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Gendering Organization Studies: A Guide to Reading Gender Subtexts in Organizational Theories

ABSTRACT

The application of Gender Theory to the subject of Organization Studies has led to the discovery and formulation of previously unnoticed problems in the theory and practice of organizations. Specifically it helps to expose the supposedly gender-neutral assumptions of organizational theories and organizations. This article aims at presenting a framework for exploring the gender subtext within organizational theories. First, it offers a review of the literature that focuses on the various kinds of feminist epistemologies in circulation and on the discourse these epistemologies have produced within organizational theorizing. Then an analytical framework for revealing the gender subtext of organizational theories will be constructed. This framework will be based on the postmodernist/poststructuralist notion of 'deconstruction'. Then the article will formulate a number of deconstructive questions designed to render the role of gender within organizational theories visible. Some final remarks conclude this article.

Key words: *organizational theories, feminist epistemologies, postmodernist/poststructuralist feminist approach, deconstructive framework.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades researchers from the disciplines of Women's/Gender Studies¹, Organization Studies and Sociology have confronted the field of Organization Theory with questions about the role of gender. There are several reasons for this new line of inquiry:

- Organization theory² "has generally and traditionally been constructed as non-gendered. Written through a male perspective, culture and discourse, it has espoused theories of empiricism, rationality, hierarchy and other masculinized concepts. In this way organization theory has been implicitly gendered" (Hearn & Parkin, 1993, 149).
- While organizational theories reflect the practical concerns of their creators (both the scholar(s) and the organizational participants whose actions are described by the theories), the following theoretical questions should be asked from the perspective of gender and gender studies: 'How do organizational scientists create knowledge?', 'What kind of gendered knowledge do organization theorists create?', 'What do they theorize about?', 'Who theorizes?', 'What do the theories look like?', 'Whose interest does the theory serve?', and 'Who benefits from it?'.³ In fact organizational theories – once they are presented as knowledge – guide organizational participants in their efforts to understand and control organizations. In this sense, organizational scientists 'create' organizations as much as they study them (see Calás & Smircich, 1992, 223).
- Organizations are the central social and economic institutions, with which most people are in daily contact in one form or the other (e.g. work-place, schools, universities, social and help services ...). Therefore organizations are decisive factors for the "well-being" of their subjects (see Alvesson & Billing, 1997), who are not gender-neutral categories, but rather are women and men.⁴

1 The terms 'Women's Studies' and 'Gender Studies' are understood to be synonymous for the purpose of this article. For arguments whether or not there are valid distinctions between these terms, see, for example: Swiss Science Council, 1998; Delhez, Braidotti & Rammrath, 1998.

2 Organization Theory is composed of a multiplicity of largely incommensurable theoretical frameworks and schools of thoughts. In this article the term '*organization theory*' represents an umbrella term for organizational theories as well as organizations. Basically '*organizational theories*' "serve the purpose to explain and understand organizations. What distinguishes them from common sense or every day knowledge of organizations is a greater degree of systematic procedure and that they can be criticized and checked inter-subjectively" (Kieser, 1995a, p. 1). There exist organizational theories which are part of macro-, meso-, or micro-levels. Since different organizational theories are based upon different fundamental assumptions as well as upon different traditions, it is very difficult to compare the different theories (Incommensurability of theories, see Kieser, 1995a, 3). '*Organization*' as defined in orthodox organizational analysis refers to "a bounded societal system with specific structures and goals which acts more or less coherently" (Cooper & Burrell, 1988, 102). The term '*organization studies*' denotes the academic discipline for the purposes of this article.

3 For the construction of knowledge from a feminist perspective, see, for example Code, 1992; Code, 1995; and Code, 2000.

4 Gender within this paper is understood as being socially constructed, a product of socialization and experience (see e. g. Dietzen, 1993). "Sex/Gender are discursive practices that constitute specific subjectivities through

- Last but not least the theoretical voices at the 'margins' of organization studies should receive a wider audience within the field (Elsbach, Sutton & Whetten, 1999).

Indeed a perspective that focuses on gender intends to expose the supposedly gender-neutral assumptions of organizational theories and of the organizations themselves, and to analyze their power-structures by rendering gender and gender identities visible. The perspective of gender thus articulates problems in the theory and practice of organizations which otherwise remain unnoticed. The following three feminist epistemological approaches⁵ serve as a basis for dealing with gender within organization studies:⁶

The first approach is what is termed the "*gender as variable*" approach and is otherwise known as "*feminist empiricism*" (Harding 1987). Feminist empiricism argues that sexism and androcentrism are social biases, prejudices based on false beliefs, caused by superstitions, customs, ignorance, miseducation and hostile attitudes. According to Alvesson & Billing (1997, 24) this approach "views gender as a variable and maintains women as a relevant and unproblematic research category. One is basically interested in comparisons between men and women in terms of inequality and discrimination and aims to explain such phenomena. Traditional (male-dominated) research (...) has disregarded women as a category and failed to pay attention to possible differences between the sexes". This 'gender as variable' approach thus assumes that these biases are correctable by stricter adherence to the methodological forms of scientific inquiry.

The second approach is the '*feminist standpoint*' approach and focuses on gender differences and on differences within the living conditions of women and men. In contrast to the 'gender as variable' approach it regards gender as a fundamental organizing principle of patri-

power and resistance in the materiality of the human body" (Calás & Smircich, 1999a, 214). The construction of gender takes place linguistically, historically and in practice and is therefore flexible and multiple. For discussions of the construction of gender see for example: Tong, 1989; West & Zimmerman, 1991; Lorber, 1994; Butler, 1999; Nicholson, 2000.

⁵ "Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, is that branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis. It has been a major interest of many philosophers almost from the beginnings of the subject" (Honderich, 1995, 242). An Epistemology "answers questions about who can be a 'knower' (can women?); what tests beliefs must pass order to be legitimated as knowledge (only tests against men's experiences and observations?); what kind of things can be known (can 'subjective truths' count as knowledge?) and so forth. Sociologists of knowledge characterize epistemologies as strategies for justifying beliefs: appeals to the authority of God, of custom and tradition, of 'common sense', of observation, of reason, and of masculine authority are examples of familiar justificatory strategies. Feminists have argued that traditional epistemologies, whether intentionally or unintentionally, systematically exclude the possibility that women could be 'knowers' or agents of knowledge: they claim that the voice of science is a masculine one, that history is written from only the point of view of men (of the dominant class and race); that the subject of a traditional sociological sentence is always assumed to be a man" (Harding, 1987, 3).

⁶ For more details concerning feminist epistemology, see, for example: Tong, 1989; Harding, 1987; Harding, 1998; and Alvesson & Billing, 1997. It should be mentioned that there also exists a fourth feminist epistemological approach: the 'Third World/Postcolonial' approach. This approach will be neglected within this article; for more details see, for example, Harding, 1998; Calás & Smircich, 1999a.

archal society and, in principle, has a larger range than the former perspective. The 'feminist standpoint' approach reasons that men's dominating position in social life results in partial and perverse understandings of society, whereas women's subjugated position provides the possibility of a more complete and less perverse understanding of society. This approach focuses on "making the lives of women visible, viewing women as more than variables to be considered in comparison with men, presenting women mainly as victims, but also as active participants essential to the creation of their own lives. Research tends to be pro-women and the focus is often strongly on women, rather than, as in the variable research, on comparisons of men and women" (Alvesson & Billing, 1997, 29).

The third and final approach – the '*feminist postmodernist/poststructuralist*'⁷ approach questions gender categories in general which were taken for granted and remained unquestioned within the two feminist epistemologies outlined above. This strand no longer views notions like man and woman, the male and the female, as fundamental, valid points of departure but considers them to be unstable, ambiguous categories and to attribute false unity (see Alvesson & Billing, 1997; Calás & Smircich, 1992; Flax, 1987; Nicholson, 1990; and Weedon, 1987). The world is considered a fragmented place and analytical notions of race, class, gender, women and men are therefore also considered fragmented. "As notions, women and men are linguistic constructions and should therefore be dissolved in order to reveal the underlying diversity and complexity. Talk about men and women does not simply reveal objective reality but is part of discourses uncoupled or loosely coupled to any possible reality out there" (Alvesson & Billing, 1997, 39).

Each of these three approaches provides a special focus for the question of gender and therefore precipitates different results when applied to organization studies.⁸ The postmodern/poststructural approach will serve as the basis for this article's inquiry into the role of gender within Organization Theory. This perspective allows to ask questions like 'Who is the subject

7 The terms *Postmodernism* and *Poststructuralism* are often used interchangeably. Both signal a 'crisis of cultural authority' located primarily in the Western World, but Postmodernism and Poststructuralism are different strands within philosophy. *Postmodernism* comprises different philosophical positions, all of which partake in a critique of the 'grand ecrits' (metanarratives of modernism) like Rationalism, Humanism, Marxism, Christianity, Capitalism. Terms like 'Unity', 'Truth', 'Science', and 'Sense' are regarded as universalist and totalitarian within Postmodernism; instead Postmodernism focuses on multiplicity, variety, outward appearance, metaphors, form, body, incident and play (see Precht & Burkhard, 1999, 458). In Postmodernism 'grand ecrits' have lost their power of legitimacy and are replaced by 'fragmental' and 'petit recrits' ("small stories' or 'modest narratives', mindful of their locality in space and time and capable of adapting or disappearing as needed", Calás & Smircich, 1999b, 651). *Poststructuralism* (also called Neostructuralism) is a reaction against classical structuralism. Poststructuralism criticizes the idea of a meta-historical closed structure as well as the assumption of an all-overlapping structuralist center (see Precht & Burkhard, 1999, 458f.). According to Beasley (1999, 89) "Poststructuralism might be understood either as an approach which is distinguishable from postmodernism and hence having a separate status, or a subset of postmodernism, in which case postmodernism may become the 'proper name' for a loose constellation of thinkers critical of the explanatory claims associated with modernism".

8 Chapter two of this article considers this point in greater detail. For publications see Calás & Smircich, 1999a.

of organizational theories?' and 'What is represented and what is not represented in organizational theorizing?', as well as allowing us to reflect "upon the production of theory as a genre and as an institutional and cultural activity" (Calás & Smircich, 1999b, 649).

The aim of this article is to provide a general analytical framework for the analysis of the inclusion and exclusion of notions of gender within the language of organizational theories. Since exclusions and inclusions of gender in traditional organizational research are mostly hidden, they form their own text within the text at large: the 'gender subtext'⁹. In order to analyze/decode the gender subtext of any organizational theory a framework is needed, which will guide the process of focusing on the construction/production of the existing text. In this article, 'deconstruction'¹⁰ will serve as the basis for such an analytical framework. Several reasons for this choice can be offered (see Calás & Smircich, 1999b, 656f.): – deconstructions are philosophical meditations delineated in very close readings of particular texts; – a deconstructive reading attends to the language of the text and those areas where language betrays itself; – deconstruction pays attention to what authors put 'in the margin'; – deconstruction disassembles textuality to show how, despite careful control of textual representations, language always eludes the writer's control; and last but not least: – deconstruction follows certain general 'rules'¹¹.

9 The concept of 'gender subtext' was introduced by Smith (1988, 1990) and according to her "the objectified forms, the rational procedures and the abstracted conceptual organization create an appearance of neutrality and impersonality that conceals class, racial and gender – subtexts" (Smith, 1990, 65). Smith (1988) also argues that it is a deliberate and integral part of the male subtext to lie concealed beneath apparently impersonal forms. To decode the gender subtext in organizational theories one needs "to focus on the construction of the 'texts' with its mediated power bases, organizational and individual arrangements constituting gender inequality and the notion of the abstract 'ideal worker'" (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998b, 5).

10 'Deconstruction' as a term goes back to Derrida (1976) and implies that meaning is not natural or intrinsic to the world, but is always constructed. As a form of textual analysis deconstruction reverses the process of construction: it shows precisely how artificial the ordinary structures of our social world that we take for granted are; it demonstrates that meanings are not embedded within a text but rather that they are constructed through the interplay of binary oppositions, which are constantly shifting. According to Flax (1990, 37) "Deconstructive readers are disrespectful of authority, attentive to suppressed tensions or conflicts within the text and suspicious of all 'natural' categories, essentialist oppositions, and representational claims. They are willing to play with the text, to disrupt its apparent unity, to rescue its heterogeneous and disorderly aspects and its plurality of meanings and voices. They are not to think of themselves as author(ities) or as un- or dis-coverers of Truth, but rather as potentially interesting members of an ongoing conversation. Their responsibility is to offer listeners a variety of moves from and against which further movements becomes possible". A deconstructive reading opens up the text to a renewed debate concerning the limits of the text and the relationship between explicit and hidden textual levels. "Deconstruction cannot be summarized as a mechanical series of operations to be applied to any piece of language. The deconstruction of a text involves a very close reading of the specific words of that text in the context of taken for granted assumptions. A deconstructive reading must follow the contours of the text itself" (Kilduff, 1993, 16). As Derrida (1988, 141) himself puts it: "Deconstruction does not exist somewhere, pure, proper, self-identical, outside of its inscription in conflictual and differentiated contexts: it 'is' only what it does and what is done with it, there where it takes place".

11 'Rules', in this context, describe strategies aimed at identifying areas of the text where a particular word or phrase is privileged and central to the meaning of the text (Calás/Smircich 1999b, 857). The analyst looks for another term – an opposite – the privileged term may have concealed and brings that term into the open ('overturning'). Eventually, the analyst demonstrates the impossibility of choosing one term over the other ('indecidability') and shows how meanings can be found within the texts ('metaphorization').

I will introduce some of the major notions of deconstruction, which will serve as the basis for my analytical framework in greater detail below. Before we will turn to this analytical framework, however, let us first review the existing literature on gender in organization studies. This review will show how each of the feminist epistemologies discussed above focuses on a distinct subject matter within organization studies. Through its discussion of literature working within a postmodernist/poststructuralist paradigm, the review will also serve as an introduction to this article's own analytical framework.

Having presented the aims of this article I would like to make some cautionary remarks: writing this article has made me aware that even as I was working with a postmodernist/poststructuralist epistemology, I could not fully escape modernist notions and thinking. It turned out that I had to make decisions about what was to be represented within this text, what was to be included/excluded, and what was to be pushed 'into the margins'. Also, dealing with gender in a postmodernist/poststructuralist way, i.e. considering gender as theoretically independent from particular sexed bodies, caused problems at times. Even though I tried hard to avoid the 'gender as variable' and 'feminists standpoint' perspectives within my own analytical framework I could not completely overcome thinking of women and men independently from actual sexed bodies. Thus I would like to end this introduction with a quote from Calás & Smircich (1999b, 650), who in their article "Past Postmodernism? Reflections and Tentative Directions" make the following suggestion for authors working with postmodernism/poststructuralism: "to situate the knowledge and so de-reify it; to speak in a way that takes ownership of their arguments; and to be accountable for the choices made".

2. LITERATURE AND RESEARCH RESULTS

Much 'critical' attention has focused on 'traditional' organization theory and its presentation of organizational theories and organizations as gender-neutral models.¹² It has been argued that an organization theory that does not take gender into account, presents a false picture of organizations, and that such 'gender-blind' theories propagate, "the myth of abstract, disembodied labor power" and hence "veil how structures, processes, practices and actors in organizations are always connected with hegemonic forms of masculinity and the respective values, norms and ideologies" (Lange, 1997, 114).

12 See for instance: Gutek, 1990; Hearn et al. 1990; Mills, 1990; Acker, 1992; Acker & Van Houten, 1992; Alvesson & Billing, 1992; Burrell, 1992; Calás & Smircich, 1992; Hearn & Parkin, 1992; Burrell, 1993b; Fagenson, 1993; Mills, 1993; Billing, 1994; Rastetter, 1994; Connell, 1995; Cheng, 1996; Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Alvesson & Billing, 1997.

The gendered organizational discourse that attempts to shatter this false picture highlights different subjects depending on the underlying feminist epistemology it employs, as table 1 shows. Even though the evolution of gender research within the field could be described in terms of a chronological sequence of phases (first the 'gender as variable' approach, then the 'feminist standpoint' approach, and most recently the 'postmodernist/poststructuralist' approach) this does not imply that the development is one-dimensional or that one phase follows the other with strict logical necessity. In a certain sense all phases are present at the same time and different subject matters are rooted more or less firmly in different phases.¹³ In essence the three epistemologies are connected dialogically and reflect the conflict between liberal, Marxist and postmodernist theories within the discourse of gender in organization theory.

As we can see in table 1 each feminist theoretical strand highlights particular organizational issues while ignoring others. The addressed issues and the conceptual vocabulary shift from concerns about women (their access to and their performance in organizations), to concerns about gender and organization (the notion of gendered organizational practices) and finally to concerns about the very stability of such categories as 'gender', 'masculinity', 'femininity' and 'organization'. Each approach gives alternative accounts for gender inequality, frames the 'problem' differently and proposes different courses of action as 'solutions'.

While the 'gender as variable' approach focuses on the so called 'Women in Management' research¹⁴ (access to organizations, leadership, sex stereotypes, job satisfaction, promotion) and the 'feminist standpoint' approach highlights gender as a structural category of organizations¹⁵ (e.g. the sexual division of labor, the gendered processes of organizations), the 'postmodernist/poststructuralist' approach concentrates mainly on the organizational discourse itself¹⁶. In fact researchers within the 'postmodernist/poststructuralist – perspective' have started to analyze (re-analyze/re-write/re-read and deconstruct) organizational theories and organizational studies¹⁷, to question the dynamics of gendering and racializing within different organizational theoretical frameworks and have tried to unveil the gender subtexts within organizational theorizing.

Each of the underlying epistemological approaches is associated with different methodologies and methods:

13 See Alvesson & Billing, 1997, 24.

14 For literature see Calás & Smircich 1999a.

15 For literature see Calás & Smircich 1999a.

16 Publications with regard to the feminist postmodernist/poststructuralist approach: Pringle, 1988; Calás & Smircich, 1990; Kondo, 1990; Martin, 1990; Calás & Smircich, 1991; Acker & Van Houten, 1992; Calás & Smircich, 1992; Capper, 1992; Mumby & Putnam, 1992; Nkomo, 1992; Bristor & Fischer, 1993; Calás, 1993; Mills, 1993; Shearer & Arrington, 1993; Cullen, 1994; Fletcher, 1994; Gray, 1994; Holvino, 1994; Harlow & Hearn, 1995; Wilson, 1996; Fondas, 1997; Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998a; Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998b; Hearn, 1998.

17 See table 2 of this article.

TABLE 1. *Feminist approaches and subject matters within organization studies (according to Calás & Smircich, 1999a) related to feminist epistemologies*

Epistemological Approaches		
Gender as variable	Feminist standpoint	Feminist Postmodern/Poststructuralist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sex differences within traditional organizational concepts: – leadership – uses of power – job stress – job satisfaction – organizational commitment – sex stereotypes – human resource management (recruitment, selection, performance appraisal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – analysis of the ongoing productive and reproductive gender dynamics of patriarchal, capitalist society or of the organization of the economy and society – workplace-household relations – ‘gender’ is, similar to ‘class’, a social category, characterized by relations of domination and oppression, functioning as a determinant of structural patterns in society – women’s double oppression of class and sex – addition of gender to analytical concerns of the Marxist perspective to compensate for its previous inattention to gender dynamics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – deconstruction of leadership – re-writing organizational studies, organizational globalization and business ethics – questioning/analyzing the ‘racializing’ and ‘gendering’ of organizational discourse – deconstruction of organizational taboos – re-analysis of organizational theories – deconstruction of accounting, marketing and educational administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sociological and structural research: – glass ceiling phenomenon – organizational demography – careers and social networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – female organizations, e.g. “Womenspace” – feminist organizational practices – feminist organizational theorizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – women-in development research – feminist correction of ‘development studies’ and economic modernization interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization and the broader social system: – equal opportunity – affirmative action and discrimination – sexual harassment – work/family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sexual division of labor – sex structuring of organizations – occupational sex segregation, visible and invisible processes of segregation within organizations – wage setting and job evaluations schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – women’s access to development resources and technology – textualization of women-in-development – representational space available for Third World women’s subjectivities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – developmental personality theories – different psychosexual development for the roles in organization and management – “Managerial Women” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – gendering and racializing through symbols, images and ideologies – gendered processes within organizations and gendered substructure of organizations – social gender interactions within organizational processes – analysis of organizational conversations and gendered communication acts – men as a social category within an examination of the intersections of masculinities, management and organization 	

- The methods of the ‘gender as variable’ approach can be quantitative as well as qualitative in nature. “Even if some versions of feminist empiricism dissociate themselves from deduction, hypothesis testing and quantitative measurements, as in the case in certain empiricist qualitative methods, such as ‘grounded theory’, these versions can still be associated with a soft form of (neo)positivism” (Alvesson & Billing, 1997, 25).
- Within the ‘feminist standpoint’ approach alternative methodological approaches are used with the intention of providing more space for personal experiences and critical insights. A qualitative methodology is preferred even though a lot of qualitative methodology is very much focused on possible male-biased techniques (see Alvesson & Billing, 1997, 31).
- The ‘feminist postmodernist/poststructuralist’ approach focuses on discourse analysis, textual analysis and deconstruction. By re-writing, re-analyzing, re-reading and deconstructing interview statements, conversations in everyday life and academic texts it shows how claims are supported by rhetorical moves and undermined by contradictions, repressed meanings and alternative representations. This approach also highlights the false robustness of claims (see Alvesson & Billing, 1997).

The gradual change within the organizational discourse from the ‘gender as variable’ and ‘feminist standpoint’ perspectives to the ‘postmodernist/poststructuralist’ approach has, according to Calás & Smircich (1999b, 660) “opened the space for considering gender theoretically independent from particular sexed bodies. The linguistic turn moved from the concerns from the body of women to the body of the text, and the effects of this change were felt in organization studies. For example, one could now ask, ‘How is gender written in organization theory? (...) and pay attention to how the language of our theories would construct understandings of the world that represented the interests and concerns of certain populations and not others, despite organization theories’ mantle of neutrality”.

As this article focuses mainly on the analyses of gender subtexts based on the ‘postmodernist/poststructuralist’ approach the next chart gives a short survey of the relevant literature concerning its aims, the theories it explores, its epistemological approaches, its methods and results.¹⁸

18 In many of the publications, the distinction between organizational theories and organizational practice was not always as clear as one would wish it to be. For the purpose of this literature survey texts on organizations had to be excluded.

TABLE 2. Selected publications on gender subtext in organizational theories

Authors (Year)	Acker & Van Houten	Calás & Smircich (1992)	Mumby & Putnam (1992)	Mills (1993)	Harlow & Hearn (1995)
Title	Different Recruitment and Control: The Sex Structuring of Organizations	Using the "F" Word: Feminist Theories and the Social Consequences of Organizational Research	The Politics of Emotion: A Feminist Reading of Bounded Rationality	Organizational Discourse and the Gendering of Identity	Cultural Constructions: Contrasting Theories of Organizational Culture and Gender Construction
Aim	Examination of possible interaction between sex and organizational factors	Contribution of feminist scholarship to re-writing organization and management theory	Poststructuralist, feminist reading of the construct of "Bounded Rationality"	To explore the relationship of the gendered self and organizational discourse	To address the relationship of the theorizing of organizational culture and of gender constructions in organizational analysis.
Theory/Practice	Hawthorne Studies and Crozier's Study of two French Bureaucracies	Institutional Theory Concept of Commitment	Concept of Bounded Rationality	Organizational discourse in general	Theories of (organizational) culture in general
Epistemological Approach	Postmodernism	Postmodernism (Post-structuralist Approach)	Postmodernism (Poststructuralism)	Postmodernism (especially Foucault)	Based on Postmodernist perspectives
Method	Re-examination	Re-writing the two examples under the theoretical premise of "women's voices"	Deconstruction focuses on: centrality of the cognitive metaphor, mind-body dualism, treatment of emotion as a form of labor	Literature Survey	
Results	Sex differences in organizational participation are related to (1) different practices of recruitment of women into jobs requiring dependence and passivity, (2) selective recruitment of particularly compliant women into these jobs, (3) control mechanisms used in organizations for women, which reinforce mechanisms to which they are subjected in other areas of the society. Sex-power differentials have a more profound effect in some cases than the organizational variables.	Strategy for making a difference by doing it differently. Recognizing that the way scholars do organizational science often defines the way society does organizational practice. Having a socially conscious organizational practice may depend on having a more socially conscious organizational scholarship.	Components of Bounded Rationality do not always facilitate decision-making that serves the best interests of various groups; the concept is not powerful because it mirrors objective organizational reality, but it articulates knowledge about organizations that reflects certain dominant practices.	Organizations are not simply spaces into which people enter, but rather networks of relationships which are deeply gendered. The potential for mixed messages or contradictory discourses contribute to the force and continuity of sexist ideology.	Different theories of organizational culture carry with them quite different messages and meanings in relation to gender construction. The future development of theories of organizational culture need to take much more explicit cognizance of the theorizing of gender construction, rather than leaving this implicit as has often been the case to date.

TABLE 3. Selected publications on gender subtext in organizational theories

Authors	Wilson (1996)	Fondas (1997)	Benschop & Doorewaard (1998a)	Benschop & Doorewaard (1998b)
Title	Research Note: Organizational Theory: Blind and Deaf to Gender	Feminization unveiled: Management Qualities in Contemporary Writings	Covered by Equality: The Gender Subtext of Organizations	Six of One and a Half Dozen of the Other: The Gender Subtext of Taylorism and Team-based Work
Aim	To show that "Organizational Theory and Behavior" in general are gender-blind	To unveil "feminization" by reviewing accounts of managerial work in three management books and to examine why this feminization inherent to managerial writing is not acknowledged	Comparative empirical studies (Case Studies) that examine the gendering processes in the Dutch banking sector	Comparative empirical studies (Case Studies) to explore the dynamic gender subtext by examining manifestations and meanings of gender distinctions in different work organizations
Theory/Practice	Not one specific theory, gives examples e.g. Taylor's Studies, Hawthorne Studies, Maslow's Motivation Theory	Management theorizing in general and especially re-engineering	The subject matter are three organizational settings: token positions, side tracks for young women with children and gendered practices of career-planning.	The focus lies on two different models of work organization: Taylorism (hierarchical organizations) and Team-based work
Epistemological Approach		Postmodernism (Poststructuralist Position)	Postmodernism	Postmodernism
Method	Literature Survey	Textual Analysis	Subtext Analysis (derived from Discourse Analysis)	Subtext Analysis (derived from Discourse Analysis)
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizational theories are constructed as being gender-blind, - to make gender a central aspect of organizational research rather than a mere addition, - to pose new questions and to render suspect the pre-existing knowledge on the subject, - to re-evaluate and re-write organizational theories on behalf of men and women. 	<p>The three themes in the investigated texts ('surrender control and share responsibility', 'help and develop others', 'build a connected network of relationships') closely parallel qualities culturally ascribed to females. The failure to name feminization is tantamount to acknowledging that management ideas and practices are gendered.</p>	<p>Gender inequality still persists at different levels in the organizations under investigation, its concealed nature prevents it from being perceived as such. Gendering takes place in the way people deal with gender inequality-that cannot-be: they prefer agreeable interpretations of relations between men and women that firmly stress equality, covering unappealing accounts of inequality.</p>	<p>Organizational and job design may be crucial for the distinction between Tayloristic organizations and team-based-work, but not for the (re)production of gender subtexts. The characteristics of the abstract worker in both approaches seem to be linked with masculinity, although in different ways. In both cases the gendering effects of masculine connotations are supported by gendered notions with regard to two factors: care responsibilities and qualifications.</p>

These tables show that the publications, although they focus on different topics, deliver similar results. Questions like 'Who did the survey?', 'What was the scientific set-up of the project as regards to gender? How was the project carried out?', 'How did the authors exclude/include men and women within their texts?', 'What role did gender play in the organizational discourse?', and 'How do gender and organizational factors interact?' uncovered a gender subtext within the examined text that had never been addressed before.

For their analysis of this gender subtext, as outlined in table 2, all authors take postmodernism/poststructuralism as their point of departure, but the terms applied are often derived from different strands of postmodernism and poststructuralism (e.g. Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard). While different strategies of analysis are used (e.g. deconstruction, subtext analysis, textual analysis), one can observe clear similarities in the actual analytical practices among these strategies of analysis. They all focus on the re-reading of texts, on the deconstruction of texts and meanings, revealing concealed processes of 'multiple meaning formation', and on the (re-)construction of alternative meanings (see Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998b, 11).

While there exist clear similarities in methodological and epistemological terms, the actual material that is analyzed represents a wide variety of well-known and highly influential organizational theories. Thus individual studies focus on the gender subtext in Crozier's Studies of French Bureaucracies, the Hawthorne Studies, the Institutional Theory, the Concept of Commitment, the Behavioral Approach to Decision-making Processes, the Concept of Reengineering, and Maslow's Motivation Theory. Significantly the results of all these deconstructive analyses of these different organizational theoretical frameworks turn out to be rather uniform:

- deeply gendered concepts were presented as non-gendered,
- lack of social awareness in organizational scholarship produced lack of social awareness within organizational science,
- the production of knowledge took place according to certain dominant practices, which did not take gender into account,
- organizational practices constructed very different identities of men and women with women cast as marginalized actors/subjects who only participate in certain dimensions/elements of organizational life,
- the traits associated with masculinity were treated as 'given' and taken for granted, whereas the traits defined as feminine were constituted as 'other', as supportive of but not essential for organizational life and organizational theorizing.

Keeping these results in mind the following chapter will provide a general framework for exploring organizational theories' gender subtext by applying key deconstructive notions.

3. SUGGESTIONS FOR AN ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL THEORIES IN TERMS OF GENDER – A DECONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH

The adoption of deconstruction by organizational theorists,¹⁹ and the encounter of organization studies with deconstruction opened up a new space for questioning the production of organizational theorizing. With the aim of writing 'another reality', or of producing an additional insight into organizational theorizing, this chapter intends to add to the postmodernist and deconstructive approach to organization theory offered by the publications mentioned in footnote 19, and to do so specifically with an eye to the role of gender. It attempts to establish an analytical framework for exploring organizational theorizing in terms of gender and to unveil its gender subtext according to deconstructive 'rules', such as 'overturning' and 'metaphorization'.²⁰ With the help of this general analytical framework the chapter wishes to answer the following key questions: 'How is gender represented in the text of organizational theories?', 'What role does gender play within specific organizational theories?', 'In which way was gender excluded/included in the establishment of the theoretical framework?', 'In which way do assumptions about gender influence basic assumptions of organizational theorizing?', and perhaps, "Through which notions can gender be replaced?'. Even though I concentrate on different research questions than the authors mentioned in footnote 19, our work has something in common: a postmodernist/poststructuralist approach to organization theory and deconstruction as means of analysis of organizational theorizing.

I will now introduce the five key epistemological notions of deconstruction²¹ – Representation, Reflexivity, Writing, Differance and De-Centering the subject – which can be regarded as deconstruction's corner stones. Deconstruction always aims at exploring that which is ex-

19 At the end of the eighties and in the beginning of the nineties postmodernism as an epistemology as well as an era was introduced to Organization Theory. The article of Cooper & Burrell (1988) "Modernism, Postmodernism and Organizational Analysis: An Introduction" can be regarded as starting point of a lot of publications, that deal with postmodernism and organizations from various perspectives (e.g. Alvesson, 1993; Alvesson, 1995; Burrell, 1993a; Chia, 1994; Chia, 1995; Chia, 1996; Cooper, 1989; Hassard, 1993; Hassard & Parker, 1993; Hearn & Parkin, 1993; Jeffcut, 1993; Jeffcut, 1994; Kilduff, 1993; Linstead, 1993; Newton, 1998; Parker, 1992a; Parker, 1992b; Parker, 1993; Parker, 1995; Parker, 1998; Power, 1992; Pym, 1992; Reed, 1993; Weik, 1996; Schreyögg, 1999). Basic insights of leading postmodernist and poststructuralist thinkers, such as Foucault (1994; 1997a; 1997b; 1997c; 1997d and 1998), Derrida (1973; 1997; 1998), Lyotard (1984; 1988) were adopted within organization theory and a conceptual framework for postmodern organizational analysis was developed. Considering the implications of postmodernism as an era, organizations were reexamined with reference to their structural characteristics, their flexible specialization and participation as distinguished from the classical terms of bureaucracy. As far as postmodernism as an epistemology is concerned, it became clear that the analysis as such created a specific discourse. "The production of organization rather than the organization of production" (Cooper & Burrell, 1988, 106) was emphasized. This shift of emphasis explicitly challenged the supposedly neutral status of former organizational analysts, researchers and authors.

20 For 'overturning' and 'metaphorization' see footnote 11

21 See Weik, 1996.

cluded or neglected within a text; in our case we are on the lookout for neglected notions of gender. After a brief summary of each of these deconstructive strategies, I will use them to formulate general questions designed to render visible the role of gender within organizational theories. This article will not, however, provide the answers to these questions. Rather these questions should be understood as examples of how the gender subtext of organizational theories could be analyzed and dismantled within a deconstructive framework. To provide answers for these questions will have to wait for a later paper focusing on one specific organizational theory or comparing individual texts of different theories. The five key epistemological can be described as follows:

Representation

The starting point of a deconstructive approach is the demand that the notion of facts should be replaced by that of representations. This suggests that attempts to discover the genuine order of a thing or of a discourse are both naive and mistaken (see Hassard, 1993, 12). Therefore the following questions can be suggested to analyze the representation of gender within organizational theories:

- Who is represented in the texts of organizational theories? Men? Women? Other gendered categories?
- How, with which examples, and when is gender represented in the texts of organizational theorizing?

Reflexivity

The notion of reflexivity refers to the necessity to be critical and suspicious of one's own intellectual assumptions and procedures. This requires permanent (self-)reflection on one's own premises and the acknowledgement that scientific research is but one linguistic game among others (see Weik, 1996, 387). "(...) propositions, which remove representation from the grasp of the factual, are themselves representations. In other words they treat as real both language and a universe divorced from language. The result is that they beget their own critical analyses" (Hassard, 1993, 12) which should also be subject to reflexivity. The two following questions are therefore suggested with regards to gender:

- Do the authors of organizational theories reflect on their own theoretical propositions/assumptions in terms of gender?
- Do the authors of the texts question their manifestations and distinctions of gender?

Writing

"Writing is the process by which human agents inscribe organization and order in their environments. (...) Writing is not concerned with the meaning and contents of messages, but more fundamentally, with the structure and organization of representation" (Cooper, 1989, 484). Writing is in fact a paradoxical – undecidable – form of action, for terms are always inhabited by their opposites. Writing is not a direct reflection on the outside world, but also the establishment of a relationship with what has already been inscribed (see Hassard, 1993, 13). Writing illustrates how the social actor is materially involved in the world through a process of reflection. One main question can be deduced from this notion

- What gender relations were inscribed at the time when the theory under examination was created?

Differance

The word "Differance is neither a word nor a concept" (Derrida, 1973, 130), it should be understood as a continuous movement, but not as a movement of things. The meaning of Differance consists of two aspects: of the French word *différer* – to differ (in space) and to defer (postpone in time) – and it tries to put the two meanings together in one designation which both subverts its meanings and produces the illusion of presence and consciousness (see Hassard, 1993, 14). "The sign represents the present in its absence – it is deferred presence" (Hassard, 1993, 14). The very fact that these two meanings reside in *différer*, means that the differential nature of the word cannot be grasped as a singularity and that one of its meanings always has to be deferred. Derrida argues against the notion of a fully present reality that is directly available to our understanding. Instead he assumes a world that is continually deferred both in space and time. "The signified concept is never present in and of itself ... every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to the concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences" (Hassard, 1993, 14f.). There are two possible ways of considering differences: Firstly focusing on the two forms that have been separated and secondly focusing on the actual process of separating (see Hassard, 1993, 14). The following questions can be offered:

- Are gender-lines/borders constituted within organizational theories? How are they constructed?
- Are men and women constructed as autonomous/related subjects within the organizational theorizing?
- How can the process of gender separation within specific theoretical frameworks be described?

- What does the partial presence of women mean for the contents of organizational theorizing?

De-centering the subject

'Subjectivity' is a process of locating identity in the language of the 'other', and 'agency' is an artefact: therefore agents are constituted through a system of symbols, which locates them while remaining outside of their awareness. Establishing agency is a process, which takes recourse to the concept of the "other" (see Hassard, 1993, 15) and which is the result of an interpretation. The subject is de-centered, no longer self-directing and a convenient location for the throughput of discourses (see Hassard, 1993, 15). Since the subject him/herself is located in discourse the following two questions can be raised:

- What kind of agency do men and women have in organizational theorizing?
- Through which system of symbols is their agency constituted within specific organizational theories?

All these questions, derived from the five epistemological notions, can serve as propositions and examples for exploring the gender subtext of organizational theories. There is no doubt that readers of this article could have raised other questions which could also be applied and which could be equally 'right' (or 'wrong'). Precisely this indefiniteness shows that the scientific discourse we inhabit is constructed as well, and that it depends on the scholars who are involved in its production.

Having briefly presented these questions some additional remarks should be made: I regard the analytical framework presented above as a starting point for deconstructing organizational theories in terms of gender. The questions should not however lead to a purely binary perspective, dividing the world into polar opposites such as male and female. These opposites should be invoked and worked with only as a first step, in order to show how one term dominates the other, and to 'overturn' the existing hierarchy between the two terms. The second step has to go beyond this binary code of male and female as well as beyond the concept of domination. Otherwise all that would have been achieved is to put the subordinate term into the place of the superordinate term and the new superordinate term would then, in turn, be ready for 'overturning'. This would start an infinite process of overturning leading to the exhaustion of the terms (as well as of the researcher). To avoid this problem, the concept of 'metaphorization' should be applied to demonstrate that there is an essential double dynamic within the opposition of male and female and that the superordinate term is defined only in contrast to the subordinate term, which itself serves to constantly threaten the former's hegemony.

3. NOT THE END – FINAL REMARKS AS A STARTING SIGNAL

As this article shows organization theory and gender research are linked through different feminist approaches, which highlight different subject matters and provide different results. A 'feminist postmodernist/poststructuralist' approach offers the possibility to dismantle the role and the power of gender as well as that of the female and male scientists within the production of organizational knowledge. But even within the 'postmodernist/poststructuralist' approach we have to deal with different points of departure (in space and time) as well as with a variety of research questions and different means of analysis. Even though a lot of research has been conducted, new research questions can still be raised based on a deconstructive framework. As Putnam (1996, 386) observes: "Organizational researchers need ways to open up text for multiple readings; to decenter authors as authority figures; and to involve participants, readers, and audiences in the production of research. One venue for achieving these goals is to seek alternative ways of presenting research reports – ones that challenge conventional modalities, ground research in historical processes, promote reflexivity, and open out texts to an infinitude of meanings". This article takes up the challenges formulated by Putnam (1996) through its presentation of a series of questions designed to analyze organizational theories. With the help of these questions it attempts to open up a new space for further organizational research aimed at unveiling gender subtexts via the 'postmodernist/poststructuralist' approach.

According to Calás & Smircich (1999b, 665) "one more general point, however, is that postmodernist (...) perspectives have *already* touched many of us in organization studies. Perhaps some of us have been tourists in the land of postmodernism and may not wish to settle there permanently, but 'we' have been 'effected' – changed – by the meeting. We cannot erase the unsettling that has occurred because of this encounters. They have left traces in how we consider theory and ourselves". In this sense – from an effected point of view – this article is not quite the end but represents a starting signal for continuing to deconstruct organizational theories, for 'thinking the unthinkable' and re-considering uncritically accepted knowledge – knowledge that is taken for granted, fixed and true – through a set of very different lenses: the lenses of gender. ■

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