'Trapped' by metaphors for organizations: Thinking and seeing women's equality and inequality

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Abstract
Gender was consistently identified as a major force in all editions of *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006), yet 30 years after publication of Morgan's (1986) seminal work, women's equality remains elusive in twenty-first-century workplaces. This state of affairs became the stimulus for the present research study, and its purpose the exploration of influences on women's equality and inequality from the eight metaphors contained in *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006). Data were collected from a sample of 70 articles in 30 leading academic journals that referenced *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006), and were analyzed for within-domains similarity between the eight metaphors and imageries of women in organizations. The results were then investigated for women's equality and inequality via content analysis. Four themes of influences on women's equality and inequality were identified from these metaphors for organizations. The implications of these findings are discussed, and two novel images are introduced to progress equality for women. The contribution to scholarly knowledge from this study is the proposition that the influence of these metaphors for organizations has in effect *trapped* ways of seeing and thinking regarding women's equality and inequality. The practical value of the current study lies in the proposal of new images to *release* organizational praxis for women's equality to become a real force in twenty-first-century organizations.

Keywords
gender equality, gender-neutral, genderless, 'Images of Organization', metaphor-in-use

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Introduction

The concept of gender was consistently raised in each edition of *Images of Organization*: 'it often makes a great deal of difference if you're a man or a woman! Many organizations are dominated by gender-related values' (Morgan, 1986: 178; 1997: 191; 2006: 185–186). The participation and status of women in the workforce has improved in the 30 years since the publication of that seminal work on metaphors (Adler, 1997; Fitzsimmons et al., 2013; Morgan, 1986); however – and as Morgan (2006) somewhat predicted – women's equality remains elusive because gender continues as an organizational issue (Hopfl, 2005; Kupers, 2013).

Scholarship regarding metaphors for organizations[1] has proliferated, though few studies have investigated the meaning for women's equality and inequality of Morgan's (1986) original eight metaphors (Deignan, 2003). It was therefore important to investigate *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006), not only because it is *the* seminal work, but because there are few studies on the influence of those original metaphors on women's equality or inequality. Furthermore, the current study was inspired by the potential implications of metaphors for organizations on women's leadership in an era of increasing rates of female employment (Barsh et al., 2008; Forgionne and Peeters, 1982; Koller, 2004a, b; Simpson and Lewis, 2005).

This research therefore seeks to explore the eight metaphors, contained in *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006), for influences on women's equality and inequality in organizations, and to address the gap in research literature, and indeed knowledge, referred to above. Four emergent themes were identified in this study regarding the influences of those metaphors for organizations on women's equality and inequality, and we also go beyond the original eight metaphors by introducing two novel images to stimulate *imaginization* of women's equality in twenty-first-century organizations (Morgan, 2006: 365 [emphasis in original]).

Relevant literature is reviewed to identify the impact of metaphors in an organizational context, and the effect of such metaphors on imageries of women in organizations is addressed. The results from content analysis of data collected from 70 peer-reviewed articles in 30 peer-reviewed journals (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) is then presented, and the scholarly and practical implications are discussed, leading to the finding of four themes of influences from metaphors for organizations on equality and inequality for women. Finally, two novel images are introduced to stimulate research and organizational praxis towards women's equality in twenty-first-century workplaces.

Metaphors for thinking and seeing organizations

We review two concepts in this section for the influences on organizational theory and behavior from metaphors. The concepts of source metaphor and metaphor-in-use are defined and the relationship between the two concepts is explained.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), 'we live by' metaphor, because new and vivid imagery is formed about existing phenomena through this powerful language device (Kupers, 2013). We also work by metaphor, as espoused theories and theories-in-use are represented/re-represented to simplistically explain complex organizational

phenomena (Basten, 2011; Cornelissen et al., 2005). Metaphors simplify complexity in organizations, shape employees' judgment of the organization, and thereby influence organizational behavior (Akin and Palmer, 2000; Tsoukas, 1991). As concluded by Morgan (2006: 4 [emphasis in original]), metaphor usage stimulates '*a way of thinking* and *a way of seeing*' the world and organizations.

The conceptual metaphor theory states that each subsequent metaphor can be traced back to a source metaphor, through transference of an image about a known domain to a target (unknown domain) (Andriessen and Gubbins, 2009; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Tsoukas, 1991). Comprehension of meaning is owing to *within-domains similarity* from a multiplicity of factors that are similar between the source and target domains (Cornelissen and Kafouros, 2008: 366 [emphasis in original]). Words/phrases are thus identified as metaphors when, in the context, meaning is sent and understood beyond the literal (Andriessen and Gubbins, 2009). The power from metaphors in the context of organizations arises when there is both 'explicatory impact' to clarify meaning, and 'generative impact' to change organizational behavior (Cornelissen and Kafouros, 2008: 367). The effectiveness of a metaphor, as a communicative device, is thereby judged on its potential to transform understanding about an organizational phenomenon (Kupers, 2013).

Metaphors are shared between employees to understand concepts in organizations and multiple versions of organizational reality (Deignan, 2003; Gherardi, 2000). A version of organizational reality arises from understanding transferred from a known source to the unknown target in organizations, and this generates activity to fit with the meaning of the metaphor (Cornelissen et al., 2005). As such, metaphors form a bridge between abstract concepts and organizational practices (Akin and Palmer, 2000; Andriessen and Gubbins, 2009). The identification of a metaphor is also somewhat of an experimental bridge between theory and praxis because, when abstracted from its original meaning, certain features are emphasized whereas others are suppressed: '…all theories of organization and management are based on implicit images or metaphors that lead us to see, understand, and manage organizations in distinctive yet partial ways' (Morgan, 2006: 4).

The selection of metaphor in organizational theory is thus a heuristic process, for which other influences on organization praxis may be overlooked (Cornelissen et al., 2005; Gherardi, 2000; Kupers, 2013).

A metaphor-in-use is a word/phrase that simplifies the complexity of organizational reality into simple language and imagery that becomes an accepted and shared descriptor for the way things are in organizations (Perren and Atkin, 1997). We offer an example here to summarize the relationship between a source metaphor and a metaphor-in-use that has shaped meaning for management practice. The image of employees (target domain), as cogs in the wheel of organizations (metaphor-in-use), can be traced through within-domains similarity to the metaphor of organizations as machines (source domain) (Kemp, 2013; Morgan, 2006). As concluded by Hopfl (2005), that particular metaphor for organizations and resultant imagery of workers has led to an interpretation that both employee and organization serve the means of production rather than humanity. The worker was imagined as somewhat 'neutral' and 'disembodied' through meaning transferred from that metaphor for organizations as machines (Basten, 2011: 155). We now move forward to review meaning from metaphors for the concept of gender within organizations.

Metaphors for thinking and seeing women in organizations

This study on the eight metaphors for organizations contained in *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006) is important for three reasons. The first is that the inclusion of women in organizations was largely unimagined and unimaginable at the time those original metaphors were considered. The twentieth century was an era with low rates of female economic participation and leadership (Adler, 1997) when compared with the twenty-first century, with an expectation of 'nearly 1 billion women entering the global labor force' (PWC, 2014: para. 3). An organizational reality now, and for the future, is that women inhabit these thoroughly changeable and perpetually changing organizations (Clegg and Baumeler, 2010).

Secondly, as metaphor usage in organizations impacts organizational behavior, potentially it will also affect women's status in the workforce (Barsh et al., 2008). There has been a 'significant increase in the number of women entering the workforce, and along with this, a steady movement of women into managerial positions' (Forgionne and Peeters, 1982: 101). Academic articles and economic reports offer evidence that the numbers of women in management, and at board level, has increased globally (Basten, 2011; Kupers, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2013). However, equal proportions of women and men in management, or in many professions, has not yet ensued in organizations (Lewis and Morgan, 1994).

Thirdly, the study of metaphors has been a relatively organization-centric approach, that is, the focus was on organization rather than the human beings involved in the praxis of organizations (Cornelissen et al., 2005; Cornelissen and Kafouros, 2008). An organization-centric approach was somewhat followed in *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006) because, although there were two anthropomorphic metaphors for organizations (as Brains[2] and as Organisms), the majority of the chosen metaphors were non-human (Cultures, Flux and Transformation, Instruments of Domination, Machines, Political Systems and Psychic Prisons). The metaphors for organizations are sans human and genderless as a result.

These three important reasons – inclusion of women in organizations, impact on organizational behavior and organization-centric approaches – justify the rationale for this current study on influences of metaphors for organizations, on women's equality and inequality (Morgan, 2006[3]). Furthermore, the concept of gender is hidden from view by the non-human imagery of metaphors for organization. Our proposition is that non-human and genderless metaphors for organizations affect imageries of women in organizations, and lead to influences on thinking and seeing women's equality and inequality.

Metaphors for organizations as genderless

We have interpreted the metaphors for organizations as genderless and, consequently, apply that phrase to this study. In so doing we do not imply that the opposite is gender-full, nor indeed that those metaphors for organizations should be somehow genderized. We considered that such a direction, although admittedly an important one, moved our research beyond the present study of women in organizations, and onto the path of gender theories (Acker, 1990; Zimmer, 1988).

We recognized, however, that an organization-centric approach focused thinking on organizations, and thereby somewhat neutralized the seeing of gender in organizations: 'gender-neutral theories of organizational behavior may mask rather than explain reality' (Zimmer, 1988: 71). Pertinent to that point was a study on Organizational Citizenship Behavior, where it was found that metaphors-in-use adversely affected women's equality (Kark and Waismel-Manor, 2005). An approach of gender neutrality to the study of organization theories and praxis has been questioned because it ignores gender as fundamental to all organizational processes (Acker, 1990; Zimmer, 1988). Gender[4] was not ignored as a concept in this study because we study women in organizations; nor, to a certain extent, does Morgan (2006) ignore gender.

The concept of gender was mainly discussed in *Images of Organization* (1986, 1997, 2006) with reference to three of the eight metaphors for organizations. Gender was considered a force in the metaphor of organizations as cultures, whereby organizations were revealed as 'no-woman's land' and 'a man's world' (Morgan, 2006: 131 [quotation marks in original]). Managerial strategies were differentiated through gendered images in organizations as political systems. A successful female strategy, named as 'The Daughter', was to seek out 'The Father', as a mentor in organizations, and mentorship was, in turn, deemed a male strategy (Morgan, 2006: 189). Men managed the employees like a 'patriarchal family' in organizations as psychic prisons, in which women were 'socialized to accept roles placing them in a subordinate position' (Morgan, 2006: 218). Morgan, in *Images of Organization* (1986, 1997, 2006), had probed within some metaphors to reveal the impact of gender in organizations. Our understanding from that review was that other metaphors were not as genderless as we had originally taken them to be, and this realization suggested that meaning within those metaphors for women's inequality was worthy of exploration.

Metaphors for organizations as masks of reality

New ways to see organizations through the lens of gender have emerged to explain women's continued inequality, and the contribution of metaphors to that theory-building regarding gender and organizations is now considered.

We uncovered a story of organizations that historically identified the male as the ideal and preferred worker (Boje, 2008; Ramarajan and Reid, 2013). Our impression of that identification of the worker as male was the exclusion of women from the work of organizations. Employed females were 're-presented' as the 'second sex', through the imagery of men only as workers – in a far from neutral approach to thinking and seeing women (De Beauvoir, 1949). We found the extent of that biased approach in a quotation on women as not only disempowered, but also resented in organizations: 'the Other, different as it might be (a woman, a dog), can nevertheless be familiar; might provoke distaste, but only occasionally fear' (Czarniawska and Sevón, 2008: 236). The metaphor-in-use, 'the Other', was supported through the imagery of a juxtaposition between a woman and a dog. The shock value of that extension of one image to another stimulated our thinking about a woman's status in organizations. 'The Other' (woman) was not only thought about and seen as different in comparison to the normal employee (man), but the harsh reality was revealed through imagery of a woman as a dog. We had extracted a deeper meaning about the extent of women's inequality in organizations from this metaphor.

The discourse and language prevalent in organizations became related more to the experiences of the male worker, and consequently rendered the metaphors-in-use less meaningful to women, as 'the Other' in organizations. Accordingly, the values of organizations and organization praxis were embedded and enacted in business discourse associated with a man's world (Garnsey and Rees, 1996; Koller, 2004a, b; Wilson, 1992). A female employee remarked, 'I don't feel my career is a journey, it has no meaning' (Robinson, 2010: 909 [quotation marks in original]). The metaphor for a career, as a linear journey, clashed with that particular woman's experience of career. That was a similar occurrence for other women, for whom organizations were experienced as a 'labyrinth' to be circumnavigated in the quest for leadership positions (Eagly and Carli, 2007: 63). Metaphors-in-use follow a 'widely-used, one-size fits all' approach that results in a lack of meaning for those for whom organizations are not that experience (Robinson, 2010: 909).

The words and phrases contained in metaphors-in-use were further revealed as a source of women's inequality in organizations because of the prevalence of the language of war (Koller, 2004b). That finding is of interest for this study because women were considered to be less familiar than men with the meaning of this particular language, and hence organizations were rendered unfamiliar to women (Koller, 2004a). Morgan (2006) also invoked the metaphor of war for management strategies: 'The Warrior' was assigned as an image for a male strategy that represented the fighting of corporate battles, whereas 'The Great Mother' was the image for a female managerial strategy of caring and nurturing (Morgan, 2006: 189). We considered that inequality for women was reinforced through these metaphors-in-use for management praxis, as they resulted in images of organizations that were outside women's experiences, through the unknown language of war, or indeed because motherhood was not an experience for all women.

The power of metaphor to change organizations has also been shown to weaken when the target image that results is over-extended from the source domain (Akin and Palmer, 2000; Smith et al., 2012). One example from Morgan (2006) illustrates why inequality for women remains as a result of an over-extension of the original source to the target of women in organizations. The example is extracted from a narrative about leadership practice, 'men, and the women who have entered the fray, joust and jostle for positions of dominance like stags contesting the leadership of their herd' (Morgan, 2006: 218). We interpreted that women's inequality was contained within this metaphor for organizations as instruments of domination (source) because of the way we subsequently saw and thought about leadership (target) – it was 'the fray', there was jousting and jostling, and it was a contest. Women were included as leaders in that quotation, but then women were excluded through over-extension of the metaphor because the leader was represented as male (i.e. an image of the Stag rather than an image of the female deer, the Doe). An organization-centric approach had over-extended the original source domain to the target domain, and, in so doing, formed a bridge between theory and practice that inadvertently reduced meaning for women's leadership (Alvesson, 1993). The example reveals the ease with which influences from metaphors on women's inequality increased through over-extension of source domain to the target domain. As a consequence, our interpretation was that organizational strategies to promote women were negatively affected by the over-extension of a metaphor for organizations to imagery of women in organizations.

There was evidence in our literature review that ostensibly genderless metaphors for organizations had masked the reality of inequality for women in organizations. The meaning of organizations for women was diminished, because metaphor-in-use was more familiar to a man's world of discourse. Metaphors for organizations were over-extended to the target, and inequality for women continued through that over-extension. Women's inequality was acknowledged in organization theory, yet women's equality had failed to emerge from a 'maze of metaphors' (Smith et al., 2012: 436). Metaphors to bridge theory with organization praxis had denied alternative ways to see and think about women's equality and inequality.

We do not want to criticize *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006) too harshly, given the relatively few female employees, and the low status of women in organizations at the time (Adler, 1997; Forgionne and Peeters, 1982; Koller, 2004a, b; Simpson and Lewis, 2005). We acknowledge that Morgan (2006: 421) also regarded 'gender as a major force in all aspects of organization', and had discussed the influence of gender for three of the eight metaphors for organizations. We are, however, critical from the perspective of our study that the influence of gender in organizations was not discussed in the majority of chapters of *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006). Another criticism was that these metaphors were non-human and genderless sources for other imagery of organizations. The third criticism was that these metaphors could be seen as effectively trapping organizational theorists and practitioners into ways of seeing and thinking organizations without gender, without women – and therefore meaning for equality and inequality was lost.

We believe sincerely in adages from Morgan (2006: 4 [emphasis in original]) that metaphors for organizations stimulate '*a way of thinking* and *a way of seeing*' and that they also 'lead us to see, understand, and manage organizations in distinctive yet partial ways'. As a consequence of our criticisms, and belief in those aforementioned maxims, we considered it expedient to study the influences on women's inequality and equality from metaphors for organizations that were contained in *Images of Organization* (1986, 1997, 2006). We envisaged that themes would emerge from such an exploration that could constitute findings to address inequality now, and also to progress action towards equality for women in organizations in the future.

Method

Qualitative methodology was chosen to investigate data for meaning about women's equality and inequality (Silverman, 2000). We followed the approach of Cornelissen and Kafouros (2008) and Cornelissen et al. (2005) in their studies of metaphors for theory-building about organizations. Content analysis of articles in peer-reviewed academic journals was undertaken to extract vital data about women's equality and inequality. Each article was chosen for its reference(s) to the works of Morgan (1986, 1997, 2006) and women in organizations. We chose to conduct a qualitative study in our methodological approach, deeming it appropriate, as having previously been used to explore women's inequality in organizations: content analysis of discourse (Garnsey and Rees, 1996); content analysis of literature pertaining to citizenship behavior (Kark and Waismel-Manor, 2005); and leadership journeys (Barsh et al., 2008; Eagly and Carli,

2007). Furthermore, a qualitative approach has been followed to make sense of metaphor use when applied to women in organizations: in academia (Basten, 2011); for careers (El-Sawad, 2005); and in organizational planning (Garnsey and Rees, 1996).

Data collection and sample

The sample of data sources was chosen to follow Cornelissen et al. (2005), where academic articles were selected from journals that were listed in the *Journal Citation Reports Social Science* (Thomson Reuters, 2012). Our choice of such data sources was therefore justified for this study because we collected literature that was also contained in articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals.

Firstly, we conducted a search through the database, *ProQuest*, using the search term, 'Images of Organization'. This term was chosen because we wished to study Morgan's (1986, 1997, 2006) eight metaphors in particular, and the expectation was that authors who published studies on metaphors in high-quality journals would inevitably reference that seminal work. The search was restricted to 'business', 'peer reviewed' and 'post 1986' (to coincide with the first edition, 1986) and narrowed to articles in scholarly journals. Secondly, the search included the terms 'woman' OR 'women', rather than 'female', which was considered a biological descriptor. Previous searches, for 'Images of Organization' and women's equality/inequality or gender equality/inequality, had returned too small a sample size. Thirdly, the sample size was filtered to include only articles that were contained in journals that rated an impact factor (IF) as an indicator of quality in the academic community (Thomson Reuters 2012). The resultant number of articles (70), as published in 30 high-quality journals, was deemed a large enough sample size to represent significant interpretations about the subject (Andriessen and Gubbins, 2009). There was an average IF of 1.923 per journal, with the IF ranking ranging from 7.817 (*Academy of Management Review*) to 0.300 (*Systemic Practice and Action Research*). The average number of articles per journal was two, and *Human Relations* was the journal that had published the most articles (9, 13%).

Data analysis

All data were submitted to the software *NVivo 10* for storage and retrieval, and to support the process of coding. Firstly, we conducted an analysis of within-domains similarity on text in articles that referenced the works of Morgan (1986, 1997, 2006) – see Table 1.

Metaphors for organizations (column 1). Each of the metaphors for organizations contained in *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006) was designated as a source domain. These were then classified as parent codes (Creswell, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998), referred to as nodes in the software (*NVivo 10*).

Within-domains similarity (column 2). The content in each article was searched for connection to each source domain using direct references, literal language, keywords and synonyms. These similarities were designated as sub-codes (child nodes) to the parent codes. For example, data that referred to thinking, intellect and the brain capacity of employees

Table 1. Women's equality and inequality – within-domains similarity.

Metaphors for organizations *Source domain*	Within-domains similarity	Women in organizations *Target domain* Inequality	Articles
Brains	Linear thinking	Non-linear thinkers	Groves et al. (2011)
	Brain capacity of employees	Little difference between genders	Iske and Boersma (2005)
	Ability to think	Man (male) is the human study	Nien-Tsu (2007)
Cultures	Service-oriented culture	Nurses told 'live with it'	Boje and Baskin (2011)
	Masculine culture	Non-women culture	Bradbury and Mainemelis (2001)
	Archetypes defined as cultural symbols	Virgin or whore	Cunliffe (2002)
	Freedom of choice is a cultural value	Has little professional choice	Harrison (2000)
	A canteen culture	Unseen/unheard	Johnson and Cassell (2001)
	Cultural strength aligns employees	Different treatment of female (to male)	Long and Jean (2010)
	Conservative cultures	Easy virtue	Mano and Gabriel (2006)
	Cultures of airforce	Barrier to promotion	Real and Putnam (2005)
	Organizational culture archaic patriarchal	Within/under a patriarchal culture	Simpson et al. (2014)
	Macho culture	Non-feminine culture	Trauth et al. (2009)
	Cultural creativity	Women leave	Wadsworth (2008)
Flux and transformation	Transformational leaders	Boundaryless person	Amernic et al. (2007)
	Organizational change (merger)	Women's institute-y as pejorative	Brown and Humphreys (2003)
	Transformational leaders make change	Females leaders have to 'climb over the Himalayas'	Chao (2011)
	Structural changes	Manager	Dougherty and Hardy (1996)
	Shutting down departments	Upset women	Drummond (1998)
	Change fails in risk management	Woman is raped but no one sees	Drummond (2011)
	'Way' of nature, is a continuous flux	No relevance	Kakabadse et al. (2007)
	Potential to transform a story through narrative	Heroine	King and Acklin (1995)

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Metaphors for organizations *Source domain*	Within-domains similarity	Women in organizations *Target domain* Inequality	Articles
	Narrative as a construct for change	Few women in profession	O'Connor (2000)
	Change in shift patterns	Mothers have to leave	Radnor and Boaden (2004)
	Managers change their behavior temporarily	More likely to spot inequality	Raelin (1993)
	Rethinking organizational change	Fertile (actual/potential)	Tsoukas and Chia (2002)
Instruments of domination	A male-dominated industry	Wife as catalyst for male CEO action	Browning et al. (1995)
	Directly confronted each other on the battlefield	No relevance	Check-Teck (2007)
	Dominant masculinity	Differentiated other	Collinson (2003)
	Dominance of the public sphere	In domestic sphere	Domagalski (1999)
	Male-dominated military	Occasionally the good guy	El-Sawad (2005)
	Intelligence	Studied separately	Glynn (1996)
	Predominant male assumptions	Subservient female sometimes is career woman	Goffee and Scase (1992)
	Dominant position given to males	Subservient –hero (not heroine)	Kavanagh (1994)
	Indicated a white dominance effect among the workers	Visitors to the workplace	Moore (2012)
	Pre-defined, dominant corporate culture	Have to assimilate	Pless and Maak (2004)
	Image of a powerful and dominant male figure	Non-represented	Terry (1997)
Machines	Production of desire	Betty Crocker	Ashman and Winstanley (2007)
	All sorts of mechanisms	Prevention of women doing job	Broadbent and Laughlin (1998)
	Public administration produces	Products	Fairholm (2004)
	Juxtaposition (e.g. 'org with machine')	Success through internal locus of control	Geh (2014)
	Interim management –prototype	Useful role for mothers	Inkson et al. (2001)

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Metaphors for organizations *Source domain*	Within-domains similarity	Women in organizations *Target domain* Inequality	Articles
	Western view –deterministic and mechanistic modeling	Man only as leader	Ma and Osula (2011)
	A sense of being false, mechanical	Prostitute	Mumby and Putnam (1992)
	Organizations – fusion of the person and the machine	Bionic woman	Sementelli and Abel (2007)
	Employees as products	Commodities	Walters-York (1996)
Organisms	Implication system has needs	Organization is male (not female)	Andersen (2008)
	Organization as life	Sales agent (Tupperware)	Ashforth and Humphrey (1995)
	Oppositions that are created between humans and nature	Differences to men's roles –subservient	Gladwin et al. (1995)
	Organizational decoration meets growth needs in organization as organisms	Feminine –decoration	Julie and Minahan (2006)
	Do companies retain pregnant female employees	Females dispensable	Jorgensen and Simonsen (2002)
	An active and living system	Differentiation between employees	Kerttula and Takala (2012)
	Turning into 'biological organisms'	Business owner	Low (2007)
	Emotional management	Good at emotional labor	Morris and Feldman (1996)
	Organizations nested within biological ecosystems	Men over women	Purser et al. (1995)
	Pregnant employees	Potential mothers	Randels (1998)
Political systems	Employee account politically motivated	Careerist	Alvesson and Karreman (2000)
	Political processes vital	Secretary (can be her or him)	Canning and O'Dwyer (2006)
	Crafty management of a political system	Sacred she	Conklin (2007)
	Social change through feminist work	Sees discrimination	Creed et al. (2002)

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Metaphors for organizations *Source domain*	Within-domains similarity	Women in organizations *Target domain* Inequality	Articles
	The Body Shop	Outlier	Jermier (1998)
	New political movement (Feminism)	Feminist	Llewelyn (2003)
	Political system in the Philippines	President female	Manacsa and Tan (2012)
	Organizing is political as value systems differ	Entrepreneur	Pless (2007)
	Career development, e.g. politics	Kaleidoscopic careers	Smith-Ruig (2008)
	Political astuteness	Subordinate	Smith and Zane (2004)
	English Factories Act	Included with children	Tinker (1998)
	Kafka was no feminist	Feminism = support of women	Warner M (2007)
Psychic prisons	Organizations function like psychic prisons	Daughter (employee)	Litz (2008)
	Patriarchy as a conceptual prison	Outside the network	Reid et al. (2010)

were sub-coded within the source domain of brain (Groves et al., 2011; Iske and Boersma, 2005; Nien-Tsu, 2007).

Women in organizations (column 3). Content in each article was investigated for references to woman/women as the target domain (Cornelissen and Kafouros, 2008). The exploration included direct references and other keywords for women (e.g. daughter–female–her–mother–she–sister–wife). For example, content within the source domain of brain was further explored for connection to women's thinking, intellect and brain capacity (Groves et al., 2011; Iske and Boersma, 2005; Nien-Tsu, 2007).

Articles (column 4). The appropriate reference is given to each article in this study.
    We had firstly established within-domains similarity between source and target domains, and further exploration of the results was required for sensemaking to emerge about women's equality and inequality in organizations (Weick, 1995). A deeper exploration was then undertaken to identify themes of influences on women's equality and inequality from across all the eight metaphors for organizations.
    The surrounding text from those initial results was re-examined at this second stage of analysis. We analyzed the textual content for language, images and metaphors that related to women's equality and inequality (Kark and Waismel-Manor, 2005). Discourse in the text that related to positive imagery of women in organizations was defined as evidence of women's equality. For example, evidence of a woman holding the position of a manager was considered a positive image. Alternatively, text that related to negative imagery of women in organizations was defined as evidence of women's inequality. For

example, a woman's role described as subservient was defined as negative imagery of women in organizations and became evidence for women's inequality. We also compared and contrasted results with our reading of *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 2006).

Findings

In this section, we offer evidence that the content in these articles revealed inspiration from particular metaphors (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006). Furthermore, we point out influences from these metaphors on women's equality and inequality. The section relates to the remainder of the article by leading through to a discussion on these findings – identified themes of influences on women's equality and inequality, 'trapped' by metaphors for organizations.

Four themes of influences on women's equality and inequality in organizations were identified as findings (Table 2). These themes emerged from a deeper analysis of the text in each article that had previously been investigated for within-domains analysis. The content had been re-examined for themes of women's equality and inequality that were interpreted from language, images and metaphors applied in the text. We interpreted themes from content analysis that linked positive imagery of women with equality for women in organizations, and negative imagery to women's inequality in organizations.

As a result of that content analysis, two themes were categorized as indicators of women's equality: *Alignment between values of organizations and the value of women in organizations* (Theme 1) and *Similarities between women and men in organizations* (Theme 2). Furthermore, two other themes were categorized as indicators of women's inequality: *Clash between values of organizations and the value of women in organizations* (Theme 3) and *Differences between women and men in organizations* (Theme 4).

We focus in these findings on evidence of women's inequality because that was the major finding. Allowing for the confines of manuscript length, at least one illustrative example of these emergent themes on inequality is presented for each of the metaphors for organizations (in alphabetical order).

Organizations as brains

Morgan (2006:131) had previously inspired thinking about inequality in this metaphor by saying, 'traditional forms of organization are often dominated and shaped by male value systems. For example, the emphasis on logical, linear modes of thought and action, and the drive for results'.

An article from our study evidenced that 'women tend to have higher non-linear profiles' (Groves et al., 2011: 459). In comparison with a genderless view of organizations as brains, we found that the metaphor had an influence on inequality in organizations because women were different to men in their thinking style, and that a non-linear mode of thinking clashed with linear thinking as THE way to think in organizations that were shaped by male value systems.

Organizations as cultures

The way Morgan inspired seeing and thinking about organizations as cultures was stated thus: '…patterns of belief or shared meaning, fragmented or integrated, and supported by

Table 2. Themes of influences on equality and inequality – content analysis.

Images of organizations (source domain)	Women in organizations (target domain)	Emergent themes	Equality and inequality
Brains	Non-linear thinkers. Little difference between genders. Man (male) as human being	Alignment between values of organizations and the value of women in organizations	Equality and inequality
Cultures	Nurses told 'live with it'. Non-women culture, virgin or whore. Little professional choice. Unseen/unheard. Different treatment of female (to male). Easy virtue. Barrier to promotion. Within/under a patriarchal culture. Non-feminine culture. Women vote to leave with 'agentic feet'		Equality
Flux and transformation	Boundaryless person. 'Women's institute-y' as pejorative. Female leaders have to 'climb over the Himalayas'. Manager. Upset women. Woman is raped, but no one sees. Heroine. Few women in profession. Mothers have to leave. More likely to spot inequality. Fertile (actual/potential)	Similarities between women and men in organizations	
Instruments of domination	Wife as catalyst for CEO action. Differentiated other. In domestic sphere. Occasionally the good guy. Studied separately. Subservient female sometimes is career woman. Hero (not heroine). Visitors to the workplace. Have to assimilate. Non-representation of women		Inequality
Machines	Betty Crocker. Prevention of women doing job. Products. Success through internal locus of control. Useful role for mothers. Man only as leader. Prostitute. Bionic woman. Commodities	Differences between women and men in organizations	
Organisms	Organization is male (not female). Sales agent for 'Tupperware'. Differences to men's roles – subservient. Feminine – decoration. Females dispensable. Differentiation between employees. Business owner. Good at emotional labor. Men over women. Potential mothers		
Political systems	Careerist. Secretary (can be her or him). 'Sacred she'. Sees discrimination. Outlier. Feminist. President female. Entrepreneur. Kaleidoscopic careers. Subordinate. Included in law with children. Feminism = support of women	Clash between values of organizations and the value of women in organizations	
Psychic prisons	Daughter (employee). Outside the network		

various operating norms and rituals can exert a decisive influence on the overall ability of the organization to deal with the challenges that it faces' (Morgan, 2006: 125).

We found a challenge for organizational thinking and seeing women's inequality, because 'social reality' was created in the norms for organizations (Morgan, 2006: 115). A woman was deemed more blameworthy for an office romance than her male colleague through a descriptive image of her as a 'woman of easy virtue' (Mano and Gabriel, 2006: 20). The negative imagery evidenced inequality for the woman, as there was no corresponding image for the man in that illicit affair. Shared meaning for those working within the organizational culture was that women's behavior, in and outside the workplace, was sanctioned differently to that of men. As a consequence, women were vilified to a greater extent than men in a clash with a cultural norm.

Organizations as flux and transformation

This metaphor was apparently genderless as it inspired seeing organizations as 'unfolding logics of change' (Morgan, 2006: 241). However, change in the organization had a disparate effect on women because, as mothers and workers, they were forced to leave employment at a higher rate than men when new timings were introduced to a shift system (Radnor and Boaden, 2004). Women had to leave the organization because their value as mothers clashed with their value as workers in organizations as the new timings meant they could not attend to childcare duties, and this organizational change did not affect men to the same extent. We found that the authors had revealed women's inequality in organizations through the use of language of change that was inspired by this metaphor for organizations.

Organizations as instruments of domination

To a great extent domination has inspired argument for seeing and thinking women's inequality in organizations. The meaning of the influence on inequality for women was found in articles in this study through connection of the word 'domination' to the word 'male': predominant male assumptions (Goffee and Scase, 1992); a dominant male figure (Terry, 1997); and a male-dominated industry (Browning et al., 1995). Women had to assimilate to survive a pre-defined organization that was presumed as male-dominated (Pless and Maak, 2004). Particular industries – the Air Force, Navy and the Police – continued work practices as instruments of domination that reinforced inequality, 'reproduces a dominant masculinity', where 'women and gay men serve as the differentiated others' (Collinson, 2003: 535).

In addition, we discovered further influence on women's inequality. For instance, women were considered as people in the 'domestic' sphere, and yet organization was in the 'public' sphere (Domagalski, 1999) – causing a differentiation between the way women and men were valued in organizations. Reading of Morgan (2006: 189 [quotation marks in original]) revealed a strategy of 'The First Lady' that was adopted by many 'corporate wives' who were 'content to exercise power behind the throne'. Evidence of this power was found in the study via the wife of a Chief Executive Officer who was a catalyst for her husband to improve women's status in his male-dominated industry

(Browning et al., 1995). We chose to interpret this finding as evidence of inequality because the authors had revealed that women were differentiated from men in being perceived as existing in the domestic sphere, and could only exercise their power through the enablement of a male as a consequence.

Organizations as machines

No woman, or man, exists in organizations as a machine, although thinking about organizations was inspired by this thoroughly non-human metaphor: '…we talk about organizations as if they were machines, and as a consequence we tend to expect them to operate as machines: in a routinized, efficient, reliable, and predictable way' (Morgan, 2006: 13).

We found that inequality for women was influenced by the machine metaphor in an article about female flight attendants: '…like prostitutes, flight attendants often estrange themselves from their work as a defense against being swallowed by it, only to suffer from a sense of being false, mechanical, no longer a whole integrated self' (Mumby and Putnam, 1992: 472).

These female flight attendants saw the routine, efficiency, reliability and predictability of organizations, and subsequently avoided a clash with that organizational approach by becoming mechanical (machine-like). Consequently, inequality had been influenced by the metaphor of organizations as machines because the result was an estrangement for women from their work. The language used by the authors that described women as false and mechanical was influenced from the source of the metaphor of organizations as machines, and it helped us to see inequality (Mumby and Putnam, 1992). We can appreciate the negative imagery of women as prostitutes because it revealed and reinforced the concept of women's inequality in organizations.

Organizations as organisms

Morgan (2006: 59) inspired thinking and seeing organizations as organisms through the lens of a natural world with plentiful resources: '…organizations, like organisms in nature, depend for survival on their ability to acquire an adequate supply of the resources necessary to sustain existence'.

We discovered influences on women's inequality in this metaphor because of biological imagery of a woman as an organism presented in articles. Women were seen as either mothers now, or they were thought of as potential mothers for the future (Jorgensen and Simonsen, 2002; Low, 2007; Purser et al., 1995; Randels, 1998). All women were then imagined to be a finite organizational resource through this lens of fertility. The influence on women's inequality, from this way of seeing organizations, was exampled particularly in one article, as all women were assumed to be potentially fertile, and were thereby banned from working in an area harmful to that condition (Randels, 1998). We found a clash with the values of organizations because of the assumption that all women will ultimately become an unavailable resource because of their biological state.

Organizations as political systems

We interpreted that it was the political agenda of feminism that was connected to the metaphor of organizations as political systems. Feminism was a differentiation between women and men because it seemingly only affected women: 'this concept allowed women to assess their experience from a new perspective, it enabled them to act differently' (Llewelyn, 2003: 672). The company, *The Body Shop*, was founded by a female entrepreneur and was categorized as an 'outlier' organization because it was founded on feminist ideals to conduct business in 'radically different ways' (Jermier, 1998: 250; also see Pless, 2007). Morgan (2006: 132 [quotation marks in original]) had inspired thinking about the positive values of feminine principles (not feminism) through citing the entrepreneur, Anita Roddick: 'principles of caring, making intuitive decisions, not getting hung up on hierarchy or all those dreadfully boring business-school management ideas'. Inequality for women was found because women and men were seen as different through the division between feminine and masculine principles and because feminism was equated with women only. We also interpreted this as inequality for women because of the clash between organizational values, considered to be male values, and the value of women in organizations.

Organizations as psychic prisons

According to Morgan (2006: 207), 'organizations are ultimately created and sustained by conscious and unconscious processes, with the notion that people can actually become imprisoned in or confined by the images'.

The metaphor of organizations as psychic prisons inspired imagery of the patriarchal prison that influenced women's inequality. An organization in the information systems industry was represented in the study as a prison of patriarchy, in which women 'lack access to decision makers' in formal and informal networks of power (Reid et al., 2010: 528). Networks of power were valued for improved status in organizations, and hence we had found an influence on women's inequality, for women were different to men in organizations because of the lack of access to such networks.

We had applied within-domains-similarity analysis and content analysis to data that were contained in articles that referenced *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006). Our investigation had identified four themes of influences on equality and inequality for women in organizations from these eight metaphors for organizations. We now discuss the significance of this study for women's equality and inequality in twenty-first century organizations.

Discussion

This discussion addresses the article's purpose to explore influences on women's equality and inequality from those metaphors contained in *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006). The first edition of *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986), a second edition (Morgan, 1997), and an updated edition (2006) have guided meaning for concepts

and phenomena in organizations for 30 years. Those eight metaphors were chosen in the twentieth century, and have been significant as a way of thinking and seeing organizations since then. We considered that the phenomenon of gender, as a potential organizational issue, was raised in these works, but that women's equality and inequality was taken into account mainly with reference to only three of those eight metaphors (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006). Unsurprisingly, *Images of Organization* (1986, 1997, 2006) did not fully take into account women in organizations because they were relatively few in number and of no significant status at the time (Adler, 1997; Forgionne and Peeters, 1982; Koller, 2004a, b; Simpson and Lewis, 2005).

We reviewed the literature on metaphors through an organization-centric approach, and following this our review turned to the literature on metaphors and imagery of women in organizations. We perceived those metaphors as genderless and as a mask of reality for thinking and seeing women in organizations. The eight metaphors for organizations were then explored in this study of 70 articles that referenced *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006). Firstly, these metaphors were designated as source domains for analysis of within-domains similarity to women in organizations (target domain). We then applied content analysis in a second stage of investigation to enable us to closely explore the surrounding content of results for each metaphor. We also compared and contrasted findings with our reading of Morgan (2006). Four themes of influences on equality and inequality for women in organizations were identified across these metaphors. Our literature review, analysis and findings have allowed us to more deeply think and see influences for equality and inequality from metaphors for organizations on women in organizations.

The metaphors contained in Morgan's (1986, 1997, 2006) seminal work have offered ways of thinking and seeing organizations for 30 years. Metaphors for organizations have become so accepted that we concluded that meaning beyond them was overlooked (Andriessen and Gubbins, 2009). Morgan said that,

> …traditional management perspectives often lock us into fixed frameworks. They offer a way of seeing that in effect says, 'This is THE WAY to see.' As a result, we often get trapped by the metaphors on which they are based. (Morgan, 2006: 364 [capitals and quotation marks in original])

Influences from these metaphors had not previously been questioned to a great extent because they had become THE way to see organizations without gender. The effectiveness of these metaphors as communicative devices was thereby lost because of failure to transform meaning about women's equality and inequality as organizational phenomena (Kupers, 2013).

From our viewpoint, meaning from metaphors for equality and inequality of women in organizations was particularly missing. We concluded that those eight metaphors for organizations that were studied have, somewhat, failed to open up exploration of other ways to think and see organizations – in this case, women's equality and inequality. Instead, we acknowledged that these original metaphors now, in turn, have seemingly locked theorists and practitioners into 'fixed frameworks', which have consequently caused particular ways to see and think about women in organizations. As a result, the issues of women's equality and inequality have become 'trapped by the metaphors on which they are based' (Morgan, 2006: 364).

The findings inspired us to consider methods to release ways of thinking and seeing women's inequality and equality in organizations. We considered it necessary to think and see imagery of women in the twenty-first-century workplace in new ways, and therefore we have identified two novel images for organizations to meet that need. Management thinking is an evolving process for which new metaphors are required for a generative impact on organizational behavior (Cornelissen and Kafouros, 2008; Iske and Boersma, 2005; Wren and Bedeian, 2009). We have called these 'images of women in organization', to follow the title of Morgan's works (1986, 1997, 2006), and further research may develop these new images into robust metaphors for organizations. We emphasize urgency to address women's equality and inequality by the introduction of new images for organizations to complement the original eight metaphors (Morgan, 2006).

Organizations as femicide and justice

We introduce the image of organizations as femicide *to see inequality* for women in organizations in a new way (Morgan, 2006 [emphasis added]). The alarming image of femicide was deliberately chosen to think about and to 'imaginize' the amelioration of women's inequality in contemporary organizations (Morgan, 2006: 365). That image of the murder of women, in and by organizations, was chosen as a distasteful image, and follows the shocking metaphor for women's experience of work as the '*harrowing of hell*', in which a woman's identity is 'disaggregated on entry to work' (Hopfl, 2005: 179 [emphasis in original]). That disaggregation of identity has excluded women from organizations through 'reifying business as a male arena' (Koller, 2004a: 173), and that exclusion has, metaphorically, contributed to the murder of women in organizations.

We introduce organizations as justice as an image *to think equality* for women in a new way (Morgan, 2006 [emphasis added]). This novel image of organizations as justice was selected for its generative impact to stimulate action towards women's equality in organizations (Akin and Palmer, 2000; Cornelissen and Kafouros, 2008). There were instances of positive images for women within the maze of metaphors found, but there will only be justice in organizations when there is equality (Smith et al., 2012). There has already been a call for metaphors to invite action against injustice because 'too much attention is given to theorization and not enough to action' (Hopfl, 2005: 179). Out of our study comes the image of organizations as justice in a call for action to 'solicit inquiry on egalitarian values' (Raelin, 1993: 582). This image of organizations as justice captures the ideal of women's equality in organizations to support the identification of further metaphors by theorists and practitioners from this source domain.

We considered that the metaphors contained in *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006) were genderless because of an organization-centric approach (Andriessen and Gubbins, 2009; Cornelissen and Kafouros, 2008; Cornelissen et al., 2005). In contrast, our chosen images of organizations, as femicide and justice, move towards a women-centric approach for metaphors. Organizations as femicide and justice were chosen to address women's inequality and equality in a conscious process of image selection because both source and target domains relate to women. Equality and inequality of women in organizations has now become the center of attention in these images to inspire the selection of further metaphors for informed sensemaking about women's equality and inequality in organizations (Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995).

This discussion has gone beyond *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006) to address the gap in knowledge that still remained after the said metaphors for organizations were developed – metaphors that have, until now, influenced women's equality and inequality. We proposed two new images for organizations, as femicide and as justice, as a result of identifying four emergent themes for women's equality and inequality in this study. The research that was conducted will, it is hoped, open up previously locked-in ways '*of thinking*' and '*of seeing*' women in organizations to garner new meaning about equality and inequality for the future (Morgan, 2006: 4 [emphasis in original]).

Limitations

The author recognized that a limitation of this study was that she 'read organization', itself a metaphorical act, through the lens of women's equality and inequality (Morgan, 2006: 418). That potential female bias in interpretation was ameliorated somewhat by a male linguistic expert, who collegially discussed the content, and contributed insight in analysis of the articles. The study was further limited by a relatively small selection of articles, from high-quality academic journals, that met the specific criteria to analyze as a sample. It is recommended that this study be extended, by female and male academicians, to include a larger sample of articles than the eight metaphors for organizations that comprised this study.

Conclusion

Inquiry into women's equality and inequality was conducted through within-domains analysis and content analysis of text from 70 articles published in 30 leading academic journals. These analyses offered evidence of equality and inequality for women influenced by those original metaphors for organizations contained in *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986, 1997, 2006). Four emergent themes were identified as findings, and two new images for organizations were introduced. We considered that Morgan (1986, 1997, 2006) had influenced equality and inequality in organizations because imagery of women, as found in the analyzed articles, was inspired by those metaphors for organizations. We somewhat caution the use of negative imagery for women in organizational literature because those images reveal, but also reinforce, inequality in organizations. The significance of these study findings is that influences from those eight metaphors have *trapped* ways of seeing and thinking women's equality and inequality.

Metaphors guide thinking to stimulate understanding about the unknown in organizations, and similarly, in this study, eight metaphors for organizations have guided thinking and stimulated understanding about women's equality and inequality. This research evidenced that women's inequality and equality continue as organizational phenomena because theorists and practitioners rely on those original eight metaphors as sources for targeting such phenomena. We chose two novel images – organizations as femicide and justice – to *release* new ways of thinking and seeing women's equality and inequality. These new images were chosen through a process of deliberate identification, respectful selection and appropriate application (Cornelissen and Kafouros, 2008). As such, this

study has attempted to remain faithful to the premise that 'organization is really a creative process of *imaginization*. We organize as we imaginize, and it is always possible to imaginize in new ways' (Morgan, 2006: 365).

Our study has theoretical and practical applications, and has shed illumination on the meaning that metaphors for organizations hold, as sources for women's equality and inequality. The study revealed a great deal about women in organizations, and much still remains un-thought and unseen about women's equality and inequality. The direction for further study is to go beyond current metaphors for organizations towards a future replete with images that both women and men equally can work by (Kupers, 2013; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Morgan, 2006).

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Notes

1. The work is entitled *Images of Organization*, and we follow Morgan (1986: 11) by referring to the original eight metaphors as metaphors for organizations (e.g. organizations as machines).
2. An initial capital letter is used in first naming the metaphors, and in tables, following the style of *Images of Organization* (1986, 1997, 2006). Subsequently, lower-case letters are used for each metaphor in this article.
3. From this point in the article, having previously stated the metaphors for organizations that are a focus in this study, we reference those metaphors as such. Quotations from *Images of Organization* are from Morgan (2006).
4. The issues of equality/inequality for men and the social construction of feminine/masculine behavior are outside the remit of this study.

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