asked them where they go for help related to their business ideas, what kind of working environment they prefer and how the incubator has helped them in the past. I did, moreover, ask questions specifically about gender. For example, I asked informants why they thought there were not more women entrepreneurs or whether they had experienced discrimination in the entrepreneurial world. Thus, part of the data I received about gendered relations was generated because I asked for it and the informants might not have reflected on these issues if I had not asked about them. However, some of the quotes that I analyse to make the gendered construction of entrepreneurship visible were taken from answers to questions that were not specifically about gender. This shows that these gendered norms of entrepreneurship are interwoven on various levels with the way the informants talked about this topic; not only are these relations explicitly visible but they also inform the experiences of the informants in ways that they might not be aware of.

In *Reflexive Ethnography,* Charlotte Aull Davies (2008) argues that interviewing is a process in which both the interviewer and interviewee are actively involved. Davies argues that knowledge is not limited to the interview itself but can include understanding of social reality outside the interview; both parties are constructing and developing knowledge of the social world through the interview. Moreover, she states that the ethnographer should collect "a variety of interpretations rather than to seek consistencies in responses" (Davies, 2008, p. 109) to be able to develop a study that can say something about the reality and experiences of people other than the informants studied. In the first four interviews I did, the informants' answers seemed rather similar at first sight. But the interview with the fifth informant brought up many new perspectives and I realised that the experiences of women entrepreneurs were more diverse that they initially seemed. After eight interviews I collected an array of different experiences with and views on the entrepreneurial world and gender relations. However, I am also aware that more interviews, or perhaps more interviews with the same informants, could have brought more insights and nuances to the research. Considering the time frame for this project the amount of data collected is suitable for this study, since it was not possible to collect or analyse more material.

The reason for basing my work placement project and this thesis mainly on interviews is that I wanted to collect data on the *experience* of women entrepreneurs and wanted to understand how they positioned themselves in gendered relations. For this reason, I analyse how they *talked* about entrepreneurship, instead of observing how they behaved or interacted in entrepreneurial environments. The choice to use interviews as my main material is in line with my research aim: I want to know how young women entrepreneurs construct entrepreneurship, which becomes most visible through spoken discourse and might have stayed invisible for me as a researcher if I would have observed my participants.

All the interviews were transcribed. During the transcription I preserved non-verbal utterances and I did not edit incorrect use of English. However, as Mary Bucholtz (2000) notes, "when a written representation reflects the discourse's oral origins, normal speech is defamiliarized" (p. 1461). I therefore edited the quotes that I use in this thesis by removing non-verbal utterances and correcting the English where it is necessary for understanding. Of course, this correction is my interpretation of the words of the informants and perhaps I have misinterpreted them. However, in those cases I would have also misinterpreted the unedited quotes, therefore it seemed better to make the quotes easier to read. Where I have emitted longer sections of words from the quotes I have inserted ellipsis points. When I had to change the wording of informants because they gave personal information or when I had to insert words for clarity I have put these words in square brackets. I did preserve some of the spontaneity and illogical formulations that oral utterances inevitably contain so as to emphasise the spoken origin of the quotes. Seven interviews were held in English and one in Dutch. In the thesis, I decided not to include direct quotes from the interview with my Dutch informant; I would have had to translate her words and include the original, which I believe would have made it easier to identify her. Instead I have paraphrased her words.

After the transcription of the interviews I coded them. I went through this process twice: first when preparing my report for the work placement and again when I started working on this thesis. The codes used reflected the different aims of these projects. Moreover, during the second round of coding I was more interested in finding snippets of data that contradict each other and understanding the nuanced positions of the informants, because I could engage in more complex ethnographic analysis for this thesis and I did not have to present my findings in a short, comprehensive report. For both rounds of coding I started off with what Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw (2011) describe as "open coding": I made note of everything that seemed to relate to my research question in some way and did not pay attention yet to how these different themes related to each other. Afterwards I

connected themes to these open codes and organised my data according to these. Most of the themes found in the second round of coding have ended up in the thesis. During the writing of the thesis, I also identified some new themes which have been included.

2.3 Observations and Field Notes

Through the interviews with the women entrepreneurs I got insights into their experiences with the entrepreneurial system, but in order to study the system itself I needed to collect data about the institutions that promote and represent entrepreneurship. Every year, the incubator for which I conducted my initial research project organises a weekend to promote entrepreneurship among women. I attended the first day of the weekend organised in 2018 to conduct observations for this thesis. I presented myself at the event as a researcher and although I talked to many of the participants I have not included any of their words in the thesis because of ethical considerations. However, some of my main informants had joined the weekend the year before and I have used insights gained through interviews with them to analyse the event. I used Swedish ethnologist Karin Lindelöf's (2012) study of sport events organised for women as an inspiration for the focus of my own observations. Her article inspired me to ask questions such as: How is entrepreneurship presented? How is the position "woman" constructed in relation to entrepreneurship? Does the event challenge or contribute to gender inequality?

I made handwritten field notes during the event, which I later typed and organised in a Word document. During the work placement project, I also kept a field diary in which I wrote down my observations, thoughts on the research and preliminary insights. I refer to these in some parts of the thesis.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research and writing process of this thesis I have tried to be as conscious as possible with regard to ethical considerations. After participants had agreed to an interview with me I sent them a short document in which I explained my standpoint towards research ethics, explaining that they will be anonymised in my work but that I cannot guarantee that they will not be recognised by people who know them. Moreover, I informed them that I

would use the interviews for my work placement project and my master thesis. We also discussed this when we met up for the interview.

I have anonymised all the research participants and the incubator where I conducted my work placement. I do not use real or fake names for the participants in this thesis and I have removed information from quotes that could make it possible to identify them. For this reason, I have also decided not to give individual descriptions of the research participants. It would be hard to describe the businesses they are working on in terms that make it difficult to identify them while at the same time writing something of interest to the readers of this thesis. Therefore, I have limited myself to the general description given in section 2.2 above.

2.5 Reflexivity

Throughout this chapter I have reflected on the methods I have used to collect data for this study. Not only the methods have influenced the results I obtained, but I did as well in my role of researcher. I believe the fact that I am a woman talking to other women about their experiences has helped to get detailed data from my interviewees. Several informants stated, often related to women-only events, that they felt more intimacy when talking to women and that it was easier to share experiences with them than with men (see section 6.2 below). It seems reasonable to assume that this applied to the interviews as well and that informants shared more with me than they would perhaps have shared with a man.

Sara Ahmed (2000) argues that relations of force and authorisation are implicated in "the ethnographic desire to document the lives of strangers" (p. 63). There is always a power imbalance where one opens up and shares experiences of her life, and the other takes and transforms this according to her own insight. I want the insights presented in this thesis to be used to create change in the entrepreneurial world and I realise that the statements I make and conclusions I draw are in some cases the opposite of what the informants suggested they wanted. In that sense, I have used my authority as a researcher to interpret their words in a different way than they would have themselves. I have done this to the best of my analytical capabilities and I hope that by interpreting informants words' "against the grain" I can raise awareness about invisible structures of oppression.

Before starting the process of data collection, I decided that I would only interview *women* who were working on businesses or who had a strong interest in entrepreneurship. Judith Butler (1990) is critical of conceptualisations of women as a unified category.

According to her, when "women" are constituted as a unified subject position no thought is given to the fact that gender is not constituted in the same way in different historical contexts and that it intersects with other markers of identification, such as ethnicity and class. I am aware that by focussing on women and making statements based on their experiences with entrepreneurship, I contribute to singling them out as a group that is "different" of what is considered the norm in entrepreneurship. However, as I show in Chapter 4 below, women are produced by the entrepreneurial system as "the other". This marginalised position can be addressed by focussing on how this group is put in this position, not only by the system but also by themselves. In my opinion, *not* focussing on entrepreneurial women as a group would lead to the same gender-blindness as some of my informants demonstrated (see Chapter 5 below), because I would not acknowledge that the marginalisation these women experience is based on their gender. However, the experiences of the group of women that I interviewed probably does not represent the experiences of all women entrepreneurs because, as Butler notes, numerous intersectional categories play a role in different women's lives. As discussed in section 2.2 above, my informants were young, privileged women without children. I do believe, however, that the conclusions that I arrive at about the system and construction of entrepreneurship apply to most women, whether they are aware of it or not, and are not specific to the group of young research informants. The way in which this system privileges masculine gender expression does not only affect young privileged women, but women in general and could even be considered as having an effect on all entrepreneurs independent of their gender.

This study does not aim at defining what "women entrepreneurship" is. On the contrary, I believe that such an aim would defeat all efforts to create a more inclusive entrepreneurial system, because it suggests that women do business in a different way than men and could never be included in a larger entrepreneurial context. Such research would rely on essentialist assumptions about women's identity and capabilities and would reinforce their marginalisation in the entrepreneurial world.

2.6 Limitations of This Study

As noted above, I have studied a specific group of women; although they came from various parts of the world they were all in a privileged position regarding their education and none of them had children. Due to the time frame of this study and the selected group of participants, I

have not studied conceptions of entrepreneurship across the lines of class, nor have I explicitly focused on the effects of ethnicity on entrepreneurship. Discussions regarding the demands on women connected to expectations of motherhood and unpaid labour are discussed in this study, but only on a theoretical level, because I have no data on the actual experience of women who are entrepreneurs and mothers. Moreover, I have not focussed on the effects of different sexual orientations on entrepreneurship, nor have I interviewed people who do neither identify as a woman or as a man and will, therefore, probably also experience the negative effects of entrepreneurial masculinity. These limitations are taken up in section 8.2 below, in which I discuss directions for future research.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Three main theories inform the argument of this thesis: Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, Iris Marion Young's theory of gender as seriality and Raewyn Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity. I use Butler's theory to define what the concept of gender entails; her theory gives the possibility to look at gender in a non-essentialist way and, importantly, gives the possibility to envision a world in which gendered acts and relations are different and less restraining than today. Throughout my field work I noticed that my informants generalised gendered identities by making claims about the ways in which women and men behave. Young's theory explains how people can relate to the collective of people with the same gender identification and can be used to understand these generalising statements. Connell's theory is used to understand the plurality of masculinity and to explain why a certain masculine norm is considered hegemonic in the entrepreneurial context.

3.1 Gender Performativity

In her book *Gender Trouble,* the American philosopher Judith Butler (1990) is critical of the conventional distinction between gender as a cultural construction and sex as the biological body. She argues that, instead, sex is a gendered category: gender is a "discursive/cultural" means that produces sex as a natural, binary sexed category, as "a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts" (Butler, p. 7, emphasis in original). Sex does not exist before gender is learned or internalised, instead it is constructed through a dual gendered understanding of humans. This gendered understanding creates the impression that sex is a natural category, established before culture. However, according to Butler, "sex" is as culturally constructed as "gender".

Butler argues that gender and sex are governed by certain norms of continuity and coherence, meaning that genders are intelligible and maintain a coherence between sex, gender and sexual practice. Those not conforming to these norms are, in effect, produced and prohibited by these very norms, whereas conforming to the expectations of one's gender grands inclusion. Butler states that gender is *performative*, it constitutes "the identity that it is purported to be" (p. 25). According to her, gender identity is constituted by the expressions of this identity; gendered identity does not proceed gendered expressions but is the result of

people *doing* gendered expressions. She calls gender a "repeated stylization of the body" (p. 33), which includes "bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds" which create the coherent image of a gender identity that corresponds to "natural" sex (p. 140). These acts exist in a rigid framework and, over time, gender produces its own naturalness, concealing that it does not flow from the identity of the subject but constitutes it.

This naturalisation of the performative nature of gender serves the "stabilization of gender in the interests of the heterosexual construction and regulation of sexuality within the reproductive domain" (Butler, 1990, p. 135). In other words, the constitution of the interiority of gendered identity regulates a system of compulsory heterosexuality by streamlining sex, gender and desire. According to Butler, the "cause" of gendered identity is located within the "self", obscuring the "political regulations and disciplinary practices which produce that ostensibly coherent gender" (p. 136). Gender performances outside of the frames of compulsory heterosexuality are concealed in this system that only naturalises certain gender acts. In this sense, the naturalisation of gender serves a power dynamic which legitimises heterosexual desire but marks other forms of desire as deviant.

Butler's theory shows that there is no natural origin for gender expression. Expressions that are considered acceptable by a specific culture in specific a context are, therefore, only legitimised based on tradition and heterosexual interest. Butler argues that gender acts that are performed the wrong way are punished. However, I argue in this thesis that women are in an ambivalent position when it comes to gender acts; when they act in accordance with their feminine gender, they are marginalised within the entrepreneurial context, so they must adapt to the masculine entrepreneurial norm. I argue that for women in the entrepreneurial context, it is more important to do their gender right as entrepreneurs than doing it right as women if they want to gain inclusion. Yet, Butler's theory gives hope that these gender acts and requirements can change. Because gender is not based on a fixed essence of human beings, the prescribed gender acts do not have to stay the same over time.

In her preface to the anniversary edition of *Gender Trouble,* Butler (2004) addresses some critiques she received on her theory of gender performativity. To the question whether her theory implies that what is understood as the internality of the subject is "a false metaphor" (p. 94), Butler answers that not "all of the internal world of the psyche is but an effect of a stylized set of acts, [but] I continue to think that it is a significant theoretical mistake to take the "internality" of the psychic world for granted" (p. 95). Instead, she argues, features of the world become internalised and the inner world is constituted through these internalisations. To address questions and critiques regarding the materiality of the body and

whether it is socially constructed she followed up *Gender Trouble* by *Bodies That Matter* (1993), in which she elaborates her ideas on how the body becomes gendered through discursive practices.

3.2 Women as a Series

American political theorist Iris Marion Young (1994) developed her theory of "women and seriality" as a reaction to feminist work that moves away from defining women in essentialist terms. Young recognises the limitations of these theories because they imply that there is no way to think of "women" as a social collective. She notes that "[w]ithout conceptualizing women as a group in some sense, it is not possible to conceptualize oppression as a systematic, structured, institutional process" (p. 718). Therefore, she argues for a theory that sees women as a collective social position by using Sartre's theory of seriality. Although she acknowledges the sexism imbedded in Sartre's work, she appropriates the notion of seriality for feminist purposes. She describes "a series as a social collective whose members are unified passively by the objects around which their actions are oriented or by the objectified results of the material effects of the actions of the others" (p. 724). For seriality to occur a common identity is not required, rather a series is constructed around common, historically formed practices and habits brought about by people living in common practico-inert[5] structures and material environments which limit their possibilities of action. Moreover, individuals in a series are interchangeable because the social practices or objects in the series do not require a specific individual to partake and interact with them for the constitution of seriality.

Young applies the concept "seriality" to women by arguing that

[t]here is a unity to the series of women, but it is a passive unity, one that does not arise from the individuals called women but rather positions them through the material organization of social relations as enabled and constrained by the structural relations of enforced heterosexuality and the sexual division of labour. (p. 733)

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[5] "Practico-inert" is a term coined by Sartre to describe "practical activities and material structures learnt or inherited from previous generations, having the effect of limiting or nullifying true freedom of action" (*Oxford Dictionaries*, 2010).

The series "women" is not constituted by a common identity but rather by a common relation to the objects and structures that position individuals as women. These historically formed material structures constitute possibilities and limitations for individual women. A series can become a group when they undertake collective action "in response to a serialized condition" (Young, 1994, p. 735). Seeing as this serialised condition limits women's possibilities and actions, Young shows that feminism can be seen as a specific reaction which creates a group of women "in order to change or eliminate the structures that serialize them as women" (p. 736).

Although I find Young's theory useful to analyse my informants' experiences, her definition of "women" is too concerned with biology; she seems to imply that there exists a biological female body that is then incorporated in a series. However, following Butler's work, I would argue that this biological body is constructed through seriality: through practices and discourse that single out this specific series the biological female body is constituted.

Even though Young's theory is not perfect I find it useful to apply her concept of "gender as seriality" to analyse the interviews I did with young women entrepreneurs. The informants often made general statements about "women", in this way both defining characteristics of women but also referring to a shared social experience that can be understood as women's experiences as serialised subjects. Although Young states that for seriality to occur a common identity is not required, I observed that the informants constructed this common identity through their recognition of serialised conditions. Combining Young's insights with Butler's, it can be argued that women might not have an essential gender identity, but that they do experience affinity with each other based on a shared gender identification. The fact that women refer in interviews to the collective experience of women can be seen as an affirmation that women exist as a series and shows the possibility of women organising as a group to respond to this condition (Young, 1994).

3.3 Masculinities

The Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell (1995) developed the theory of "hegemonic masculinity". She argues that masculinity is not a concept one can generalise, because its form is dependent on the specific cultural context in which it occurs. She states that gender is ultimately relational and that "masculinities are configurations of practice structured by

gender relations" (p. 44). Masculinity, then, is not a concept that exists in isolation but is produced in the way that people interact with each other and the world and is shaped in opposition to "femininity". According to Connell, research into masculinity should

> focus on the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives. 'Masculinity', to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture. (p. 71)

Connell stresses that gender cannot only be viewed as a place in discourse but that attention should be given to the effect on the body that gendered relations have. In my research, this is possible by not only looking at how informants talk about gendered relations, but also looking at how these relations shape their own actions and experiences, which are, according to Connell, shaped by gendered relations.

Connell uses the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" to describe the form of "masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable" (p. 76). Not all forms of masculinity are hegemonic, but the forms that are will be the forms that men are striving for to gain certain privileges in areas of life, specifically, as Connell states, the domination of women. Even though most men do not embody these hegemonic ideals, they benefit from the perpetuation of patriarchy that it maintains.

If one looks at Connell's theory using Young's theory (1994), it could be argued that masculinity becomes a place in gendered relations through the serialisation of men. Practico-inert structures offer certain possibilities and limitations to men and construct a hegemonic masculine ideal. As Connell notes, this hegemonic ideal is context dependent, which suggests that men get serialised in different ways depending on the context. Moreover, as Connell argues, masculinity is a practice of engaging a place in gendered relations, which can be understood through Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity. Masculinity is actively produced through the ways men and women act and is, in this sense, performative.

In this thesis, I use Connell's theory to argue that masculinity in the entrepreneurial context takes on a specific form and to study what this form looks like. As noted in section 1.2 above, previous research on masculinity and entrepreneurship does not always address the precise form masculinity takes in the entrepreneurial context, which I believe contributes to

its invisibility as a gendered norm. Connell's theory makes different forms of masculinity visible and shows that masculinity is constructed through acts, which connects her theory to Butler's (1990) and makes it suitable to use the two side by side. Moreover, Connell stresses that these acts constitute masculinity through the way people interact with the world, which makes her theory useful to understand that masculinity is constructed through the way people talk and think about it. Furthermore, as I show in this study, women can also gain from adapting to hegemonic masculine norms, although their position in the men-women hierarchy stays subordinate.

Connell's theory has been criticised for essentialising the identity of men and creating a unified category where there is none (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In reaction to these criticisms, Connell and James Messerschmidt (2005) state that it seems highly unlikely that "masculinity" is employed as an essentialising category regarding the vast amount of different studies done using this concept. Moreover, they show examples of research using the concept "masculinity" that acknowledge that even when it is possible to identify different types of masculinity, not every man necessarily fits one of these types completely. "Masculinity" can therefore be employed in such a way as not to essentialise the identity of individuals. Throughout this thesis, I use the concept of masculinity in relation to women; in this study, "masculinity" is not the property of specific men, but a constructed quality perceived by the informants. They do, at times, generalise the identity of men, which can be explained by them perceiving men as a serialised collective (cf. Young, 1994). However, as I show, "masculinity" and "hegemonic masculinity" are constructs in the entrepreneurial context, not embodied by individuals, but strived for by entrepreneurs to gain recognition and support.

CHAPTER 4: THE MASCULINE CONSTRUCTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As discussed in section 1.2 above, scholars have argued that entrepreneurship is a masculine construction. In this chapter, I look at how my informants, both implicitly and explicitly, constructed entrepreneurship as a masculine activity. Both in previous literature and in the interviews, entrepreneurship is related to the notions of "independence" and "the ability to take risks". The use of these terms in relation to entrepreneurship can seem stereotypical; however, it is useful to consider that the repetition of these concepts contributes to the construction of entrepreneurship. In this chapter, I argue that the concepts "independence" and "risk-taking" are masculine gendered. As Butler (1990) states, gender acts are established through a repetition of certain acts through time. The repeated link between entrepreneurship, risk and independence thus reinforces the notion of entrepreneurship as a masculine practice.

Connell (1995) argues that hegemonic masculinity is context dependent: there is a hierarchy between masculinities of which one is dominant in a certain context. It follows that the masculinity desired by the entrepreneurial world is a specific kind of masculinity. However, as noted above, not all articles on the gendered nature of entrepreneurship are specific as to what type of masculinity is constructed as hegemonic in the entrepreneurial context. Therefore, apart from showing that my informants perceive entrepreneurship as a masculine gendered activity, I also discuss which form of hegemonic masculinity is constructed through the interviews.

4.1 Independence

The concept of independence gained through entrepreneurship was mentioned in several of the interviews I conducted. Entrepreneurship seems to promise the possibility of becoming an independent person who does not have to take orders from a boss and can develop their own ideas. In this section, I explore the concept of independence from a gender perspective. Just as entrepreneurship, independence is not a gender-neutral concept and its association with entrepreneurship contributes to the masculine construction of entrepreneurial practice.

When I asked one of the informants what drove her to start working on her business she told me that "I didn't want to have somebody above me, basically" (interview, October 10th, 2017). The desire to work on one's own ideas without having to consider the opinions of

a boss was a recurring theme in the interviews. Another informant described that she liked to work as an entrepreneur because she found it difficult to take other people's opinions into account (interview, October 20th, 2017). Yet another informant stated that it was important for her to work on her own ideas, instead of ideas conceived by somebody else (interview, October 5th, 2017). Another informant, who grew up in an entrepreneurial family, summed up these sentiments when I asked her why she was attracted to entrepreneurship:

> Oh my god, because of the freedom, and I feel like with my family, when they wake up in the morning they spent their time and energy on something *they like*, and that's something that is *for them*, so they're not growing somebody else's business or spending their time for somebody else, but working *for themselves*, so they can do *their ideas*. You know, it doesn't have to be a big company or anything, but you're spending your time on something that is *yours* … you have the freedom to make [your] own decisions … that freedom is very appealing to me. (Interview, September 19th, 2017, my emphasis)

As the examples show, the informants connected being independent in the entrepreneurial context to not having to take into account the input of somebody who has a powerful position or even the opinion of peers. This notion is in line with the definition of the word "independent": "Free from outside control; not subject to another's authority" (*Oxford Dictionaries*, 2010). However, having the time to be independent can prove a challenge for women, as will become clear by the following example.

The informants stressed that working on a business requires a lot of time. When I asked one of the informants why she thought there were not more women entrepreneurs she told me that she believes that women take on too many small responsibilities in life; not only do they have responsibilities related to paid work, but they also take the responsibility for unpaid work in the household:

> We [women] help out, we're very good, we do all the chores we should do in school, but we also do everything else, at home, and everyone feels good, everyone has food, everyone is happy … [women] wake up every morning and they're burned out because they should do everything. They're not good professors sitting there in a big chair, because their wives do everything. (Interview, October 20th, 2017)

According to the informant, men feel less responsible for these daily tasks, and leave them to women, which means that men have more time that they can, for example, spend on working on their own business. Of course, this description is a generalisation. However, as Iris Marion Young (1994) notes, it is possible for women to recognise themselves as a social collective, because they see that they experience the same practico-inert limitations. In this case, the informant recognised that many women are expected to take on responsibilities that include a large amount of unpaid labour. This might not be the case for every woman; however, even in Sweden, acclaimed for its gender equality, women take on a larger share of unpaid labour then men (see SCB, 2013; discussion on part-time work and parental leave in Numhauser-Henning, 2015).

The issue described by the informant is related to a traditional division of labour. Independence is not a neutral construct but can be linked to a specific gendered context in which a traditional division of labour facilitates male autonomy. Ahl (2004) notes that

> [b]eing an entrepreneur – strong willed, determined, persistent, resolute, detached and self-centered – requires some time, effort and devotion to a task … leaving little time for the caring of small children, cooking, cleaning and all the other chores necessary to survive. Performing entrepreneurship … requires a particular gendered division of labor where it is assumed that a wife (or if unmarried, usually a women anyway) does the unpaid, reproductive work associated with the private sphere. (p. 59)

Independence, in this sense, requires both an absence and a presence: no one should stand above the independent entrepreneur, but someone must be beneath her or him to take care of life outside of the entrepreneurial project. If one only conceptualises entrepreneurial independence by taking into account the definition of "independent" mentioned above the complexity of this term is obscured. The amount of time that is required for an entrepreneurial project can only be facilitated if another person takes care of daily chores and tasks. This unpaid labour is, even in Sweden, largely executed by women. It follows that they have less time to develop their entrepreneurial ideas.

Those who take the responsibility of the largest part of unpaid labour in society have less opportunity to earn money with which to take care of their needs, making them dependent on the financial resources of other people. This pattern has affected mostly women, not only in the past, but still today. Access to economic resources can therefore be seen as a masculine position. Entrepreneurship offers the possibility to earn money and gain economic

independence, but it also requires financial resources from the start in the form of savings and investments (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2005). When women take on the majority of unpaid labour and therefore have less financial resources than men, it limits their ability to start a business.

From the above it follows that doing entrepreneurship means doing independence. For the entrepreneurial project to have a chance of success, it is vital to be in an independent position. Independence can be viewed as a gender act that one does (cf. Butler, 1990) which includes acting on one's owns ideas and leaving care and house work to dependent people. It also results in practico-inert structures that limit possibilities for women (cf. Young, 1994): because of the cultural expectation that they are responsible for the vast amount of unpaid labour, they have less time and financial resources to start their own company. Therefore, as discussed, the gender act that emerges in relation to independence is masculine and is founded on heterosexual relations of dependence (cf. Butler, 1990).

4.2 Daring to Take Risks

"The ability to take risks" was often named by the informants as a core characteristic of the entrepreneur. The concept of "risk-taking" was not neutral for the informants as gendered beliefs surrounding risk were discussed by them. In this section, I argue that the informants construct themselves and women in general as the opposite of risk-taking. I connect this to the ideals of doing gender in the entrepreneurial context. Moreover, I investigate *what* the informants argue they risk by investing in their entrepreneurial project and show some examples of how they try to avoid risk.

During the interviews, beliefs surrounding women's and men's ability to take risks were discussed by the informants. One informant told me that she observed that men find it easier to talk about their business ideas; even when they were not sure whether their idea would work they were not afraid to share it with others (interview, September 19th, 2017)., According to this informant, women are more cautious with sharing what they are working on, because they are afraid their ideas might possibly fail. This means that their ideas will not get out into the world as easily; being cautious limits their entrepreneurial possibilities. The informant generalised both the identity of women and men and she attributed different qualities to them: women are cautious, men dare to share their ideas. Another informant also

portrayed women as more careful than men and addressed that this is not perceived as positive in the entrepreneurial world:

> We [women] are very careful when we do something and for example guys, you can see in the pitches and I learn to be more like a guy, to play more by these rules. Me and my co-founder, we were very careful when we were pitching about how much we think we will make, how much money we will make in a certain time. Most of the guys [that] were pitching, they [say they will] make 15 million in the first five years. And me and [my co-founder], we were really modest … we want to be honest and we don't want to be lying. But that honesty, it was as if people thought we were not ambitious enough. So, you have to learn how the rules of the entrepreneurial world work, because if you want it or not, we can have a debate, a discussion, sorry, the men set the rules for this. (Interview, September 20th, 2017)

Again, a generalisation takes place: at the beginning of the quote the informant stated that women are careful, and she went on to describe how that played out for her and her co-founder in relation to the generalised, daring characteristic of men. Being careful, modest, and honest was, according to this informant, not rewarded in the entrepreneurial context because it made her and her co-founder seem unambitious. Therefore, being risk-taking, daring to make assumptions about profits in the unforeseeable future is constructed as a requirement for entrepreneurial success.

Butler (1990) argues that doing one's gender right is rewarded with inclusion. In the entrepreneurial context, this means doing gender in a masculine way: those who show their masculinity through their daring, risk-taking attitude are seen as ambitious entrepreneurs, whereas the women in the example are constructed as the opposite because they are careful. For women in the entrepreneurial context, it is therefore more important to do their gender right *as entrepreneurs* than as a women. As the informant stated, "you have to learn how the rules of the entrepreneurial world work" and adapt to the masculine position that is rewarded by the system. Moreover, the generalisations in the informants' statements can be seen as them perceiving gender as an internal, essentialised identity: women do things a certain way, and men do it differently.

But what is risked, exactly? One informant made the following statement: "I think that maybe we [women] have great ideas but not until they're sure, I think [women] are more cautious where spending time (interview, September 19th, 2017)." I discussed time in section

4.1 above in relation to independence. In order to develop an entrepreneurial idea people need access to time. But because of a system in which women have less access to time as a resource, because they are burdened with unpaid work, they do not have the same degree of independence as men. Therefore, to use time to develop a business is a bigger risk for women than for men: women have less time to spend and, therefore, less time to lose. "The fear of failing" that the informant talked about at the beginning of this section, could thus be understood as the "fear of losing time": in order to take risks one needs access to time to fail. In this sense, risk-taking is less accessible to women than to men.

The women that I interviewed for this study did not have children. This means, arguably, that they have access to more time than women who combine their role as mother with that of entrepreneur. Yet, through the interviews a different kind of time pressure that these young women experience became apparent: the pressure to build a career. For example, an informant described that instead of working on a business idea and possibly failing or finding out that that was not what she wanted to do, she could also get a paid job (interview, September 19th, 2017). Another informant, who was struggling to get her business of the ground, explained that she was young and "can't spend five years not doing anything" so she might have to give up her business (interview 2, September 21st, 2017). The informants constructed themselves as having little time; it was implied that as a young woman you cannot wait too long with building a career. Spending time on an entrepreneurial project forms a risk for advancing one's career.

Interestingly, building a career through paid employment was also named by the informants as beneficial to entrepreneurship. It became clear that for these young women the prospect of gaining experiences and access to financial and other resources through a full-time paid job was a way in which they could limit the amount of risk involved in an entrepreneurial project. Several of the informants stated that they did not have the required experience to start a business. One woman was working on a business plan and in the way she explained her process to me it seemed quite advanced: she was working together with a partner and had sought out people to interview about their experiences starting a similar business (interview, October 5th, 2017). However, she stated that ideas are not enough and she did not feel ready to start this business yet, because she did not have enough work experience. Although she acknowledged that she would gain experience through trying out her ideas, she was also considering working for a start-up company to gain more knowledge which she could later use for her own business. Another informant expressed a similar intention: "I'm looking for

opportunities to learn from companies that are already up and running, so that I can learn about different structures" (interview, September 19th, 2017).

In these cases, it seemed to be "knowledge" that informants were after: by gaining work experience they would know better how to build a company and which ideas could be successful. Acquiring this knowledge can be seen as a strategy to avoid entrepreneurial risk: instead of "just starting" and hoping that the business will sustain, the informants can make a better assessment of the risks involved and how to avoid them by gaining work experience first. It is therefore the opposite of entrepreneurial risk-taking and perhaps a better option for women, since their access to resources to risk is limited. Another strategy among informants to avoid risk was to work on ideas that required low (time and money) investments (interviews, September 19th; October 5th, 2017). However, one informant stated that she had gotten better at taking risks since she started working on her business (interview, September 29th, 2017). At first, she had been afraid of failing but now she did not worry too much about that anymore. This suggests that the ability to take risks can be learned, but it also affirms the importance that this notion has within the construction of entrepreneurship.

4.3 Entrepreneurial Masculinity

In this chapter, I have argued that the informants construct entrepreneurship as a masculine practice. Doing entrepreneurship, then, means doing a masculine gender act (cf. Butler, 1990). Connell (1995) argues that the forms masculinity takes always depend on the context in which they occur and that in different contexts a certain type of masculinity becomes the most desirable expression of masculine gender. There is therefore a hierarchy between different types of masculinities, with femininity at the very bottom. However, as will become clear in Chapter 5 below, women can also strive to embody hegemonic masculinity to gain acceptance in the entrepreneurial world (cf. Nilsson, 2013). It is therefore important to explore what hegemonic masculinity looks like in the entrepreneurial context to be able to understand what kind of gender act women aspire in order to gain recognition in the entrepreneurial world.

Above I discussed how entrepreneurial independence requires that the entrepreneur is responsible for unpaid household and caring work as little as possible. This traditional division of labour, related to male-breadwinner models (Lewis, 1992), presupposes heterosexuality: while men have the time and means to be (economically) independent, their female partner is largely responsible for unpaid labour. This division is also related to time

and risk: in order to take risks, one needs enough time to gamble with. As Butler (1990) notes, the performativity of gender, which constructs a seemingly natural gender identity, serves a system in which heterosexuality is compulsory and in which the oppression of women is legitimatised based on a natural order in which they are responsible for (unpaid) care work. Doing gender "the right way" as a woman would produce a position that is inconsistent with the position of the independent entrepreneur, since doing gender right as a woman would mean taking up a dependent position in the heterosexual dichotomy. Masculinity in the entrepreneurial context is therefore produced as a heterosexual position that requires the dependence of women on a male breadwinner.

Another aspect of entrepreneurial masculinity that surfaced through the examples is that of having a position of authority, manifested through a daring, risk-taking attitude. This is an aspect of independence which relates to being in control and being able to dominate others. Moreover, in the entrepreneurial world control does not manifest through bodily violence, as in other masculine contexts, but is connected to intelligence and rationality. As Connell (1995) notes:

> Historically there has been an important division between forms of masculinity organized around direct domination (e.g., corporate management, military command) and forms organized around technical knowledge (e.g., professions, science). The latter have challenged the former for hegemony in the gender order of advanced capitalist societies … (p. 165)

Although Connell notes that both of these masculinities can become hegemonic, masculinity organised around technical knowledge is dominant in the entrepreneurial context. Knowledge of how to obtain resources, how to explain one's idea to other people and how to develop products are all technical requirements of entrepreneurship. As opposed to this rational masculinity, women have often been constructed as emotional (Connell, 1995), as evidenced by descriptions as "affectionate", "compassionate" and "sensitive to the needs of others" (from Bem's Femininity Scale as cited in Ahl, 2004, p. 56). These cultural markers limit women's access to entrepreneurial rationality; even if individual women do not identify as "emotional", the correct way for them to do their gender is tied up with these markers of femininity which are perceived as incorrect in the entrepreneurial world.

The position of authority that the entrepreneur occupies also seems to give the power to claim what reality should look like. In one of the examples above an informant stated that

men often exaggerate their business turnover, which is rewarded by the entrepreneurial world with investments. Stating what reality should look like and receiving what it takes to create this reality seems an ultimate position of control.

Hegemonic masculinity in the entrepreneurial context is defined by being in a heterosexual position as provider of dependent persons (women) who take care of the majority of unpaid labour. Moreover, it is a position of rational authority where knowledge of the entrepreneurial process results in power. This power produces, among other things, the ability to make claims to what reality for one's business should look like and, in that way, gaining access to resources to turn this vision into reality. Hegemonic masculinity in the entrepreneurial context is about having control. Through the privileges that this position provides the necessary risks for successful enterprise can be taken.

In the examples discussed throughout this chapter gender identities are often generalised: women and men are claimed to do things in certain ways and are often constructed as doing things *differently.* Butler's (1990) theory that we perceive certain gender acts as natural for certain bodies is affirmed by these generalisations. Men are endowed with characteristics which are beneficial for entrepreneurs whereas women are burdened with unhelpful characteristics. This also becomes clear in my analysis of entrepreneurial masculinity: doing entrepreneurship, and therefore masculinity, the right way is incompatible with doing gender the right way as a woman. This suggest that women must find a way to *not* do their gender in a feminine way if they want to gain inclusion in the entrepreneurial context. As one of the informants in section 4.2 noted: "You have to learn how the rules of the entrepreneurial world work" (interview, September 20th, 2017). How, then, do women adapt to these "rules"? This is the focus of the next chapter.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter, I showed how the informants construct entrepreneurship as a masculine activity. As a point of departure, I looked at the concepts "independence" and "risk-taking" and I showed how these are gendered. Entrepreneurial independence is constructed by the informants as the possibility to work on one's own ideas without having to take input from someone else. I also showed that entrepreneurial independence is dependent on a traditional division of labour, in which women take on the majority of unpaid work and thus have less time to work on their entrepreneurial project. "Risk-taking" was also discussed by the

informants as central to entrepreneurship. However, the informants constructed women as less capable of taking risks than men. Moreover, I argued that these women are mainly risking "time" as a resource, a resource that is scarcer for women than for men because of the traditional division of labour and the pressure to build a career. I concluded this chapter with a discussion of entrepreneurial masculinity and argued that it is a heterosexual construct, a position of knowledge and authority which results in power over resources. In this position of privilege, it is possible to take the risks required for entrepreneurship. I argued that women's traditional gender act is not compatible with the notion of entrepreneurial masculinity and that it seems that women must find a way to not do their gender in a feminine way in order to be accepted in the entrepreneurial world.

CHAPTER 5: MOVING TOWARDS MASCULINITY

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the informants constructed entrepreneurship as a masculine practice. In this chapter, I discuss how young women entrepreneurs handle this masculine norm of entrepreneurship. As I show, some of the informants moved away from an overtly female gender act by changing their behaviour and dress, and by stating that they saw themselves as different from other women. The ability to show one's knowledge was also discussed as a requirement of entrepreneurship. Not all informants thought it was good to focus on gender inequality in the entrepreneurial world and to single out women as a marginalised group. However, I argue that they, too, adjust themselves to the masculine norm of entrepreneurship through processes of gender-blindness.

5.1 Attempts to Fit In

One of the topics that came up in some of the interviews was that the informants noticed that they had started to dress and behave differently since they had joined an incubator. These changes were the result of the experience that they were different from the masculine entrepreneurial norm. For example, one informant told me that she had started to wear more t-shirts which made her feel like she was matching the guys in the incubator (interview 1, September 21st, 2017). Another informant told me a similar story which contained an even more explicit departure from femininity:

> I even changed the way I dressed, I used to have my fancy dresses and my high heels
> and my tights and so on. But then I was like, no, I have to go into t-shirts, sneakers,
> and jeans, to mirror and blend in with this code, and actually I think it has been very
> helpful. (Interview, September 20th, 2017)

This woman listed a couple of clearly feminine items of clothing: dresses, high heels and tights. To be taken seriously as an entrepreneur, to adapt to the "code" as she stated, she had to move away from these material markers of femininity. Note that the items of clothing that she changed to are not as clearly marked by gender as the items she mentioned before: in Western culture it is not at all uncommon to see women wear t-shirts and sneakers. However,

this informant clearly marked that she started wearing this type of clothing because it made her fit better into the male dominated environment of the incubator. She distanced herself from a physical appearance that marked her as a woman and changed it for an outfit that led her blend in with the men.

Changing clothes was also connected by the women to changing their behaviour and attitude. For example, one informant noted that these masculine clothes made her feel powerful and said: "I don't think it's a bad thing. Of course, I think my behaviour changes, but it changes me into being tougher, to match. Which is good I guess" (interview 1, September 21st, 2017). The informant strived for an attitude which she described as tough and powerful, an expression of masculinity that may be connected with the entrepreneurial masculinity described in section 4.3 above. Moreover, the informant marked the change in dress and behaviour as "helpful" and, in that way, as "good"; "fitting in" was framed as positive by these women:

> You have a mission, go and accomplish that mission and don't get distracted. If for my business it is helpful to have jeans and sneakers, I put on my sneakers and my t-shirt, and then I go and have a beer with [the male entrepreneurs]. (Interview, September 20th, 2017)

Implicit in this quote is the belief that if women adapt themselves to masculine norms, they can become successful entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurial world marks these changes in behaviour and dress as positive, because they are rewarded with inclusion and, in that way, investment and support. Therefore, it is not surprising that informants felt that changing themselves in a way that supports their business is a positive act.

Apart from changing behaviour and dress, informants also displayed more subtle ways in which they moved away from being marked as female. In section 4.1 above, I discussed the example of an informant who stated that women take on many unpaid responsibilities, causing them to not have time to start their own business (interview, October 20th, 2017). However, this informant did not feel obliged to take on these small responsibilities on which she saw other women spend a lot of time. Moreover, she stated that men, like her, do not feel they are responsible for these household tasks. In this way she both separated herself from other women and showed how she conformed to masculine ideals of independence. Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio (2005) also found that women entrepreneurs portray other women as unsuitable entrepreneurs and explain their own success by being different from the average

woman. Similar to the examples above in which women moved away from feminine dress styles, this is a form of distancing oneself from overtly female gender expressions.

5.2 Demonstrating Knowledge

As discussed in the previous chapter, *knowledge* is a central part of hegemonic masculinity in the entrepreneurial context. It is necessary to be the person who is knowledgeable about her business and products in order to gain the authority to make one's business successful. However, through the interviews it became clear that knowing how to do business is not enough. Most importantly, for these women it is about presenting their knowledge in a way that convinces others that they indeed possesses the necessary expertise. In this section, I discuss in what way the informants handled the entrepreneurial requirement of showing knowledge.

When I asked one of the informants what the main challenge was with starting her business, she told me it was to make people understand what her business idea was and why it was important that such a business exists (interview, September 20th, 2017). Because she was developing an idea that was rather unique, people did not take her business idea seriously. Moreover, having a technical product based on social knowledge meant she had to interact with people in the tech world who were not used to her kind of expertise. She stated that, as a woman, one is disadvantaged in the entrepreneurial world, but this can be compensated by showing that one has knowledge about one's company and product.

Another example in which knowledge and the connected authority was discussed was an informant who told me that her knowledge about the product she was developing was sometimes challenged. As a woman creating a technical product she felt that she was often meeting men who were sceptical about her idea, because they believed it already existed or, when they understood what she was designing, that it was impossible to execute it:

> People say [about my product], ah, this exists, and then I feel like, no it doesn't exist. I have to tell them that and a lot of men, often in engineering, I meet a lot of technical people because I'm looking for prototype development right now, so I meet a lot of engineers, often sixty-year-old men, fifty-year-old men, there are no women in this area, and they're all like, this [product idea], you can't do this … that's impossible. [But I know] it's not impossible, have you seen this, [examples of similar products],

and I have to mention all this, and I have to *show* them that I know the technical stuff … you need to [correct them], all the time, and that's kind of annoying but you have to do it, you have to *show* them you know as much. That's hard. (Interview, October 20th, 2017, my emphasis)

The informant was constantly questioned, possibly because she was a woman designing a product in the technical men's world. Moreover, the men she met tried to convince her that they knew more than she did, even when she should be viewed as the expert, since she has been researching and designing her product for years. Therefore, she had to prove that she had the knowledge necessary to execute this project; s*howing* her knowledge was a way for her to be taken seriously as an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurial knowledge, then, is not recognised unless women entrepreneurs manage to show their knowledge convincingly. Different than men, these women are required to make an extra effort to show that they have the required knowledge. Therefore, *showing knowledge* can be viewed as a strategy that these women use to act out a masculine gender act which is required to gain acknowledgement and support in the entrepreneurial world.

Writing about the masculine environment of high cuisine restaurants, Swedish ethnologist Gabriella Nilsson (2013) argues that women are marginalised in this environment if they act too feminine. Therefore, women in this context are forced to find ways to move away from being marked as feminine. The strategies discussed in this and the previous section can be viewed as ways to avoid an emphasis on feminine gender. Moreover, changing one's behaviour by acting tough and demonstrating one's knowledge are examples of adopting a masculine gender act in the entrepreneurial context. This non-feminine, masculine style of doing gender is encouraged by the entrepreneurial system because it is rewarded with inclusion and support. It is a way to strive for the ideals of hegemonic masculinity in this context and obtain the privileges that are connected with this position.

5.3 Invisible Gender

Some of the examples above showed that informants were aware that they were adapting to masculine norms. However, the way in which informants handled the masculine norms of entrepreneurship was not always explicit. The attitude and character traits that the entrepreneurial world desires were viewed by some informants as gender-neutral and the

suggestion that their gender leads to unfair treatment made them uncomfortable or was even dismissed by them (Díaz García & Welter, 2011). In this section, I discuss statements by informants that can be viewed as examples of gender-blindness, which can be seen as a strategy to handle hegemonic masculinity.

One of the topics I addressed in most of the interviews was that of events targeted towards women entrepreneurs. While some of the informants were enthusiastic about this type of event, others were critical of the way these events single out women as a separate group:

> For me, if an event or anything ever says, only for a certain gender, I'm not interested in it. Even if they say that it has to be 40% women you're already insulting women, because you're saying, oh, you're different, and that's what we don't need. (Interview, September 29th, 2017)

Addressing entrepreneurial women as a separate group is framed as insulting in this quote. Another informant framed it as women being put in a lower position by this singling out (interview, October 10th, 2017). Implicit in these statements is the notion that marking yourself as different from the male entrepreneurial standard is bad and will only reinforce inequality. One informant stated that if you call yourself a "female entrepreneur" it sounds as if you do not take yourself seriously (interview, October 5th, 2017). This implies a connection between femininity and non-serious business on the one hand, and masculinity and seriousness on the other. Moreover, the same informant said that she thought people went a bit far in discussions of unfair treatment of women entrepreneurs, she herself had not experienced any discrimination. Overall, these women did not see the benefits of marking themselves as "women" in the entrepreneurial context.

Apart from being sceptical towards events that single out women entrepreneurs, there was a sentiment among some informants that women who feel marginalised in the entrepreneurial community are, at least partly, themselves to blame:

> People who have to change their idea are we, women. Because, at the end of the day, if you make yourself believe something, it's on you, it's your fault also. So, you need to change your own attitude I think. We need to change our own attitude. Because we've been blaming people for too long. (Interview, September 29th, 2017)

The quote exemplifies the notion that women are complicit in their own marginalisation. "Blaming others" is framed as negative and even passive; the alternative is women actively changing their own attitudes. This locates blame, but also agency, in women entrepreneurs: if they would stop blaming others gender problems in the entrepreneurial world could be solved. Of course, this view does not take structural discrimination into account, but it is clear that this is an attractive prospect because it gives individuals the possibility to effect change.

This notion of the individual's power to create change can be linked to a belief in meritocracy (Marlow, 2015). Some informants subscribed to this notion that promises that everybody will be measured on equal terms and, therefore, has the agency to change their situation (Puwar, 2004). For example, one informant remarked that entrepreneurship "is about the right people, if you want to do something, you do it", which implies that one's desire to execute an entrepreneurial project is more important than one's gender when it comes to chances of succeeding (interview, September 29th, 2017). The notion of "the right kind of people" is connected to the idea that entrepreneurs possess certain exceptional character traits which distinguish them from other people (Ogbor, 2000), an idea that was emphasised by another informant who stated that a certain personality is necessary for entrepreneurial success (interview, September 19th, 2017). Instead of connecting entrepreneurial success to gender, it is framed as having to do with possessing the right character traits. The belief in meritocracy is linked to post feminism and neo-liberalist ideals of personal autonomy and the encouragement to seize opportunities as they arise (Marlow & Martinez Dy, 2018). However, as Patricia Lewis (2006) notes, this belief in meritocracy is a form of gender-blindness. Instead of acknowledging that certain individuals act from privileged positions that give them advantage over others, there is a strong belief that "all individuals have an equal chance to succeed if they are ambitious and hardworking" (Lewis, 2006, p. 258). Lewis notes that entrepreneurial women "appear to be trying to avoid being marked and symbolically constructed as 'the other'" (Lewis, 2006, p. 458). The sceptical attitude that some of my informants had towards events organised for women entrepreneurs can be viewed as a form of gender-blindness; in the same gesture that these women rejected the discriminative practice of organising special events for women entrepreneurs they did not address the deeper discriminatory practices of the entrepreneurial world. Spaces where these practices could effectively be discussed and the norms of entrepreneurship could be challenged do not get a chance if women do not see the ongoing structural marginalisation of women entrepreneurs. It must be noted, however, that women-only events are problematic in different ways, as I discuss in Chapter 7 below.

The gender-blindness described above can be viewed as an implicit strategy to adapt to the masculine norms of the entrepreneurial context. As Butler (1990) notes, certain gender expressions are perceived as natural for certain bodies. However, by claiming that the gender expressions that the entrepreneurial world desires are gender-neutral, which was demonstrated by the informants implying that it is about personality and achievements, not gender, the informants implicitly denied the connection between the perceived natural body, gender and entrepreneurship. Moreover, by constructing the entrepreneurial world as gender-neutral, it seems superfluous to focus attention on women; it is implied that if women are underrepresented in the entrepreneurial world it is their own choice or fault. It is not surprising that some informants were not interested in being framed as "women" and therefore "the other" of the entrepreneurial world; in a system that favours masculinity, it could be disadvantageous to emphasise one's femininity. This strategy of gender-blindness does however reinforce the hegemonic masculinity in the entrepreneurial world, because it is made invisible and, therefore, stays unchallenged.

Connell (1995) argues that masculinity is, among other things, the practices through which men and women engage with masculinity as a place in gendered relations. Throughout this chapter I have shown ways in which young women entrepreneurs engage with masculine norms of the entrepreneurial world; they have to handle these norms in order to gain inclusion and support. This handling of entrepreneurial norms means, first and foremost, to *not* do gender in a feminine way (cf. Butler, 1990). This is exemplified by the informants who consciously moved away from feminine ways of dressing and the gender-blindness that obscures the fact that certain bodies and gender acts are seen as different and therefore wrong in the entrepreneurial context. Another strategy to handle entrepreneurial masculinity was adopting a masculine gender act, for example by acting tough and displaying knowledge (cf. Butler, 1990). Nilsson (2013) argues that women can gain acceptance in masculine contexts by adapting to masculine norms. Striving for ideals of hegemonic masculinity in the entrepreneurial context can grand women inclusion. The ways in which the informants did *not* do a feminine gender act therefore contributes to their inclusion in the entrepreneurial world.

Although the above findings can be used to argue that women are complicit in the masculine gendering of entrepreneurship, I want to emphasise that it is first and foremost the entrepreneurial system that produces these reactions. In order to succeed as an entrepreneur, women have to obscure their femininity, which by some women is handled by changing their behaviour and dress and displaying their knowledge and for others results in acts of gender-blindness. Although awareness should be raised among women *and men* in the entrepreneurial

world about these issues, I do not want to suggest that women are themselves to blame for their marginalisation because they are not actively combatting masculine gender norms. One of the characteristics of a hegemonic masculine system is that it obscures its own workings of power which appear, therefore, invisible to the individual (Connell, 1995). Instead of blaming women, this study aims to raise awareness which can contribute to the construction of more equal and inclusive forms of entrepreneurship. I elaborate on this in Chapter 8 below.

5.4 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed how young women entrepreneurs handle entrepreneurial masculinity. As shown, this is done in two connected ways. Most importantly, the informants tried to not do their gender in a feminine way, for example by not dressing overtly feminine and by stating that they saw themselves as different from other women. In some cases, the informants adopted a masculine gender act, by acting tough and showing that they possess required knowledge. The informants experienced these changes as positive, because it led to more inclusion in the entrepreneurial world. Through these strategies, the informants gained a certain degree of support in the entrepreneurial context because they appealed to notions of hegemonic masculinity. In certain cases, the informants were aware that they were adapting to masculine norms, whereas I also discussed examples where informants invested in notions of meritocracy, which can be seen as a form of gender-blindness. This is, as I argued, also a strategy to move away from being marked as "feminine". Moreover, through gender-blindness hegemonic masculinity in the entrepreneurial context is obscured and stays unchallenged.

CHAPTER 6: EMPHASISING DIFFERENCE

The examples in the previous chapter showed in what way women distance themselves from feminine gender acts to handle the masculine norm of entrepreneurship. During the interviews informants also discussed ways in which they explicitly deviated from this norm. Moreover, having female-only spaces in the entrepreneurial world was seen by some informants as invaluable. In this chapter, I show that understanding the experience of women entrepreneurs in the masculine entrepreneurial world is not only about the ways in which they adapt to masculine norms. Some of the informants who were aware that they changed their behaviour to live up to masculine ideals were also advocates for women-only spaces within the entrepreneurial world. Understanding the experiences of individuals in gendered systems is not as simple as creating categories which will fit different people's reactions to these structures. Competing views can constitute important aspects of the same person's experience. In this chapter, I discuss ways in which my informants did not shy away from marking themselves as different from the masculine norm of entrepreneurship. As I show, this is not an unproblematic process in a context that values masculinity and could even contribute to further marginalisation of women entrepreneurs. However, it also offers insight into possible alternative ways to do entrepreneurship.

6.1 Searching for Alternatives

During some of the interviews, informants distanced themselves from what they perceived as a masculine way of doing business. Several informants struggled to identify as entrepreneurs, which in the interviews was mostly connected to the fact that they were not in business to earn a lot of money. The following quote is part of a discussion on the value of women-only events for entrepreneurs. The informant felt more encouraged by other women because she experienced that their business mindset is like hers:

> I guess it has something to do with that I don't really feel like a business woman, I
> don't do this for money or for business, I'm just doing it because I love what I'm
> doing. And often when I talk with men about this they have this business mindset
> really, so they're like, aha, how you're going to make your money, [when will you]

break even, you know, numbers. And this is not what I'm interested in at all.
(Interview 1, September 21st, 2017)

The informant distanced herself from the way she saw men conducting business. Instead of focussing on, what she called, numbers, it was more important to her to work on her business because she loved working on it. A suspicion towards money was also apparent when another informant explained that she does not just want to sell any product to make money, but that her business should add value to people's lives (interview 2, September 21st, 2017).

In section 4.1 above, I discussed money as a resource connected to entrepreneurial independence and, therefore, to entrepreneurial masculinity. Entrepreneurship offers the opportunity to earn money and gain economic independence, a position that I have discussed as being masculine. It is not my intention to claim that not prioritising money is a characteristic of female business owners. On the contrary, I do not believe that women entrepreneurs share characteristics that differentiate them from men (see section 2.5 above). However, the statements mentioned above do reveal a degree of scepticism towards traditional ways of doing business that can be seen as an act of resistance towards a masculine system that prioritises money and financial independence. These informants refused to connect the worth of their business to money alone and emphasised instead the personal and community value of their work. According to Patricia Lewis (2013), these women can be said to be searching for an alternative entrepreneurial identity that is in line with their personal values, because "the characterization of entrepreneur … doesn't sit well with their internal sense of self" (p. 254). On the other hand, this attitude could also be viewed as a way to withdraw from the masculine conception of entrepreneurship. Instead of failing the masculine norm of financial independence through doing business, the informants did not even strive for this masculine ideal.

In the current view of entrepreneurship, money is intrinsically connected to new enterprises: no money means no business. Even though the informants rejected prioritising money above everything else, it is clear that in the current system they need money in order to work on their businesses. For example, the woman who stated that she works on her business because that is what she loves to do had a full-time paid job on the side. Redefining entrepreneurship is not as easy as eradicating problematic aspects of this masculine system; as discussed above, doing entrepreneurship means doing masculinity, because the masculine gender act is rewarded in the entrepreneurial context (cf. Butler, 1990). Distancing oneself from this act but at the same time appealing to the entrepreneurial support system is at least

complex and perhaps impossible, since the whole notion and possibilities of entrepreneurship are wrapped up in this masculine structure.

6.2 Networks of Entrepreneurial Women

As has become clear in the previous chapter, some informants were sceptical towards events that single out women entrepreneurs. There were, however, also informants who had positive experiences with these events; one of the informants even stated that there should be more women-only events for entrepreneurs in the city where she lived (interview 1, September 21st, 2017). In this section, I discuss why these informants thought these events are important. Moreover, I show in what way they generalised characteristics of women through the way they talked about these events and how this can be perceived as problematic and contributing to women's marginalisation. Part of the informants had joined the women-only weekend that the incubator organised the spring before I conducted my field work (see section 2.3 above). Most of the statements discussed in this section refer to this event.

Several informants described the atmosphere at women-only events as "intimate". They stated that it felt easy for them to connect to other participants and that this "intimate atmosphere" was different from the atmosphere at mixed gender events. The informants connected this intimacy to the fact that the events were only for women and that there were no men present:

> I think that somehow, maybe it's easier with women to connect. The networking with women is probably easier, somehow, I feel more connection. Maybe it's because we are so few and I feel like, if there is already one you need to bond, it's so precious. (Interview 1, September 21st, 2017)

The informant linked the ease of connection to the fact that there was only interaction with *women* at these events. This connection was made stronger, according to her, because there were only few women entrepreneurs. The informant generalised the category of "women", because she did not give any specification *which* women were easy to connect to. Moreover, a connection between women is presupposed by which they automatically connect to each other because they share the same gender identification. This can be connected to Young (1994), who states that women can be viewed as a serialised collective that is constituted by common

relations to objects and social structures. The fact that the informant stated that women feel connected to other women can be seen as an acknowledgement of their serialised condition: women recognise that they live in structures that influence their lives in similar ways. As discussed in the previous chapter, women have to find ways to handle the masculine norms of the entrepreneurial world. These norms produce them as "different" and in order to get included in the entrepreneurial world they have to move away from feminine gender expression and adopt a masculine gender act. The challenges that women face in the entrepreneurial context are therefore caused by masculine norms. The intimacy and connection that informants experienced could be attributed to the recognition that they are marginalised in similar ways and, moreover, that they got to explore entrepreneurship in the absence of men. The connection they experienced was heightened by the absence of men and the norms they embody and represent.

Another reason informants gave for appreciating events organised for women was that they recognised that women have different challenges than men. The challenges that informants discussed were both external and internal. For example, one informant discussed that women do not start out from the same position in the family as men: as women they are expected by society to take care of children, whereas for men it is socially accepted to leave care work to their female partners (interview, September 20th, 2017). The recognition of these gendered structures shows that informants were aware of the limitations caused by practico-inert structures. However, other challenges seem to be internal. For example, learning how to present your ideas like a man was named by the same informant as something that women have to learn (interview, September 20th, 2017). In this example women are said to possess gendered characteristics that are not beneficial to becoming entrepreneurs and that should be addressed and changed at women-only events; again, a generalisation of the category of "women" takes place and they are constructed as unsuitable entrepreneurs.

In the examples above, women's behaviour towards each other and the atmosphere at women-only events is generalised on the basis of the serial condition of women: there is a similarity between events organised for women because women are similar. This generalisation is not unproblematic; for example, a similar generalisation was used by informants to construct women as unsuitable entrepreneurs in regard to risk-taking (see the example in the last paragraph and section 4.2 above). Moreover, women's entrepreneurship is constructed as problematic and less successful than men's in academic writing based on similar claims of generalised difference (Ahl, 2004). Women-only events offer the possibility for women to discuss their marginalised situation and possibly react against the structures that

marginalise them (cf. Young, 1994); however, the way that the informants talked about these events also constructs women's similarity and inadequateness as an essentialised identity.

6.3 Femininity as Valuable

In this section, I discuss an example of women's difference from the entrepreneurial norm showed in a positive light. It shows a positive take on women and men's perceived difference but it is nonetheless problematic. One informant stated that women entrepreneurs have the opportunity to complement male entrepreneurs because men and women have different ways of seeing things:

> It's a great opportunity for you to complement guys. For example, I have a lot of guys that come here to this office to ask me for opinions or things … And we as women we need guys to have a look at our business plans because we have a way to see things, and guys they see things completely different. (Interview, September 20th, 2017)

In this quote, a mutual dependent relation between female and male entrepreneurs is constructed, based on their difference. As Butler (1990) shows, compulsory heterosexuality constitutes a binary opposition between two sexes/genders which appears to be natural and flowing from the biological body. The complementary thinking to which the informant referred to can be seen as a direct consequence of this binary construction of gender. This mutual dependency narrative is a way to create space for women in the entrepreneurial world: this system is not complete without women. Ahl (2004) observes this logic as well in her study of academic discourse on women and entrepreneurship. "Instead of weaknesses," she states, "feminine characteristics are seen as strengths" (Ahl, 2004, p. 166).

The problematic aspect here is that there seems to be a strong power imbalance. Women, in this binary, provide a valuable asset to the entrepreneurial world with their "different" views, when needed they can complement men and give them a different take on doing business. There seems, however, to be little reciprocation, seeing as in general women are marginalised in the entrepreneurial world. Their "complementary" views support men, but who supports these women? Moreover, as Ahl (2004) notes, this kind of thinking "leaves the male/female dichotomy intact and does not seriously question the dominant construction of the entrepreneur" (p. 166). Again, women's identity is generalised, a position that I discussed

in the previous section as problematic. Although this "complementary" example could be viewed as a way that women emphasise their femininity and distance themselves from hegemonic masculinity in the entrepreneurial context, it is a position that does not challenge hegemonic power but rather affirms women's position as "other entrepreneurs".

This chapter shows that the relation between femininity and entrepreneurship is complex. On the one hand, informants emphasised their difference from male entrepreneurs as a way to resist certain aspects of entrepreneurial masculinity. On the other hand, acknowledging that one differs from the entrepreneurial norm, for example through emphasising femininity, can become a process that legitimises the marginalised position of women entrepreneurs. Generalising the identity of women and claiming that they do entrepreneurship differently proves problematic in a context that already produces women as "the other". Moreover, as evidenced by the discussion on "money" in section 6.1 above, distancing oneself from masculine aspects of entrepreneurship is not as easy as just taking them away because the whole notion of entrepreneurship is based on these masculine concepts. However, recognising that entrepreneurship can be done in a different way offers hope for resistance against the system of entrepreneurship that marginalises women.

6.4 Summary

In this chapter, I showed ways in which the informants deviated from the masculine norm of entrepreneurship. I discussed the sceptical attitude of some informants against "being in business for the money", which I argued is a way in which these women distance themselves from entrepreneurial masculinity. I also noted that the common understanding of "entrepreneurship" is made up of masculine practices, which makes it difficult to dispose of problematic aspects of entrepreneurship. I discussed that some informants valued women-only events for entrepreneurs and problematised the notion of generalising women's identity and affinity, because it can become grounds for further marginalisation of women entrepreneurs. I also gave an example of a way in which femininity is constructed as valuable in the entrepreneurial context but complicated this example by stating that women do not receive reciprocation for the qualities they bring to the table and that their identity is, again, generalised. In this chapter, it has become clear that women do not always distance themselves from feminine gender expression in the entrepreneurial context. However, when

emphasising their femininity and difference, they do this in a way that does not necessarily challenge hegemonic masculinity and their own marginalisation.

CHAPTER 7: THE ROLE OF THE INCUBATOR

In order to study the institutional side of entrepreneurship, I conducted observations at an event organised by the incubator where I conducted my work placement. I refer to this event as the Women Entrepreneurship Weekend. This event aims to promote entrepreneurship among women and, as noted in section 2.3 above, I joined the first day of this two-day event. In this chapter, I argue that through the way this event is organised, the structural marginalisation of women in the entrepreneurial world is not addressed. Therefore, the event can be said to preserve the marginalisation of women. The chapter starts with a description of the event, followed by a discussion of how women are separated from the rest of the entrepreneurial world through the way the event is set up. This is followed by a discussion of the implications of organising such a separated event where women learn entrepreneurial skills.

7.1 The Event

The Women Entrepreneurship Weekend is an event exclusively for women. When I visited the incubator the Friday before the weekend and asked one of the male incubator staff members if I would see him the next day, he joked that he was not invited because he is a man (field diary, February 16th, 2018). Women who were interested in the event could send an email with their motivation to the incubator, after which twenty-five participants were selected. For the participants, the Women Entrepreneurship Weekend is free of charge. One of the incubator's staff members told me that this weekend is the event that the incubator spends most resources on every year (field diary, October 23rd, 2017). In this way, she explained, the imbalance between resources spent on men and women is at least partly corrected; since most of the incubatees are men, the incubator would spend the majority of their resources on them if they would not organise an event exclusively for women.

On the day that I joined the event, all the participants met up at the bus station of the university's city and we took the bus together to the location of the event. The bus ride was about an hour and from the start the atmosphere was cheerful and chatty: people talked to each other on the bus and once we were at the location of the event we were treated to a

generous *fika*[6]*,* which encouraged the participants to interact even more with each other. Throughout the day there were three more occasions where food was consumed which offered the possibility for the participants to get to know each other and the incubator staff in a casual manner.

After *fika*, the first workshop started which focused on idea generation and finding inspiration in female role models. The woman leading the workshop discussed five successful women entrepreneurs, four of which had created a product that was specifically targeted towards women. For example, Sara Blakely was discussed, who started the women's underwear company Spanx and Ida Tin, founder of Clue, a menstruation tracking app. Afterwards, she discussed techniques which could be used to come up with a good business idea. The participants were encouraged to talk to each other and make a list of ideas, the quality of the ideas did not matter. Afterwards the participants were invited to share their ideas with the group.

After lunch, a woman entrepreneur who had been working on her business for a couple of years presented her experiences with entrepreneurship to the participants. She talked about the development of her company and encouraged the participants to find a way in which they can realise their ideas, even when the road to success is full of difficulties. She also stated that there is no recipe for success and encouraged the participants to go out and try out their business ideas and see what happens.

The day concluded with another workshop, this time on mingling and networking. In this workshop the participants received tips on how to approach people at networking events and they were encouraged to try the techniques they learned by talking to each other. Throughout the workshop, the participants were encouraged to share their experiences gained from talking to each other with the group. This encouraged the friendly atmosphere I experienced at the event; even though I felt like an outsider because I was not participating but only observing the workshops, it was clear that the participants were getting to know each other and were having a good time.

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[6] Swedish term describing a social event where one enjoys (often) warm drinks with something to eat.

7.2 Women Entrepreneurship as Separated

In this section, I argue that the focus on women-to-women business, the spatial removal of the weekend and the way intimacy between women was encouraged created a notion of women entrepreneurship as separated from the rest of the entrepreneurial world. During the first workshop of the event the participants were presented with five female business owner role models, four of which had a company that targeted their product or service towards women. Incubators have the opportunity to show that entrepreneurs have the possibility to address specific needs of women, needs that are often not acknowledged in a system that favours male bodies. However, by presenting women entrepreneurship in this way, it gets separated from the larger entrepreneurial context, because a separate niche is created: women entrepreneurs focus on female customers. This "separate women's sphere" was reinforced by the event being spatially removed from the actual incubator, because it was held at a different location. Moreover, the event was, literally, only for women. As discussed above, even male members of the incubator's staff were not welcome. In Chapter 6 above, I wrote that informants who had joined the Women Entrepreneurship Weekend the year before described it as having an intimate atmosphere which they attributed to the fact that it was organised for women only. In section 6.2 above, I argued that the intimacy experienced at the event was probably not only caused by the fact that it was organised or women, but also by the absence of men. In regard of the ethnographic data presented above, this intimate connection was also encouraged by the way the event was set up: there were many instances where the participants were encouraged to connect with each other. As discussed in section 6.2, some informants preferred this kind of event to that where men are present and the intimacy that they experienced was used as an argument why women-only events appeal to them. Of course, there is nothing wrong with feeling connected to other people, but when this is used as an argument to separate oneself from other groups it is cause for concern. This intimacy can be said to contribute to separating women from the entrepreneurial context at large.

What is constructed through the emphasis on women-to-women business and the intimacy between women is a separate entrepreneurial system which is better suited to women than the larger entrepreneurial world. This is a temporary situation: in order to develop their businesses women have to participate in a larger entrepreneurial network, for which they were also prepared by the event (see section 7.3 below). However, by creating this women-only space, it becomes difficult to address inequalities of the larger entrepreneurial context, because this space is *separated* from its larger context: literally, because it is far away from

the actual incubator and figuratively, through a focus on women-to-women business and intimacy between women. The incubator structurally positions women as separate and, in this way, contributes to the structures that serialise women (cf. Young, 1994): through the material placement of women and the connections encouraged between them their options in the entrepreneurial world are determined and, unfortunately, limited. Through the aspects of the event that encourage separateness, the incubator can be said to preserve the marginalisation of women in the entrepreneurial context.

7.3 Learning Entrepreneurship

According to the Facebook invitation to the event, the aim of the Women Entrepreneurship Weekend was to give women the tools they need to start their businesses. In section 7.1 above, I discussed the workshops given on the day that I was observing at the event. The next day the incubator had also organised a pitching workshop. In the context of high cuisine restaurants, Gabriella Nilsson (2013) argues that men are seen as already possessing the masculine qualities required for their work, whereas women have to learn those same qualities. Translating this insight to the context of entrepreneurship, men would be seen as already possessing, in their inner being, all the qualities needed to become successful entrepreneurs; the only thing an incubator has to do is encourage these qualities. Women, on the other hand, would be perceived in this dichotomy as needing to *learn* how to be an entrepreneur; they would need to be taught the appropriate behaviour and attitude to keep themselves standing in the entrepreneurial world. Considering Connell's (1995) discussion of masculinity, men can obtain the privileges of complying with hegemonic masculinity by appealing to their perceived innate masculine qualities whereas women can only access this privilege by playing along with masculine ideals.

Based on my data it is impossible to say whether the incubator I observed constructs this binary opposition where men *are* and women *have to learn* how to be entrepreneurs. However, as discussed in section 7.1 and 7.2 above, the event creates a separate space in which women learn entrepreneurship and the incubator spends a lot of resources on this weekend, which increases its special status in the services they offer. The incubator does not organise any similar events for men or mixed gender, which implies that men do not need as much attention to develop desired entrepreneurial qualities. Therefore, through the way the

event is set up, it can be said that women are constructed as needing a separate space and time to learn entrepreneurship.

Karin Lindelöf (2012) discusses similar implications in the context of sport events organised for women. She argues that these events create the idea that women need special events in order to want to participate in masculine gendered activities. She notes that these events try to prepare women to enter these masculine contexts, for example by inviting inspirational speakers and providing extra information about activities traditionally reserved for men. She states that, in this way, the position of "woman" is constructed as incompatible with the sport events discussed. Ahl (2002) discusses a similar construction in relation to women and entrepreneurship:

> The measures that are intended to help, in fact define the helpless … Build into the discourse on enhancing women's entrepreneurship is therefore a construction of women entrepreneurs as the Other, as someone in need of assistance. The 'support the disadvantaged' argument does by the same move *produce* the disadvantaged. (p. 62, my emphasis)

The focus on "learning entrepreneurship" for this event, then, affirms the masculine norm of entrepreneurship by constructing women as a group that is different from the norm and therefore has to learn skills in order to enter the entrepreneurial world. Moreover, through women-only events that focus on learning, women's supposed "weakness" is addressed instead of questioning why women are constructed as "lesser entrepreneurs" in the first place (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). The focus of an event like this is on getting more women inside the entrepreneurial world and giving them the tools to sustain themselves, whereas for durable gender equality it is necessary that the entire system surrounding new venture creation is changed. Only offering women the traditional tools will not create this change but instead perpetuate masculine normativity in the entrepreneurial world.

The separateness discussed in section 7.2 above contributes, as noted, to the impression that women need a special space and time to learn entrepreneurship. In this section, I have argued that the incubator constructs women as a group that has to learn entrepreneurship. In a way, these two processes seem incompatible: one is focused on keeping women out of the entrepreneurial world, whereas the other is about getting them in. Yet, it is precisely this double movement that is problematic because the first aspect reinforces the second: women are conceptualised as a separate group which means they need to change

themselves through learning before they can blend into the entrepreneurial world. As argued in Chapter 5 above, this includes moving away from a feminine gender act and, in some cases, adopting a masculine way of doing their gender (cf. Butler, 1990). Neither separating women nor teaching them entrepreneurship acknowledges or challenges the inherent masculinity of entrepreneurship and the way that women are produced as "the other". Therefore, women's marginalisation in the entrepreneurial context is sustained. Yet, I believe it is possible to do things differently. As stated in the introduction, this thesis aims at giving some practical suggestions for incubators to address gender inequality in the entrepreneurial context. These are discussed in the next chapter.

7.4 Summary

In this chapter, I argued that, through the way that the Women Entrepreneurship Weekend is organised, the structural marginalisation of women in the entrepreneurial world is not addressed. This event can therefore be said to preserve the marginalisation of women entrepreneurs. I started this chapter with a description of the event, followed by a discussion of different ways in which this event constructs women entrepreneurship as separated from the larger entrepreneurial context: by presenting women entrepreneurship as a separate niche, by having a women-only event spatially removed from the incubator and by encouraging intimacy between women. I went on to argue that this separated, women-only event implies that women, as opposed to men, have to learn entrepreneurship; because women are separated, they have to learn how to adapt to become part of the entrepreneurial system. Through these processes, the masculine norm of entrepreneurship and the marginalised position of women as "the other entrepreneur" are preserved.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND APPLICABILITY

8.1 Summary

The aim of this thesis was to study how young women entrepreneurs construct entrepreneurship. Previous research has shown that norms of entrepreneurship that are perceived as gender-neutral are, in fact, gendered. I argued that entrepreneurship can be viewed as a masculine practice, because it is dependent on a traditional division of labour and because informants construct themselves and women in general as unsuitable entrepreneurs in regard to taking the required risks. The notions of "risk-taking" and "independence" are connected; because of a traditional division of labour women have less time, which becomes a scarce resource that is difficult to risk. I argued that hegemonic masculinity in the entrepreneurial context is constructed as a heterosexual position, a position of rational authority. Access to knowledge and demonstrating knowledge are essential to obtain this powerful position.

Butler (1990) argues that failing to do the right gender can be punished with exclusion. Through my analysis it has become clear that the right gender act in the entrepreneurial context is a masculine act. Therefore, doing entrepreneurship means doing masculinity. I have discussed several ways in which the informants adapted themselves to this hegemonic masculine norm. Some women tried to handle this norm by consciously changing their behaviour and dress. They experienced this as a positive change, because it gave them more power and acceptance in the entrepreneurial world. Moreover, I argued that the ability to show one's knowledge, part of the construction of hegemonic masculinity, is required to be perceived as a legitimate entrepreneur. This affirms that the entrepreneurial system rewards people who can do their genders in a masculine way (cf. Butler, 1990). Some informants were of the opinion that women should not be singled out in the entrepreneurial world; these informants instead demonstrated a belief in meritocracy and individual agency to effect change. I argued that this form of gender-blindness is another way to handle hegemonic masculinity, because it is a process in which women try to move away from being marked as the entrepreneurial "other". Therefore, handling entrepreneurial masculinity is about two connected strategies: women try to move away from being marked as "feminine" and, when possible, try to adopt a masculine gender act.

I have shown ways in which the informants tried to distance themselves from masculine norms. These included women who claimed that they were not in business for money and, therefore, struggled to identify as entrepreneurs, women who valued events for women entrepreneurs and an example of an informant who stressed that being a woman is an opportunity to complement male entrepreneurs. I have discussed that these examples are complex; on the one hand, these are ways to resist entrepreneurial masculinity, on the other hand, they can become the basis for more marginalisation. Moreover, I argued that creating a more inclusive form of entrepreneurship is more complex than removing problematic, masculine aspects from entrepreneurship, since the notion of entrepreneurship is tied up with these masculine practices. I argued that the incubator that I studied does not effectively address the marginalisation of women entrepreneurs and therefore can be said to sustain this situation. Women are separated as a group from the main entrepreneurial context, while at the same time they are being constructed as a group that has to learn entrepreneurship. These two processes reinforce each other and make it difficult to address women entrepreneurs' marginalisation.

8.2 Applicability and Further Research

The research project that formed the basis for this thesis was conducted for a student incubator in southern Sweden. In Chapter 7 above, I have argued that, due to the way in which the incubator promotes entrepreneurship among women, they do not address the structural marginalisation of women entrepreneurs. Through organising events in the way that the incubator does now, gender equality in the entrepreneurial world is not increased.
To conclude, I want to give several suggestions as to how things could be done differently in this and other incubators.

As argued in the previous chapter, events for women entrepreneurs separate women from the larger entrepreneurial context and construct them as a group that has to learn entrepreneurship. I believe that the first step towards more gender equal business incubation is to stop organising these kinds of instructive events exclusively for women. Instead, mixed-gender events could be organised where people of different genders learn the skills necessary to create a successful business. This will take away the impression that women need special places to learn entrepreneurship and there will not be the assumption that men naturally know how to do entrepreneurship. However, I do believe that spaces that centre women can be

beneficial in the entrepreneurial world in other ways. Instead of being places about learning, events can offer the opportunity for women to meet and discuss their entrepreneurial experiences. These spaces can form the basis from where resistance against the marginalisation of women entrepreneurs takes place, what Young (1994) describes as a series becoming a group when they undertake collective action to challenge the structures that serialise them. I do not think these have to be men-free zones either: why should men be excluded from conversations about creating change in the entrepreneurial world? It would be interesting to see if a similar feeling of intimacy as the informants in section 6.2 above described can arise at a mixed-gender event if women and men were encouraged to interact with each other in a similar way as the women were at the Women Entrepreneurship Weekend. It would be, however, most important to create clear guidelines what the aims of these mixed-gender spaces and events are, so as to preserve feelings of safety and not create ground for people venting their frustration about the loss of male privilege (Lövkrona, 2016).

Offering instructive events to a mixed gender audience would only be a start. "Learning entrepreneurship" will remain problematic if the skills learned are part of a heteronormative, Western, masculine entrepreneurial system. Therefore, I believe institutions like start-up incubators should raise questions around the value of entrepreneurship and innovation. Why do we consider these beneficial for society? Who is benefiting? Who is excluded? As John Ogbor (2000) notes, gendered ideas around entrepreneurship control who has access to support. Therefore, it is necessary to explore what non-masculine entrepreneurship could look like. Which values do incubators want to prioritise? Are there people in their incubators who are constructing alternative forms of entrepreneurship, not based on hegemonic masculine notions? How is the current support system excluding entrepreneurial endeavours that do not look like entrepreneurship according to common views? Which entrepreneurs do not feel at home in the current system, and might not apply for help from incubators?

I hope that the suggestions and questions above can help incubators to find directions towards a more diverse understanding of entrepreneurship, which hopefully will attract a diverse range of entrepreneurs. It should be noted, however, that this thesis has not answered every question on the ways that hegemonic masculinity excludes people from the entrepreneurial world, so I want to make some suggestions for future research. For example, I have not made an analysis of the influences of ethnicity and class on the access to entrepreneurial support, a direction for entrepreneurship research that Susan Marlow and Angela Martinez Dy (2018) indicate is important. It would be especially interesting to

research those issues in an incubator that is part of a university, in order to connect the study to overall poor representation of certain groups in academic environments. Moreover, as Marlow and Martinez Dy (2018) note, men's relation to the masculine norms of entrepreneurship is under-explored and requires more scholarly attention. I would also be interested in seeing studies of entrepreneurs who do not define their gender in a binary way and how they relate to entrepreneurial masculinity.

This thesis aims to raise awareness about the preservation of masculine norms in the entrepreneurial context. Even after more than thirty years of research focussing on the relation between gender and entrepreneurship (Henry, Foss, & Ahl, 2015), this thesis demonstrates that masculinity is still the norm in the entrepreneurial world. I myself and other scholars who have examined the literature on gender and entrepreneurship have noticed that some texts suggest that masculine norms in entrepreneurship can be changed by focussing on feminine values (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Lewis, 2013). By describing "entrepreneurship" as a masculine construct, it can seem as if cultivating a feminine form of entrepreneurship or combating the norm with feminine characteristics might be a way to dismantle this system. However, describing this system as masculine is a remnant of a binary gender system that we have to move away from in order to obtain lasting gender equality. Currently, as described above, requirements of entrepreneurship are associated with masculinity. To assume that this system will change by introducing "feminine qualities" into the entrepreneurial system, such as sensitivity to the needs of others and being sympathetic (from Bem's Femininity Scale as cited in Ahl, 2004, p. 56), does not take into account that inequality is inherent to a binary gender system (Butler, 1990). Working towards a system, a world view, in which certain bodily styles, personality traits etc. are not associated with a certain gender or body seems to me the only way to obtain gender equality within entrepreneurship and other contexts. Although this might sound like a utopic view, Butler's (1990) theory suggests that this situation is possible. According to her, gender as an internal identity is only a construct, something which if recognised on a bigger scale promises the possibility that individual bodily expressions are not limited to gendered expressions. I believe, therefore, that it is not productive to conduct research into "feminine ways of doing entrepreneurship". Instead, investigating forms of entrepreneurship that do not conform to the form of hegemonic masculinity that I have discussed in this thesis and are enacted by people of different genders (also people who do not identify as a woman or a man) is a possible way to explore how to dismantle the masculine entrepreneurial system, in order to create a more gender equal entrepreneurial world.

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Interview 2, September 21st, 2017

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Interview, October 10th, 2017

Interview, October 20th, 2017