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HR Diversity Management:
A Feminist Interpretation of Gender Diversity

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Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to illustrate aspects of diversity management which may foster a different theoretical framing and understanding of it. More specifically, it aims at integrating feminist political philosophy concerns in the HR academic debate about gender diversity management. This interdisciplinary approach hopes to give gender diversity management a renewed strength arguing for the social role it may have contributing to women empowerment. The historical evolution of the management of people at work shows how diversity management is naturally embedded in HRM and how it represents its contemporary natural evolution due to contextual factors. Therefore, organizations should consider it an integral part of effective HRM, not an optional one. Moreover, diversity management studies can be traced back to both classical academic approaches to HRM, the micro/functional and the macro/strategic approach.

The biggest contributions that feminist political philosophy can make to the gender diversity management debate are: first, it is able to shed light on the principles (equality, difference, inclusion) behind policies and practices, facilitating coherence and a deeper understanding. Second, it can enlarge with deeper analyses the debate on some of the mechanisms that organizational studies identify as the causes of women's disadvantage in employment, which are mainly motherhood, socialization, national and organizational culture, and homophily, but also women's different preferences and psychological attributes, stereotypes, and the power of self-fulling expectations. Third, it suggests that gender diversity management may not only have an impact on individuals and on the organization, but on society too, eventually spurring social change.

Feminist political philosophy aims at identifying what a good and just society is, towards which diversity management, interpreted as a Corporate Social Responsibility strategy, can contribute. To be that effective, diversity management shall be understood as only concerned with those diversities that may lead to discrimination, not as the mean to extract the full potential of every employee, because everyone is diverse, as this would impoverish its meaning and effectiveness. Second, affirmative action, - reconceptualized as based on the principle of difference rather than equality - shall not be considered as different from gender diversity management, but as a first, integral step of it which aims at granting representation. Moreover, the issues diversity management needs to fight today – some of which affect all diversity categories creating, despite the differences, common experiences of being a minority - are ambiguous microaggressions and subtle systematic discrimination, therefore, diversity training in the form of awareness training and changes to organizational culture are needed. Ultimately, diversity management has to be understood as incorporating all three principles of anti-discrimination: equality, difference and inclusion. In light of

feminist political philosophy, gender diversity management's final aim is to bring women in positions where they can participate in the definition of cultural, economic, social and political institutions. Only once institutions mirror the "particular situation" of women too, institutional influence on individuals and on choices can be considered neutral, thus render individual identities and choices truly free.

The thesis is organized into four main chapters followed by conclusive remarks.

The first chapter aims at providing a solid theoretical and analytical framework to diversity management as an HRM practice. Therefore, it starts with an attempt to define HRM and to identify which practices it entails, in consideration of the lack of academic consensus on a clear-cut, neutral definition. This is integrated with an historical approach. The two assumptions on the historical emergence of HRM are presented together with the evolution of the management of people at work starting from the industrial revolution in the late-eighteenth century. It will be underlined how specific legal, political and social contexts, and contingent contextual forces have shaped, and still shape, the management of people at work. HRM evolved when individuals became a central asset for the production system and diversity management is gaining momentum due to the changes in the composition of the workforce and the emergence of new, varied individual identities. Academic research on HRM will then be looked at more specifically, presenting its two dominant approaches. The macro/strategic approach investigates the impact of HR practices on the organization and is rooted in the Resource-based view on competitive advantage. It entails concerns about what "strategic" HRM is and whether there are HRM best practices or they need to "fit" with each other, with the overall organizational strategy and with external factors (best practice vs. best fit). The micro/functional approach investigates the impact of single HRM practices on individuals, rather than on the organization. Due to the immense literature in this framework, only the main research topics, supported by an exemplary study to better illustrate the central issues, will be outlined, giving stronger emphasis to research questions that are relevant for the overall argumentation. So far, both approaches have not been able to answer the "black box" dilemma satisfactorily. The question is "which is the link between people management and organisational performance?". Several different answers are presented, some of which are more alternative then others, including considerations drawn from new institutionalism and isomorphisim in the debate. However, the majority of explanations, regardless of their difference, tend to recognize the relevance of the behavioural variable: employees' effort and commitment.

The second chapter provides a comprehensive representation of HR diversity management. First, the concept of "diversity" is explored, mainly drawing on Gardenswartz and Rowe's *Four Layers of*

Diversity. "Diversity management" is defined, presenting also specific models such as the one suggested by Dass and Parker (1996) and Kossek and Lobel (1996), but ultimately, inspired by the definitions proposed by other authors, a threefold definition, which aims at encompassing all the fundamental aspects of diversity management, is suggested. The complex relationship between diversity, identity and social groups is framed referring also to sociological studies on homophily and social identity. Later, the mechanisms which make diversity management needed, that is, discrimination, harassment, prejudice, stereotypes and mental bias, are presented, as well as the two rationales explaining why organizations may want to invest in diversity management: the *social justice case* and the *business case*. The first argues that diversity management is needed because of a moral obligation, the latter argues that it is a matter of efficiency. On the other side, it will be hinted to the reasons why diversity and diversity management may actually not be desirable. Further on, five diversity dimensions are going to be explored in detail: cultural and ethnic diversity, age diversity, ability diversity, and sexual orientation diversity. For each of them, following will be outlined: the most salient aspects, anti-discrimination legislation in the U.S. and in the European Union, the forms discrimination may take, the business case arguing for its relevance, and the most effective diversity management practices. It will become clear that, despite the substantial differences between social groups, some discriminatory mechanisms and some difficulties, as well as some diversity management practices fighting them, are common to all diversity dimensions.

In that light, the third chapter is an in-depth analysis of gender diversity. The problems related to different HR practices that women progressively face over their careers are analysed and diversity management practices to potentially overcome them are suggested. Where available, recent statistical data will be provided to assess the scope of the phenomenon today. First, it will be looked at the barriers women face in recruitment and selection with a special focus on occupational segregation. A specific look will be given to women's little representation in STEM fields. Then the disadvantages in professional development, specifically in on-the-job training, networking, and mentoring, will be illustrated. The section on performance appraisal and career entails an analysis of the glass ceiling keeping women away from executive and board positions, as well as a discussion on gender quotas, which will be supported, despite the reasonable arguments against. The main issue discussed in the framework of Pay and Benefits is the gender pay gap as well as, more specifically, the motherhood pay gap. Lastly, the complex relationship between women, employees' voice and industrial relations, and diversity management will be illustrated. The five overarching explanations for women's disadvantaged condition in employment are motherhood, socialization, homophily, national and organizational culture. Other recurring topics are women's different preferences and psychological attributes, descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes, and the power of expectations resulting in self-

fulfilling assumptions about women and paid employment. In particular, the *human capital theory* and the *statistical discrimination theory*, represent an economic-rational explanation why women are not equal to men in matters of employment.

The fourth and last chapter represents the core, giving the title to this thesis. The idea of interpreting diversity management as a CSR strategy to spur social change and more specifically feminist objectives, is explained, including a presentation of the main approach to CSR and its business case. The second section entails an analysis of parallels between feminist political philosophy and organizational studies. In the first place it will be shown how anti-discrimination law is based on the same principles of liberal feminism. Second, a variety of aspects related to second-wave feminism, or more specifically to the equality versus difference debate, will be analysed. If gender *equality* is pursued, to what shall women be equal? This question initiates the debate concerning gendered standards and (leadership) roles within organizations which ask women to conform to a male paradigm. If, on the other side, women are different from men, *how* do they differ? This question raises the issue of defining women as a category which concerns diversity management, too, as it needs to take differences *between* and *within* social groups into account. The following section suggest a reframing of the controversial affirmative action policies. Rather than anchoring affirmative action to equality, as it is generally considered the operative arm of liberal anti-discrimination legislation, it will be argued that a foundation on the difference principle is more useful. However, the last section will propose diversity management, based on the principle of inclusion, as a wide-ranging approach to managing minorities in the workplace and overcome the equality-difference dichotomy. Moreover, a section will be dedicated to the debated issue of women's preferences and choices being at the root of their disadvantage in employment. On this matter, contributions coming from third-wave feminism, named also *choice*-feminism, and from the criticisms raised to it, will be integrated in the debate. In conclusion, the main argument that diversity management, if implement on a large scale, can foster social change and contribute to women empowerment in the light of feminist political philosophy's concerns, will be explained. To wrap up the discussions, the main conclusions and suggestions for future research will be presented.

I.   An analytical framework

1.   The historical evolution of Human Resource Management – Individuals becoming an asset

A definition of "Human Resource Management" (HRM)

Today, the term "Human Resource Management" (HRM) has become a very general label for the management of work and the management of people who undertake this work (Beardwell 2017, 5). Boxall and Purcell (2011:1) state: *"HRM refers to all those activities associated with the management of work and people in organizations"*. This unspecific and generalized use of the term results from a lack of consensus among scholars about a clear-cut and neutral definition that is free from specific theoretical nuances. For instance, Storey (1995:5) defines HRM as "*a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce, using an integrated array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques*" (Storey 1995 as cited in Grugulis 2017). However, this definition is biased, it gives a strategic relevance of HRM for granted, it highlights the importance of commitment signalling a support to "High Commitment Work Systems", and it suggests the relevance of "fit" talking about "integrated" techniques, assumptions that are not necessarily shared, as it will be demonstrated in the following. Nevertheless, it is true that many authors have defined HRM drawing a line between HRM and former, more traditional, personnel management stating that the first is strategic, while the latter is not (Grugulis 2017, Beardwell 2017). According to Grugulis (2017) however, this distinction has no empirical validation, as personnel managers have always emphasised their contribution to the business linking employment practices to strategy. This lack of a definition may be mitigated describing HRM through the practices it entails, however, also this is not free from dissent. Often HRM policies and practices deal with: recruitment, selection, learning and development, reward, communication and employee involvement, teamwork, and performance management (Beardwell 2017).

The historical origin of HRM

To better define and understand HRM also an empirical and historical approach is need. This looks at HRM as those policies and practices developed at a certain point in time in a certain business environment. Many authors argue that HRM can be traced back to welfare capitalist employers in the US during the 1930s. Being strongly averse to unions and collective bargaining, these employers

introduced practices to avoid any propensity to unionize: efficiency wages, healthcare coverage, pension plans and layoff pay. Additionally, they tried to secure employee commitment through strong, centralized corporate cultures and long-term employment contracts. It is also argued that they pioneered practices which today represent typical examples of HRM such as performance-related pay, profit-sharing schemes and team working (Beardwell 2017). Others however, believe that HRM has more recent roots. According to Gospel (2009) the advent of HRM can be traced back in the 1970s when some big multinationals in the sectors of electrical goods, food and drinks, and household and personal consumer products, especially in the UK and the US (e.g. P&G and Unilever), started to introduce policies and practices that were later labelled as "Human Resource Management". These firms, which were grown by mergers and acquisition had to develop new methods to manage their new environment, which was characterized by growing product market competition and by high diversification, both in terms of product lines and in terms of labour force, which became increasingly heterogeneous concerning interests, academic background, and skills. In broad terms, people management witnessed a shift from a centralized and paternalistic approach, as well as centralized bargaining, to more decentralized, flexible, and non-unionized policies. Companies started to be reorganized in multidivisional form with a focus on team working, job flexibility and pay for skills and performance (Gospel 2009).

Regardless of the exact beginning of HRM, in the 1930s or in the 1970s, there is agreement on the fact that it gained recognition and started to spread only after the 1980s. The recession of 1980-82, the declining influence of unions and the rise of the Japanese economy becoming a strong competitor, led to discussions concerning the productivity of Western workers and the declining rate of innovation in US industries. Ultimately this resulted in the desire to introduce practices to create an organizational environment free from conflict in which employers and employees share the same goal of success. In this perspective, the distinction between traditional work management and HRM is that the latter aims at achieving competitive advantage by creating an organisational climate in which workers are highly motivated and committed to cooperation with management in the achievement of business goals. Another crucial environmental element for the spread of HRM has been the rise of the service sector and of "high tech" industries which put human capital rather than industrial capital at the centre of the production system (Beardwell 2017).

Further back in time: the historical evolution of the management of work and people

Even though there is no consensus on what exactly Human Resource Management entails or when it originated and why, it is clear that the issue of managing people at work arose way back in time,

already with the emergence of contemporary economy through the industrial revolution in the late-eighteenth century. The shift of production from households and small workshops to factories led necessarily to a change in the way work was conceived and organised. The factory system rose thanks to technological innovations which enabled it, but it then expanded rapidly because it allowed employers to better control the labour force: when putting out work to households and small workshops, the "employer" paid its workers by piece-work but had very little control over the quality of production and the wage-effort relationship. In these very early stages, management of labour was a mixture of both hard, direct control, and a more paternalistic and personal supervision. In mid-nineteenth century, the bureaucratic management system emerged in the railway industry, becoming the second big innovation in the management of work. Bureaucratic systems of employment included more systematic recruitment, the creation of job and promotion hierarchies and related pay systems based on fixed rates of pay, and more bureaucratic rather than paternalistic welfare arrangements, such as housing, basic sick care and pensions. Through this system, the railways were among the first sectors to develop hierarchies of managerial staff. Bureaucratic management spread to other sectors later on, especially in the utilities. The next big leap forward was represented by the development of the so called "personnel management" in the framework of the second industrial revolution from the late nineteenth century, where the advent and then widespread of electricity changed the production system dramatically, giving vigour to sectors such as steel and chemicals and later to electrical products and automobiles. In these industries, large firms emerged which had the need to recruit more systematically, to train on the job rather than through apprenticeship, to develop employment hierarchies and welfare arrangements. The main concerns in this framework were however related to the effort put by workers in their duties and to the development of skill-displacing technologies which would allow unskilled of semi-skilled workers, to use the machinery on what then became the assembly line. These issues led to the development of the so called "systematic" or "scientific" management by F.W. Taylor in "The Principles of Scientific Management" (1911) (Gospel 2009).

This work is considered today a pioneer of HRM, as it already investigated to a certain degree, the relation between human work and firm performance. Taylor argues that management is a true science with clearly defined laws, rules, and principles aiming at securing "maximum prosperity" both to the employer and to the employees, which in turn is achieved when workers reach their "highest state of efficiency, that is, when [they are] turning out the largest daily output". To reach this objective Taylor suggests the "scientific management" approach. The first step is for management to carry out an accurate study of time and motion. All the movements needed to carry out a specific element of work have to be analysed and measured with a stop-watch. This analysis allows to identify the quickest and best movements as well as the real amount of a day's work. The second step is to select workers

capable of delivering the quantity of output required. Afterwards, the selected workers have to be trained in the new work method. Taylor underlines particularly the importance of training and development, every production plant needs to have teachers to show the workers exactly how the work can best be done, to "guide, help and encourage" them. Moreover, to succeed, cooperation between workers and management is essential. The management has to take over much of the responsibility about the outcome, usually left to the workers, it has to plan in advance the work of every worker to give him a clear task that he has to achieve. In the end, everyone gains from scientific management: employers produce more output at a lower labour cost, employees have higher wages and consequently higher living standard, shorter working hours, and a better atmosphere at work thanks to the more cooperative relations with the management. Ultimately, consumers are the ones who benefit the most from increased productivity, as this leads to lower prices and therefore to access to more products and in turn to prosperity and reduction of poverty (Taylor 1911).

The industrial production system Taylor describes is what we consider today mass production, characterized, as shown, by narrowly defined manual tasks requiring little skills, consequently high turnover and absenteeism, low motivation counterbalanced by close monitoring and efficiency wages. Today, this system has been replaced by "flexible production" in many industries, for instance in the automotive sector. Flexible production gives workers a more central role. Being their task not as narrow, they are required to have a conception of the whole production system to be able to solve problems and comply with more responsibilities, concerning for instance quality inspection and equipment maintenance. This new production system requires skilled, committed and flexible workers as they need to be able to resolve complex tasks, cover higher responsibilities without supervision, and perform different tasks within job rotation. To achieve this, Human Resource Management becomes crucial and acquires a central role to implement business strategies (Macduffie 1995). This circumstance shows that even though HRM may have gained particular importance with the rise of the service sector, it is relevant across industries, even those that are often associated with a traditional factory or assembly line system.

From the time HRM gained relevance in the 1980s across different production systems and in many industries and sectors, much has changed and has developed further. In recent years, we have experienced a set of new policies and practices in HRM. There is an increased reliance on self-investment in training and development, greater mobility, more flexible careers and project working, especially for higher-level employees, and the spread of share- and stock-based pay. However, some industries, for instance the telephone call centres, still have the features of mass production and scientific management. Jobs are narrowly defined without scope for training and development, and are carried out by part-time workers, often young, female, and immigrant workers, to facilitate

flexible scheduling. Nevertheless, in comparison to the beginning of the twentieth century, information and communication technology allows an exact synchronization of production and work, varied identities among workers prevent solidarity and opposition to management, and more sophisticated management systems seem to prevent growing union membership (Gospel 2009).

Forces shaping the management of people at work

After having reported how work management practices have changed over time, from the advent of the industrial revolution to the spread of HRM in the 1980s, it is impossible not to investigate what determines changes of the management of people at work, to understand what we can expect today from HRM. Considering their historical evolution, it is clear that work practices are a result of several external contextual forces. As already hinted to, the biggest changes happened in concurrence with big technological advancements. Additionally, the business and market environment has always created evolving pressures on the production side. For our further discussion, more than product market and financial market changes, variations in the labour market are particularly relevant. Some changes, such as demographic change, the balance between labour supply and demand, and the changing composition of the labour force, may have a long-term impact on many aspects of the work-related issues. In conclusion, as it will be discussed also further on, management practices are strongly contingent to a specific legal, political, and social context. Different countries, for instance, have very different approaches about the public role in industry and business: the US, at one end of the spectrum have a "voluntarist" approach, while coordinated economies, such as Germany, Japan and France, are at the opposite side of the spectrum with their tradition of state intervention. In terms of social environment having an impact on the management of work, women and children acquiring a different position, the increased awareness about human rights, and the new identities in terms of age, sexual orientation and disability, cannot be ignored, being increasingly present in social discourse. (Gospel 2009). Especially this last social trend, as well as the increased variety in the labour force, with women representing now a considerable percentage, has led to the rise of HRM "diversity management".

2. **The role of human resource practices in the Human Resource Management approach**

Since the 1980s, when HRM became a widespread practice, academic studies of HRM have developed into two subfields, a macro or strategic approach and a micro or functional approach. The

main difference between the two research fields is that macro/strategic studies investigate the impact of HRM practices on the organization, taking the firm as the level of analysis, while micro/functional studies investigate the impact of single HR practices on individuals. However, this distinction is not necessarily clear cut. Micro research is often conducted on small groups of individuals after having demonstrated some degree of homogeneity among them, which justifies their being treated as one entity. On the other side, some macro research is carried out on establishments rather than on whole organizations (Wright and Boswell 2002). In the macro/strategic research field, the main issues are: how to understand "strategy" and what is "strategic HRM", and are there best practices or is "fit" crucial for HRM practices to be strategic? The micro/functional stream on the other side entails an immense variety of studies on the effect of HR practices in isolation on individuals' performance within the framework of many HRM areas of concern, mainly within selection and recruitment, training and development, compensation and benefits and work design. As for organisational performance, there is hardly a definition of individual performance. Therefore, micro HRM studies interpret individual performance in disparate ways according to their specific topic of study. It is often understood as: higher productivity, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, supervisors' performance ratings, team effectiveness, organizational citizenship/extra-role behaviour and lower absenteeism and voluntary turnover.

a. <u>The Macro/Strategic approach to Human Resource Practices</u>

<u>What is strategy and "strategic" HRM?</u>

As hinted to, a conspicuous field of research in Human Resource Management is the one related to strategic HRM practices. However, the object of investigation has not always been the same, as, again, there is no consensus on what "strategic" exactly means and implies. Nevertheless, in the quest of understanding strategy, the starting point is often Porter (1996), probably the main scholar on corporate strategy. He views strategy as market positioning in relation to competitors. Strategic positioning is performing different activities from rivals or performing similar activities in different ways. Consequently, the strategic options are three: cost leadership, which means offering the same product at a lower price, differentiation, which entails offering a different product either in terms of high quality or distinctiveness of the good, and focus, which means focusing on serving a specific niche of customers (Porter 1996). Since in this traditional view of strategy, HRM practitioners are reduced to mere implementers of strategies developed upstream, and therefore the relevance of HRM is limited, another paradigm dominates the debate around strategy and HRM practices, the Resource-

based view (Grugulis 2017). The Resource-based view, developed by Barney (1991), argues that organizations' internal resources and capabilities are at the basis of their strategy and profitability. To generate sustainable competitive advantage the firm's resources must be valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Barney 1991). Many authors have applied this idea to HRM stating that it is people who have these attributes. Employees contribute to the firm's efficiency or effectiveness (value), they are not widely available (rarity), they cannot be easily replicated by competitors (inimitable) and other resources cannot fulfil the same function (non-substitutable) (Paauwe and Boselie 2003). From this point of view, HRM acquires a pivotal role in securing competitive advantage and strategy can be defined as developing a plan which puts resources and capabilities into action to gain competitive advantage and meet business goals.

According to the definition of strategy one adopts, also the meaning of "strategic HRM" may vary. Because of this ambiguity about the term, some authors, such as Wright and Boswell (2002), have preferred to refer to this category of HRM practices as "macro" HRM to encompass in its definition all the HRM examinations focused on the organization as a whole. However, the term "strategic HRM" has been generally used to allude to HRM systems or High Performance Working Systems (HPWS), that impact various goals of the firm such as profitability (Wright and Boswell 2002). In other words, strategic HRM entails HRM practices which contribute to overall business strategies and goals and therefore ultimately impact profitability. A popular example is provided by Macduffie (1995) who has studied the role of HRM in the implementation of the flexible production system in automotive plants. A flexible production system requires motivated, skilled and adaptable workers, which HRM has the duty to develop. Only with the necessary human resources it is possible to achieve the strategic objective of flexible production (Macduffie 1995). Consequently, HPWS aim at identifying and recruiting strong candidates in consideration of the firm's competitive strategy and operational goals, at providing them the abilities and confidence (training and development) to work effectively towards business objectives, at monitoring their progress (appraisal system) in relation to the set performance standards and business objectives and at rewarding them with performance-related incentives (Becker and Huselid 1998, Paauwe and Boselie 2005). To impact business goals and profitability it is not enough for HRM to introduce one or only few of these practices. There is general agreement on the strategic relevance of HRM systems, or bundles of HR practices, rather than single practices (Macduffie 1995, Becker and Huselid 1998, Dyer and Reeves 1995). Macduffie (1995) argues that bundles/ systems of interrelated, internally consistent and even overlapping practices are necessary for HRM to be strategically relevant to increase performance (Macduffie 1995). However, the content of the bundles is different from study to study, they usually involve a dimension of employee involvement and the majority includes careful selection, extensive training

and contingent compensation, but they are otherwise quite disparate. Nevertheless, this variety makes it difficult to reach empirically satisfying research results on the superiority of bundles (Dyer and Reeves 1995). Additionally, even though there is agreement on the fact that HRM systems are relevant, not single practices, it is still impossible to determine if all of the individual components of such a bundle improve the firm's performance, if they are all necessary or equally important. These two considerations point to the necessity of more empirical research and evidence about the strategic relevance of HRM to better support the theoretical framework on which the majority of scholars seem to convergence (Becker and Huselid 1998, Dyer and Reeves 1995).

"Best practice" versus "best fit"

Once it has been accepted that HRM is "strategic", which means that it helps the firm implement its overall strategy and therefore increase performance, the debate "best fit" versus "best practice" arises. The question is whether the effectiveness of HR practices is given by their being tailored on organisational and external characteristics (best fit) to have an impact on performance, or if there are universally suitable and superior HR practices (best practice) (Wright and Boswell 2002, Paauwe and Boselie 2005).

Supporters of the best-fit approach argue that HRM practices need to "fit" with the overall organizational strategy and environment to be effective and to contribute to the firm's performance (Becker and Huselid 1998). The logic is that being firms different, they need different types of employees and different behaviours from them, and to obtain this, they obviously need different human resource practices (Dyer and Reeves 1995). A subtle alignment between HRM and strategy makes the HRM system specific to the particular firm. From a Resource-based view perspective, this specificity makes the HRM system an inimitable strategic asset improving competitive advantage (Becker and Huselid 1998). Scholars classify fit in disparate ways, but the most common categories are internal/horizontal fit, external/vertical or strategic fit, and environmental or contingency fit. (Guest 1997, Paauwe and Boselie 2005). There is internal/horizontal fit when HRM practices are consistent among each other and reinforce one another signalling a coherent message about the valued behaviour in the organization. For instance, if work is organized in teams, incentive systems and career opportunities cannot be linked entirely to individual performance but must include the team-work dimension. External/vertical or strategic fit is present when the behaviours produced by HRM are consistent with the overall firm's strategy (Becker and Huselid 1998). While there is some empirical evidence about the importance of internal fit, there is little if no evidence at all of the connection between external fit and a firm's performance (Guest 1997, Macduffie 1995, Huselid

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1995, Paauwe and Boselie 2005). Lastly, environmental/contingency fit, requires that HRM reacts to external factors such as the nature of the market, legislative changes or features of a specific sector (Guest 1997).

The best practice approach on the other side suggests a bundle of HRM practices which have positive effects on the organisation, regardless of the nature or any other circumstance of the business, as they are universal "best practices". Nevertheless, there is no agreement on which practices exactly such a bundle should contain. Even when authors suggest the same practices, they are not necessarily interpreted the same way and with the same implementation (Grugulis 2017). Grugulis (2017) for instance quotes Pfeffer (1998) on the matter, who identified seven best practices: employment security, selective hiring, self-managed teams or team-working, high pay contingent on company performance, extensive training, reduction of status differences, and sharing information (Pfeffer 1998 in Grugulis 2017). Huselid (1995) suggests the U.S. Department of Labour cataloguing of HPWS: extensive recruitment, selection, and training procedures, formal information sharing, attitude assessment, job design, grievance procedures, labour-management participation programmes, performance appraisal, and promotion and incentive compensation system (Huselid 1995). The main argument against the "best practice" approach is that if there are practices which are "best" regardless of the circumstances, they can hardly have a relevance in terms of corporate strategy (Grugulis 2017). It has been reported earlier, that according to the Resource-based view, resources and capabilities need to be valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable, which would not be the case of HRM practices recognized as "best" and implemented by every firm; they would lose their ability to provide a competitive advantage. Even though at a first glance these approaches seem irreconcilable, some authors have suggested solutions to overcome this theoretical dichotomy. Paauwe and Boselie (2005) for instance, report that Boxall and Purcell (2003) argue that both approaches are relevant exploring the link between HRM and performance. Some principles are universally effective (best practice), such as employee development, employee involvement and high rewards, but their actual design and implementation depends to some degree from the specific organizational context (best fit) (Boxall and Purcell 2003 in Paauwe and Boselie 2005).

b. The Micro/Functional approach to Human Resource Management

While we have explored how HRM practices have an impact on organizational performance, the functional or micro approach to HRM studies what impacts individual performance. Based on organizational psychology, this stream of research investigates how HRM practices can increase

individual productivity, quality, or satisfaction, focusing more on studying the impact of single practices rather than the impact of bundles like the strategic/macro approach does. An immense number of studies pertain to the functional approach, investigating the relationship between several variables and indicators of performance, mainly in the fields selection and recruitment, training and development, compensation and benefits and work design (Wright and Boswell 2002). Given the vast academic interest in this matter, only the main research topics will be outlined, often supported by an exemplary study to better illustrate the central issues. Stronger emphasis will be given to research questions that are relevant for the overall argumentation in this paper.

One of the overall main topics, but especially in the selection literature, is the impact of personality on performance. Goldberg (1990) identifies five general characteristics to describe personality, "The Big Five": Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Culture (interpreted by some authors as Intellect or Openness). These five personality traits together are known as five factor model (Goldberg 1990). Depending on the specific work context, these personality traits impact performance, leadership, career success and employment status (Wright and Boswell 2002). The most generalizable predictor is conscientiousness which seems to impact performance through its effect on goal setting and through its negative relationship with counterproductive behaviour and through higher efficiency, achievement, perseverance and thoroughness, all associated with core task proficiency (Mount, Barrick and Strauss 1999; Mount, Witt and Barrick 2000). However, not only personality traits seem to impact performance. In fact, a lot of research has been dedicated to the relationship between general mental ability (GMA) and individual performance. GMA describes the level at which an individual learns, understands and solves problems. Tests of GMA evaluate the verbal, mechanical, numerical, social and spatial ability. It is often considered the single best predictor of job performance across organisations and positions; therefore, it is valued in selection processes for assessing likely future job performance (Performance Group International Ltd., n.d.). However, the direct impact of GMA on performance is little, what makes it relevant is its indirect influence through its effect on job knowledge (Mount, Barrick and Strauss 1999). Lastly, there is a third set of information about individuals that is often used to predict performance: biodata. Biodata are "a set of questions framed around 'coincidences' on the lives of good performers". The idea behind it is that individuals who are good at a particular job have more in common, for instance concerning hobbies and social activities, than two individuals randomly selected from the population (HRM Guide, n.d.). Biodata try to evaluate constructs such as temperament, assessment of work conditions, values, preferences, skills, aptitudes and abilities. These are shown to be indicators of performance criteria such as training success, performance ratings, wage, adjustment, satisfaction, team performance and safety performance. Putting all three

indicators together, personality, GMA and biodata, Mount, Witt and Barrick (2000) found out that biodata account for incremental variance in performance measures (quantity and quality of work, problem solving, interpersonal facilitation and retention probability) beyond that accounted for by GMA and personality, proving the relevance of biodata too (Mount, Witt and Barrick 2000).

Often in connection with selection, the issue of recruitment arises. In this regard the two main sets of research are concerning the relevance of realistic job preview (RJP) and the person-job fit which seems more relevant than person-organization fit in predicting hiring recommendations (Wright and Boswell 2002). The body of research concerning RJPs aims at defining their ideal form and timing for them to maximize outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and performance, and to minimize negative outcomes such as turnover. RJP can be presented early in the recruitment process, after a job proposal but before hiring, or after hiring, and they can be presented verbally, on video and written. Timing and medium were found to have an impact on attrition from recruitment, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, voluntary turnover and performance. For instance, RJPs just before hiring reduce attrition from the recruitment process and turnover, while RJPs after hiring lead to higher performance, probably due to their having a socialization effect. Concerning the form, verbal RJP lead to lower turnover and higher job satisfaction, probably due to the higher degree of attention and comprehension displayed by applicants with this method, while videotaped RJP positively affect performance. Even though they are the most widely used, written RJPs seem to be the least effective. Consequently, the optimal form and timing strongly depends on the desired outcome (Phillips 1998).

Within the framework of training and development and their impact on individuals, the main research is concerned with teams. Predominantly, the approach to study group performance is the input-process-output (I-P-O) model. Input refers to the contribution members make in terms of experience, knowledge, skills, abilities and personality characteristics. Process is related to the interactions between group members and output concerns what is produced by the group. Within this model, the process dimension has gained much attention with careful analysis of the interactions among group members. The research question is which process leads to group effectiveness and many studies point to the crucial role of coordination, cooperation and communication (Tesluk and Mathieu 1999). To better understand how training and development can be helpful in terms of team performance, an eye to the external environment with which teams interact is important. In this regard, Tesluk and Mathieu's (1999) research offers an interesting insight. They have found that maintenance and construction road crews which have problem-management actions/strategies become more cohesive when managing performance barriers, such as low budgetary support, defective equipment or low job-related information. Groups without problem-management strategies, on the other side, would

become less cohesive due to difficulties on the job. For teams to be likely to develop problem-management strategies, they need to believe in their effectiveness, as this increases commitment, to be familiar with their work, to have a high degree of control and management of their activities, and to be supported by encouraging internal and external leaders. (Tesluk and Mathieu 1999). Many of these characteristics can be developed through targeted training and development activities which would in turn increase teams' effectiveness.

Another rich set of research is dedicated to how different forms of compensation and benefits affect workers. The topic of most interest is the one of incentive pay. Several forms of it are analysed and evaluated in terms of their impact on employees' performance. For instance, bonuses based on end-of-period ratings seem to lead to higher goal setting, but lower performance than bonuses based on self-set goals. Performance pay is demonstrated to reduce extra-role behaviour among employees with low value commitment, those whose interest are not aligned with those of the employer. A second set of studies in relation to compensation is concerned with pay dispersion, showing that greater pay dispersion negatively affects the performance of those lower in the pay distribution and positively affects the performance of those higher in the distribution (Wright and Boswell 2002). In close relation to the issue of compensation is the question concerning benefits. Traditional organizational behaviour theories link benefits to job satisfaction, but not to job performance. Lambert (2000) on the other side argues that work-life benefits, which usually entail family support such as child care or other services for the employees' wellbeing such as a fitness centre, psychological counselling, and tuition reimbursement, foster organizational citizenship and therefore benefit organizations. Organisational citizenship or extra-role behaviour are all those additional things individuals do at work which benefit the organization but that they are not mandated to do. The reasoning linking work-life benefits to organizational citizenship is based on social exchange theory. The idea is that employees feel obliged to reciprocate the employer who has directed to the employees beneficial actions such as work-life benefits. Another mediator between work-life benefits and organizational citizenship is supposed to be perceived organizational support. However, empirical evidence is mixed in this regard, not confirming unanimously such relationship. In any case, the degree to which employees feel motivated to give something back, if at all, depends on how useful they perceive the benefits and on the overall relationship with the employer (Lambert 2000).

Lastly, work design, especially in terms of work schedules, has attracted scholars' attention and is particularly interesting for the following discussion of this paper. The use of alternative work schedules has increased due to social changes such as the increasing number of women in the workforce and consequently dual-career households. The most common arrangements are flexible time schedules, or flextime, and the compressed work-week. Flextime allows workers to decide the

time at which they arrive and leave from work guaranteeing in any case their presence at a set core time. It has positive effects on employee productivity, probably thanks to the reduced job stress, increased job autonomy and a more efficient use of the individual 24-hr physiological cycle. Additionally, flextime positively impacts job satisfaction, satisfaction with the work schedule and absenteeism. Absenteeism is probably reduced due to flexible schedules lowering work-nonwork conflicts and therefore lowering stress, and increasing organizational commitment and job satisfaction. The second common schedule arrangement, the compressed workweek, reduces the workweek to less than 5 days by increasing the number of hours worked on the other days. Similarly, it positively influences job satisfaction and satisfaction with the work schedule, but little positive effect was recorded on productivity, even though supervisors rated performance as increased, and no significant effect was reported on absenteeism. Baltes et al. (1999) additionally report that the effect of flexible work schedules is moderated by employee type, as it is less relevant for managers who already enjoy higher discretion, by flexibility of the flextime schedule, as too flexible schemes seem to loose their beneficial effect, and by time since schedule intervention, as the effectiveness declines over time (Baltes et al. 1999). What is even more interesting in terms of effect moderators, is the study by Scandura and Lankau (1997) which found that gender and having family responsibility determine part of the effects of flexible work schedule arrangements. Individuals who perceive their organization offers flexible work schedules report higher levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. But additionally, this relationship between perceived flexible schedule arrangements, organizational commitment and job satisfaction, is stronger for women and for individuals having family responsibility. In other words, this type of flexible work arrangement is more salient to women who still have predominantly to balance work and family life (Scandura and Lankau 1997).

3. <u>**Opening the "black box": Understanding the link between people management and organisational performance**</u>

Regardless of whether there are HRM best practices or a fit with the organizational strategy is necessary for HRM to have an impact on the firm's performance, according to the macro/strategic HRM approach, HRM has for sure impact on organisational performance. Accepting this assumption, the question of *how* HRM influences performance is ineluctable. This is often referred to as the "black box" dilemma. Which is the relationship between independent variables, such as the characteristics of human/organisational resources, and dependant variables, such as performance? (Paauwe and Boselie 2003). As Guest (1997) points out, to investigate this matter, it is necessary to have a theory about HRM, one about performance and another one about how they are linked. Many authors have

followed this structure in their dissertations, answering however the different questions in disparate ways. As the issue of not having a unanimous theory on HRM has been already explored, the focus will be on the other two issues.

A theory about performance

Again, concerning performance there is no univocal definition. Paauwe and Boselie (2005) and Dyer and Reeves (1995) argue that performance can be understood in three different ways: financial outcomes, organisational outcomes and HR-related outcomes. Guest (1997) explicitly addresses the issue implied by this categorization in multiple "outcomes": performance is a "company-dominated criterion", while "outcomes" are much broader, encompassing also issues such as job satisfaction and environmental impact. When evaluating financial outcomes, the most used measure is profits, followed by sales (Paauwe and Boselie 2005), but many other measures such as share price, market share, dividend yield or dividend cover, return on capital or assets, profit before interest and taxes and the cash flow can be used as financial indicators of performance. Becker and Huselid (1998) for instance, studied the link between HPWS and corporate financial performance in terms of market value of shareholder equity, accounting profits, sales per employee, and market/book value. Organizational outcomes can also be several, ranging from service or product quality to well-managed distribution systems. HR-related outcomes are somewhat linked to employee well-being, they may include satisfaction, commitment, turnover or absenteeism (Grugulis 2017). Many commentators note that the distance between HR practices and financial outcomes is too wide, there are several other interventions, for instance in marketing or in research and development, which could account for changes in financial performance (Becker and Huselid 1998). Organisational and HR-related outcomes are closer to HRM initiatives and can therefore be considered closer measures (Becker and Huselid 1998, Dyer and Reeves 1995). However, they are often evaluated not per se, but to trace them back again to bottom line performance. For instance, Huselid (1995), considers turnover and productivity, measures of what we have previously catalogued as HR-related outcomes, as intermediate outcomes of corporate financial performance.

Some authors have suggested even broader theories on performance, not only beyond financial outcomes, but also beyond organizational or HR-related outcomes. According to Paauwe and Boselie (2005), a financial or shareholder approach is too narrow. Therefore, they argue for a multidimensional approach, where a shareholder perspective is integrated by a stakeholder one. The stakeholder approach recognizes that HRM has also the goal of legitimizing the organization towards society and relevant stakeholders as well as towards employees. They suggest a "strategic balance

theory" which acknowledges the importance of labour productivity, product quality and organisational flexibility, but also highlights the importance of social legitimacy, as individuals deeply care about what they perceive as fair and just. There is a positive effect between perceived justice on the job and satisfaction, commitment and trust. In this perspective, the organizational climate is important, there has to be a shared understanding and shared goals between the organisation and its employees. A similar concept is expressed, in a less sophisticated manner, by Grugulis (2017) as she reflects on whether this focus on the efficacy of HRM is in the end only a quest to understand what makes a "good" employer.

A theory about the link between HRM and performance

As there are several theories concerning performance, authors have consequently given very disparate answers to the question how HRM is linked to performance. One of the most quoted studies concerning HRM practices and performance is the one of Macduffie (1995) on the performance of the flexible production system in auto industry plants. According to him, three conditions have to be met to enable HRM to impact performance: (1) employees posses knowledge and skills that managers lack, (2) employees are motivated to apply these skills and knowledge with discretionary effort, (3) the firm's business or production strategy can only be achieved when employees contribute with discretionary effort. To make sure that employees contribute with their effort, "high commitment" HRM policies are necessary, such as employment security, compensation partially contingent on performance, and reduction of status differentials between management and workers (Macduffie 1995). Guest (1997) suggests that MacDuffie's words can be assimilated to the "expectancy theory of motivation". Its main argument is that individual performance depends on motivation, the possession of necessary skills and abilities, an appropriate role and understanding of that role. Consequently, HRM practices encouraging these factors, such as performance-related pay, contribute to higher individual performance. Becker and Huselid (1998) also recognize the importance of individual attitude, or, in other words of motivation. They sustain a behavioural perspective: the HRM system initiates productive behaviour among employees which in turn leads to higher performance. Even if then inflected in several different ways, this basic principle seems to be shared by many authors. The following conceptual models help to visualize this:
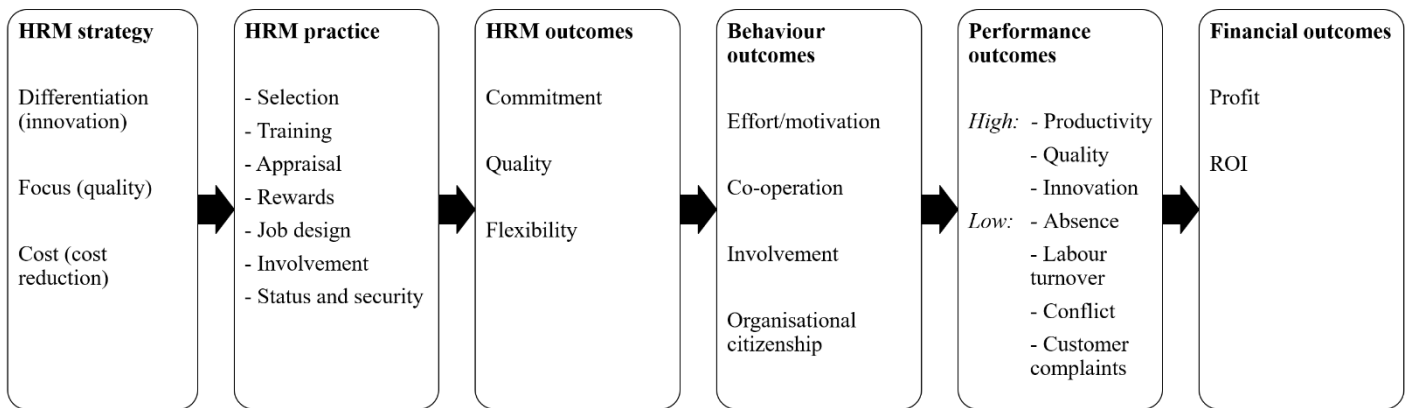
Figure 1: Conceptual model of Guest (Guest 1997 in Paauwe and Boselie 2005)
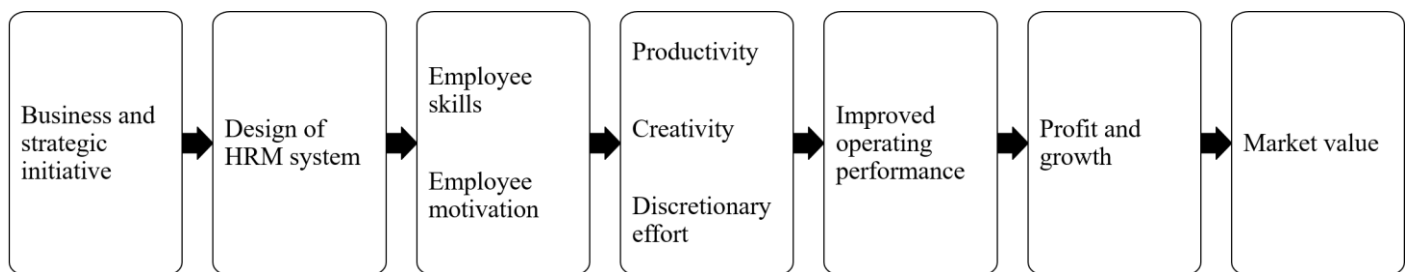
Figure 2: Conceptual model of Becker et al. (Becker et al. 1997 in Paauwe and Boselie 2005)
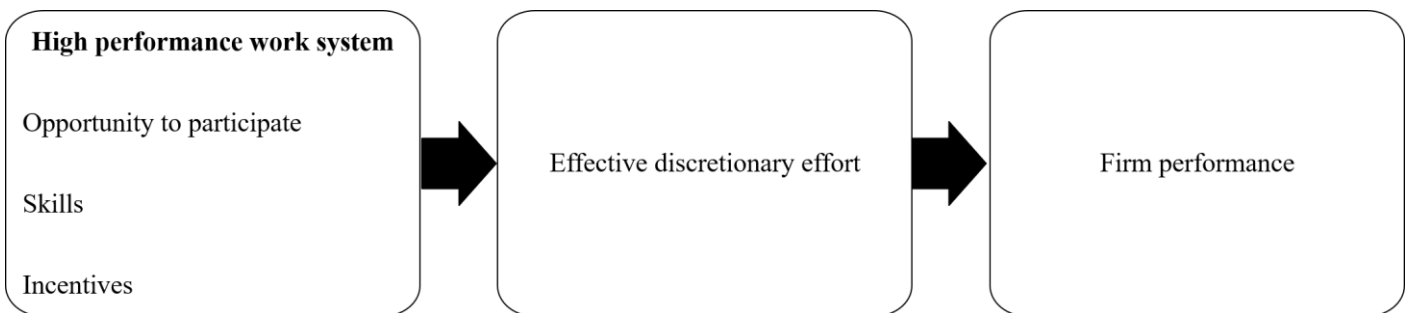
Figure 3: Conceptual model of Appelbaum et al. (Appelbaum et al. 2000 in Paauwe and Boselie 2005)

Both similarities and differences among these schemes are remarkable. First, they confirm the central role of the behavioural variable. All models, as well as Macduffie (1995) and the supporters of the expectancy theory of motivation, recognize that the link between HRM and performance goes through effort, motivation and skills (HR outcomes – Quality, in Guest). Also Dyer and Reeves (1995) suggest that HRM bundles impact ability and motivation, which in turn enhance individual performance. Second, both Becker et al. (1997) and Guest (1997) start from organizational strategic decisions, hinting to the fact that HRM practices have to fit the overall organization's strategy to impact

performance. On the other side, the absence of strategy in Appelbaum et. al (2000) remarks that there is no empirical evidence for the relevance of external fit (Becker et al. 1997, Guest 1997, and Appelbaum et al. 2000 in Paauwe and Boselie 2005). An interesting perspective is offered by Paauwe and Boselie (2005) who suggest that it is not strategy determining HRM, but HRM enabling strategic options. Translating this in a model would mean to put HRM practices first, then strategic choices, and finally performance. The reasoning behind this point of view is that if HRM is able to encourage learning, to foster employee development and knowledge management, it creates a workforce which is flexible, eager to learn, and able to adapt. This in turn enables the realization of a wide range of strategies which can lead to higher organizational performance.

Even though it is clear that individual attitude and behaviour link HRM and organizational performance, the question how individual performance is translated into organizational performance remains. This is signalled for instance by the very different number of intermediate steps which it takes to improve performance in the various schemes. Particularly, in Appelbaum et al. (2002) (as in Paauwe and Boselie 2005) with only one step between HRM and performance, the link remains quite obscure. How does "effective discretionary effort" become "firm performance"? Also the Resource-based view paradigm does not seem to effectively answer this question. It argues that HRM practices influence human capital which, thanks to its complexity, contributes to the inimitability and therefore to the sustained competitive advantage of the organization (Paauwe and Boselie 2003).

The reasoning which sheds more light on the translation of behavioural improvements into organizational performance seems to be the one represented in Guest's (1997) scheme. Behavioural outcomes such as higher motivation and effort, lead to improvements in the form of lower absenteeism, turnover, conflict, and customer complaints which in turn improve financial performance. Huselid (1995) reaches very similar conclusions. He argues that HRM positively affects skills and abilities though effective acquisition, and training and development, that it fosters motivation through individual appraisal and performance-related incentives, and that it contributes shaping the organizational structures so that employees are encouraged to participate. Because HRM affects employees directly, or more precisely employees' discretionary efforts, intermediate outcomes such as lower turnover or higher productivity, over which employees have direct control, are achieved. Then, if the returns from the investments in superior HRM exceed their costs, then lower employee turnover and greater productivity will in turn enhance corporate financial performance. In other words, HPWS impact corporate financial performance partly through employee turnover and productivity (Huselid 1995). Somehow refuting these standard model explanations, Dyer and Reeves (1995) suggest an interesting perspective. The presence of HRM systems may actually be picking on some other organizational characteristic to which they are indirectly related. It

is not HRM systems per se which impact performance; they may be simply mirroring other organizational variables such as salient management philosophies or careful attention, which enhance performance. Translating this into a model such as the ones presented above would mean to put some undefined variable in the first box, which is however not HRM. Not pointing to a definite answer, also this perspective suggests the necessity of further research on the link between HRM and performance.

HRM and organizational performance – criticism

So far it has become clear that there is no consensus on HRM's contribution to a firm's performance and on how this contribution is supposed to be achieved. Nevertheless, it has also be seen that there is often a common ground among several scholars. On the other side, however, there is some criticism and, in some cases, strongly dissonant perspectives on the issue of HRM and performance. The most common doubt, even among supporters of the HRM-performance link, is the one of reverse causality: It is not investment in HRM that increases performance, but high performance that increases investment in HRM. Firms with high profits may be willing to invest more in HRM than less financially successful firms. Additionally, it may be performance itself which increases job satisfaction and commitment, not the other way around. In fact, individuals enjoy being part of a "winning team" and a well-performing company may ensure higher employment security (Paauwe and Boselie 2005, Huselid 1995).

A more fundamental criticism to many theories trying to explain the link between HRM practices and performance, is their lack of consideration for contextual factors. For instance, criticising the Resource-based view for its lack of interest for the context and institutional setting, Paauwe and Boselie (2003) make a strong claim for the introduction of new institutionalist theories in the debate. The underlying question is whether organisations which were able to develop competitive advantage thanks to their resources, would have been able to achieve the same under different circumstances, in a different time, country, industry. There are strong differences among countries regarding employment relations, industrial relations and sector relations, just to name a few contextual elements which influence the performance outcome. For instance, some scholars argue that the predominant HR practices in the US cannot be applied in Europe due to a too different context. According to new institutionalism, organisations' behaviour is shaped not only by market forces, but also by formal and informal institutional pressures, general social expectations and the action of leading organisations. Paauwe and Boselie (2003) refer to DiMaggio and Powell's theory on isomorphism and apply it to HRM. They argue that HRM practices tend to resemble each other in different organisations due to

isomorphism, the tendency to resemble units in the same environment to increase the probability of survival. There are three homogenizing mechanisms, a coercive, a mimetic and a normative one. Coercive mechanisms derive from political pressure, they include the influence from labour legislation, the government and trade unions and work councils as well as international conventions. Mimetic mechanisms are in place when organisations imitate the practices put in place by competitors. Often, consulting firms develop new models which soon become "blueprints". Normative mechanisms are subtler, they refer to the relationship between management policies and the expectations of employees, given by their educational level, job experience and professional identification. For many professions formal education and training is required, which builds also specific professional norms and values, later reinforced by professional associations. Developed ethics and operating procedures, and expectations about them, do not leave much room for conflicting HRM practices. According to Paauwe and Boselie (2003), these three forces lead to HRM practices being homogeneous across organizations, they tend to make resources more similar rather than more unique. In other words, institutional mechanisms decrease the effect of HRM practices on performance. However, recognizing the relevance of contextual factors may also be simply seen as the necessity for HRM practices to have an environmental fit, as previously discussed (Paauwe and Boselie 2003).

II. HR diversity management

1. Introduction

<u>At the root of "diversity"</u>

A variety of factors is increasing the amount of internal and external diversity organizations face and must manage to be successful (Kreitz 2008, Seymen 2006). Globalization and international competition have opened new markets, confronting organizations with diverse customers and markets (external diversity), while demographic and social changes are shaping the workforce (internal diversity). The population's ageing is rising the issue of age diversity, while the increasingly global labour market is presenting the issue of cultural diversity and ethnic diversity in organisations. Social structures are changing too, such as the family, which today often consists of single parents or dual-career parents, making women part of the workforce and raising the issue of gender diversity. It immediately becomes clear that "diversity" pertains to various dimensions and may be used to refer to different specificities. Scholars and organizations may use the term diversity in relation only to gender, nationality, ethnicity or culture, or it can more broadly include age, job status, field of specialization, educational background, (dis)abilities, religion, sexual orientation, lifestyle preferences, family structure and so on (Kossek and Lobel 1996, Dass and Parker 1996). Many writers have generically defined diversity as "any significant difference that distinguishes one individual from another" (Kreitz 2008). Scholars have developed several classifications of differences. For instance, they can be divided into surface-level diversity and deep-level diversity, as well as objective diversity and subjective diversity. Surface-level diversity refers to all explicit diversities reflected by physical characteristics, such as age, gender and ethnicity, while deep-level diversity refers to those differences that can only be identified through repeated interaction with individuals, such as personality, values and attitudes. Objective diversity is, as the term itself suggests, anchored to an objective data, such as the chronological age. Subjective diversity, on the contrary, is the perceived diversity, how much and individual feels diverse from others or how much it feels others diverse (Sammarra and Profili 2017). The most comprehensive attempt to classify differences and understand what determines individual diversity, remains the one developed by Gardenswartz and Rowe ([1994] 2008). As the image below shows, differences are organized into four areas. At the core there is personality, which is made from individual traits, skills, and abilities; it is the individual innately unique aspect that permeates all other layers. The internal dimension includes age, race, ethnic group, physical ability, sexual orientation, and gender. Many of these characteristics are inborn, the individual has little or no control over them and they have influence on the individual over its whole

life. These dimensions have a powerful effect on behaviour and on the attitude towards others. For instance, belonging to a certain generation (age) shapes values, norms, and expectations: an employee in its twenties will see matters such as loyalty, security, work ethic and flexibility differently from a colleague in its forties or fifties. Gender may influence behaviours and communication style, especially in light of different socialization and of what is culturally considered appropriate for each gender. Belonging to a different ethnicity may imply different cultural norms, holiday observances, language proficiency and group affiliation. Race can still be a factor of heavy discrimination, while disability and sexual orientation are dimensions that can hinder the acceptance and inclusion among colleagues. Geographic position, marital status, family, appearance, professional experience, education, religion, hobbies, personal habits, and income give the external dimension. These traits are made up from external influences, they derive from society and experience. Particularly influencing can be religion, as it gives individuals basic sets of values and rules to guide their life, or educational background, as a liberal arts background and a technical one obviously lead people to think and solve problems with very different approaches. Also income is particularly interesting as esteem may be related to it and as one's family income level may have provided or prevented opportunities, such as travelling or pursuing high quality education. Marital and parental status obviously determine one's responsibilities outside work and may influence priorities. Lastly, despite the obvious influence on a person's identity that geographic location and work experience have, it should not be underestimated the effect that appearance, personal, and recreational habits have, as they may either include or shut people out of groups. The outer layer is the organizational dimension which entails functional level, managerial status, trade union affiliation, place of work, seniority, work department or team, and content or field of work. These variables may affect self-esteem, the level of participation, relationships and interactions with colleagues and exposure to stereotypes. For instance, if some employees are union affiliated and others are not, this can result in conflict. Or, there can be assumptions about a specific department, for example of being a troublemaker, and the management may be approached with an "us versus them" attitude. Even these more superficial dimensions which change over the course of life contribute in determining one's identity and consequently diversity (Gardenswartz and Rowe [1994] 2008, Kreitz 2008, Seymen 2006).
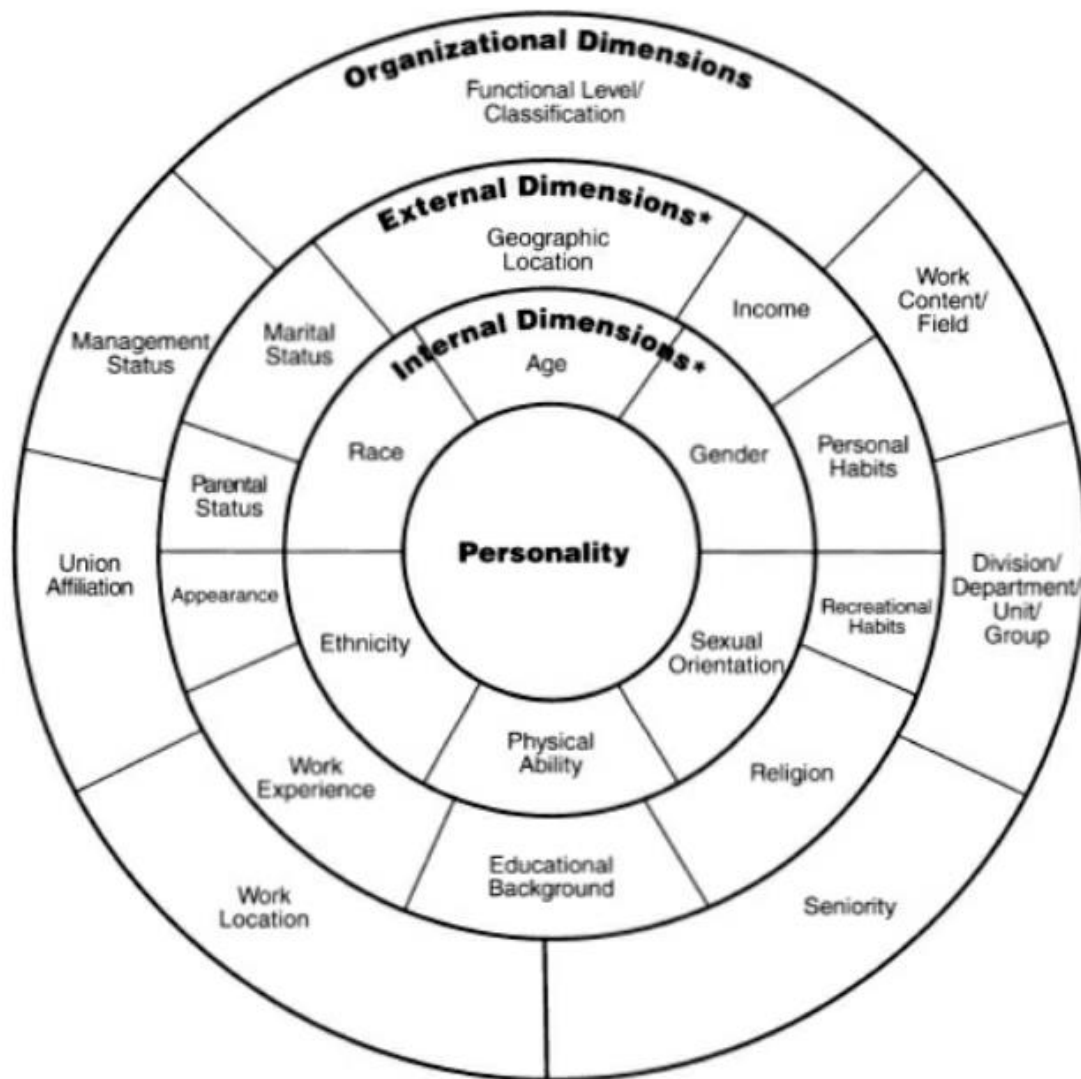
Figure 4: The Four Layers of Diversity (Gardenswartz and Rowe [1994] 2008).

Combining for everyone the listed characteristics, each person turns out to be unique and different from others (Riach 2009). Some may therefore argue, that since everyone is "diverse", it is useless, on an operational level, to focus on diversities rather than simply stating the one universal similarity: all individuals are human beings. However, taking diversity into consideration is crucial for organizations' success, because the above-mentioned differences influence how individuals see their tasks and colleagues and how they relate and interact. Individual characteristics determine the "filter" through which employees see and interact with the world (Gardenswartz and Rowe [1994] 2008). However, not all differences are taken into account in employment practices. Diversity management acknowledges and considers actively that all individuals are different but is mainly concerned with those "diversities" that may lead to discrimination, mainly, but not only, the permanent characteristics of the internal dimension, such as disability, sexual orientation, gender, age, marital status, religion, ethnicity, and culture (Shen et al. 2009).

Definition of "diversity management"

In regards of what has been said so far, diversity management can be understood as the organizational response to increased internal and external diversity given by the demographic, economic and social changes delineated above, such as the increased presence of women or racial minorities in the workforce (Agócs and Burr 1996). Diversity management is defined by scholars in a variety of ways, highlighting each time, according to the aim of their research, different aspects of it such as inclusion, individual potential or performance benefit (Gilbert, Stead, and Ivancevich 1999, Agócs and Burr 1996, Shen et al. 2009). The definition suggested here draws from several authors and tries to capture the complexity of diversity management. Diversity management are HRM practices aimed at (1) increasing the representation of historically excluded groups at all levels of the organization, including in key decision-making roles, (2) promoting an organizational culture of mutual understanding and appreciation to guarantee everyone's inclusion in informal social networks and formal organizational programs, and at (3) drawing from each employee's full potential in order to maximize the performance benefits of diversity (Olsen and Martins 2012, Kossek, Lobel and Brown 2006, Gilbert, Stead, and Ivancevich1999, Kossek and Lobel 1996). Consequently, in the first place, diversity management aims at overcoming labour market segregation through addressing inequalities based on differences. This is achieved in the first place making sure that anti-discrimination law is respected, and affirmative action applied (Shen et al. 2009). Some authors however prefer to trace a clear line between affirmative action and diversity management underlining the innovative and voluntary element of diversity management (Gilbert, Stead, and Ivancevich 1999, Agócs and Burr 1996). Agócs and Burr (1996) argue that diversity management was actually developed in the US in the 1980s as a reaction to the widely disliked affirmative action initiatives originated in the mid-1960s to early 1970s. Affirmative action is the "hiring by number" practice which focuses on increasing the representation of minorities in workplaces, but it does not address the issue of integrating, retaining and advancing minorities once hired under affirmative action. While affirmative action is intended as a remedy for past and continuing discrimination against specific social groups, diversity management aims at changing organisational practices and culture as well as individual employees' attitudes to achieve a greater integration of minorities in the workplace (Agócs and Burr 1996). Even though these considerations on affirmative action versus diversity management are relevant, in the following the more "numerical" dimension of diversity management will be considered integral part of it. First, because even though affirmative action is often legally mandated, organizations can introduce similar representation targets spontaneously and voluntarily as organizational objectives. Second, because if no significant representation of minorities is achieved in the first place, every other objective and action of diversity management become superfluous as there is no diversity to manage within the

organization. Once this basic requirement of diversity management is achieved, its other two dimensions become the core of diversity HRM practices. Diversity is valued by organizations with the aim of achieving higher organizational performance and competitive advantage on the market. In practice this consideration then takes a variety of forms, it ranges from one-shot diversity training sessions to pursuing systematic and planned organizational change to accomplish a throughout inclusive workplace (Kreitz 2008).

Dass and Parker (1996) suggest an interesting model to classify the different forms diversity management can take. They believe that organizational responses to diversity vary in terms of level of integration with other organizational functions and of strategic response.

Level of structural integration / *Strategic response (strategies)*	Episodic	Program (programmatic)	Process (non-programmatic)
Reactive *(avoid, defy, manipulate)*	Denial (a case of denying a woman the job of supervising men)	Resistance (legal fund program)	Assimilation (come and fit in)
Accomodative *(acquiesce, compromise)*	Ad hoc committees (for judicial review of cases)	Affirmative action (for women and minorities)	Appraisal system (includes diversity goals for managers at different levels)
Proactive *(anticipate)*	Diversity workshops (for potential rewards)	Valuing differences (interpersonal relationships based on respect and trust)	Multiculturalism (structural and cultural transformation)

*An example of each approach is given in parentheses

Figure 5: Approaches to strategic management of diversity in organizations (Dass and Parker 1996).

As the table above shows, diversity initiatives can be episodic, isolated from other organizational activities. For instance, for every sexual harassment complaint, the management may take action

concerning the specific case and move on. A programmatic approach, on the contrary, involves setting up a variety of relatively stable programs addressing different diversity issues, while a process approach involves giving the responsibility of diversity to line managers who have to integrate diversity practices in all organizational processes. In the table's column, there are the strategic responses organizations may have to institutional and social pressures. These can be reactive, accommodative, and proactive. Combining the two dimensions it is possible to categorize the way organizations respond to diversity issues. A reactive orientation to strategy together with an episodic integration, for example, usually leads organisations to deny cases of discrimination and handle them case-by-case to maintain as much as possible the traditional status quo. When a reactive orientation meets a process structural integration, the results are so-called "colour-blind" practices. A colour-blind approach entails treating everyone the same, without acknowledging differences. This means that individuals need to fit within the existing standard norms and behaviours. While this approach may seem fair at a first glance, it is highly problematic and will be analysed in detail with a dedicated section in the following chapter. The accommodative strategic response, regardless of the level of structural integration of the diversity practices, is characterized by the adaptation to environmental changes, rather than resistance. With this response, diversity is tolerated, and a positive response is put in place by imitation, habit, or compliance with external trends or legal impositions. The most interesting approach in the context of accommodative strategies is when it works together with a programmatic integration. Here organizations comply with government mandated affirmative actions. Compliance with law, as stated above, is what is usually consider the minimum level of diversity management. The further step to go beyond the minimum requirements is having a proactive strategic response to diversity. Only in this case organizations see diversity as an opportunity. Organizations with a proactive strategic approach and an episodic structural integration tend to hire consultants to educate the workforce about being more sensitive to cultural differences and about communicating efficiently despite differences or organize caucuses and interest groups to discuss common concerns and problems with the organization. These are probably the most common practices among organizations which start to deal with diversity management. However, if the results of such activities are not integrated in every-day work practices, they remain vain. Only when proactivity and process integration meet, an organization can be considered "multicultural" in the sense that it does not only accept or value diversity, but it integrates it in organizational strategy to achieve long-term competitive advantage. To achieve this, organizations redesign their systems through both structural and cultural transformation to achieve an organizational atmosphere where all can contribute to their best, without facing barriers, to the organization (Dass and Parker 1996).

In terms of diversity management definition, this last approach is the one complying strictly with all the three dimensions discussed above.

This classification of diversity management practices however is not the only possible one. A completely different categorization of approaches to diversity management is suggested by Kossek and Lobel (1996). They argue that there are three traditional HR approaches for managing diversity: diversity enlargement, diversity sensitivity and cultural audits. Diversity enlargement entails hiring minority employees. This can be tied to the assumption that the presence of "diverse" employees per se will increase productivity or to the compliance with social or legal demands of increased diversity in the workforce. Diversity sensitivity initiatives educate employees about cultural differences and stereotypes through training sessions which aim at improving communication and understanding across differences. Lastly, cultural audits involve consultants collecting data through focus groups or surveys to identify groups and understand which obstacles they face in the organization. If not linked to other HR practices, such as the pay and promotion system, and if not embedded in the overall organizational strategy, diversity training sessions and cultural audits may have negative effects rather than positive ones, as they risk to underline and reinforce stereotypes and differences (Kossek and Lobel 1996).

The presented categorization attempts clearly show that in practice diversity management can mean very different things. There are not universal diversity practices applied by organizations, and scholarly and practical knowledge concerning the integration of diversity practices to HR areas is still evolving (Kossek and Lobel 1996). However, there is general consensus that regardless of the specific practices, diversity initiatives need to be tied to changes in the organizational culture and to be integrated in HR practices and organizational strategy to be effective (Kossek and Lobel 1996, Dass and Parker 1996, Bombelli 2010). Additionally, regardless of the specific classification suggested by different authors, diversity initiatives remain the same in the substance. For instance, what Kossek and Lobel (1996) define as diversity sensitivity and cultural audit, can be assimilated to what Dass and Parker (1996) consider the result of a proactive approach with an episodic integration strategy. In this chapter, the approach will be of presenting suggestions by scholars on how to deal with each diversity category regardless of specific categorizations.

Diversity, identity, and social groups

To understand diversity management, the concept of "diversity" has been simplified so far. Its connection with identity has only been hinted to, by suggesting, in line with Gardenswartz and

Rowe's ([1994] 2008) model, that there are several deeper or more superficial dimensions which combined define a person's identity and consequently "diversity" from others. The relationship between diversity an identity requires closer attention, as many issues arise due to the attempt of diversity management to conceptualize something complex as personal identity. Diversity management programs risk to pick out one characteristic, such as gender - maybe not even the one that the beneficiary considers the most relevant in the determination of its identity - and consequently flatten the other elements defining identity (Bombelli 2010). The problems that diversity management faces in relation to personal identity derive from the fact that individuals are implicitly grouped together into social groups based on one key characteristic, usually physical or cultural characteristics (Noon 2017, Roberts 1996). The notion of "diversity" is based on the assumption that individuals who are not part of the "dominant" or "majority" group, are part of a "minority" group which is singled out in society and experiences differential and unequal treatment based on an assumed defect in comparison to the majority group (Roberts 1996). Individuals with disability are considered a minority social group, women are another. Of course, there are differences *between* social groups. Being discriminated as a woman is very different from being discriminated because of a disability or ethnicity. In fact, diversity management does not deal with "diversity", but with "diversities". Because discrimination does not mean the same regardless of the social group concerned, it has to be fought with targeted practise. However, diversity management should always keep in mind that there are also differences *within* social groups. Social groups can be broken down into smaller categories, like Muslim men with disability or black, lesbian women. But regardless of how fine-grained the group has been defined, there will always be differences comprised in it. For instance, "disability" is a wide-ranging categorization which puts together individuals with very different needs deriving from their condition. Also cultural diversity management groups together individuals with different ethnic backgrounds who therefore experience discrimination in disparate ways and consequently need different actions to redress it. Still, on the other side, being part of a social group is often part of the individual's identity who recognizes and values his or her belonging to it (Noon 2017). In this regard, the main paradigm is Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979, Tajfel 1974). According to it there is a social categorization-social identity-social comparison-psychological distinctiveness causal sequence. Individuals create social categories, groupings of persons, to organize and simplify their environment. This social categorization is a system of orientation from which social identity drives. Social identity is the part of an individual's self-concept deriving from knowing that he or she is member of a social group. Being part of one or more groups is an important aspect of an individual's self-definition, as it provides identification, and in turn contributes positively or negatively to the image it has of his/herself. However, social identity, deriving form group

membership, only acquires relevance in comparison with other groups (social comparison). The characteristics of a group achieve most of their salience in relation to perceived differences from other groups and the value connotation of these differences. Psychological distinctiveness is than aimed at identifying superiority on the diverging identified dimension. Conflict of interests between groups, often in obtaining scarce resources such as power, prestige or wealth, increases the intensity of ingroup affiliation and outgroup antagonism. Individuals act on a continuum in terms of self or in terms of group membership. Consequently, group membership can have more or less impact on behaviour and this depends on two variables: intergroup conflict and belief system ("social mobility" vs. "social change"). The more intense intergroup conflict is, the more likely it is that individuals who are members of opposing groups will behave towards each other as a function of their respective group membership rather than in terms of their personal characteristics. Concerning belief system about the nature of the relation between social groups in society, the more the person perceives "social change" to be predominant, which means it is impossible or very difficult to change an unsatisfactory, stigmatized or underprivileged group membership, the more it will act in terms of group membership. While if the person believes there is "social mobility", alias the possibility to move individually to other groups, as society is permeable, it will act more in terms of its own personal characteristics (Tajfel 1974, Tajfel and Turner 1979). In some cases, group membership can even acquire the traits of cultural identity, not only social identity, when shared norms, values and goal priorities are developed within the social group (Roberts 1996). Therefore, the concept of "social groups" cannot be ignored by diversity management. Group identity membership may affect the individual behaviour in the workplace and its ability to work well within the organization (Kossek and Lobel 1996). Additionally, group membership can be at the root of discrimination. Being part of a group leads to in-group bias, the tendency to favour the in-group over the out-group in evaluation and behaviour. Incompatible group interests do not even seem necessary for the development of in-group bias and discrimination; perceiving the belonging to two different groups is enough (Tajfel and Turner 1979). This is particularly problematic considering that the majority of decision-making roles in organizations is hold by white, Christian, able-bodied, males. This circumstance represents a problem even when it does not come to ingroup bias and discrimination, because homophily leads the majority group to reproduce itself making persons similar to it, advance. Homophily is the principle according to which contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people. In other words, there is a strong tie between similarity and association. Homophily in race and ethnicity creates the strongest divides, with age, religion, education, occupation and gender following in roughly this order (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook 2001). Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) distinguish between status homophily and value homophily. The first concerns similarity based on

sociodemographic dimensions such as race, ethnicity, sex and age, and acquired characteristics such as religion, education, occupation or behavioural patterns. The latter captures the similarity based on the individual's internal dimension (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954 in McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook 2001). Homophily is pervasive, it has been encountered in relationships ranging from marriage and friendship, over work, to mere contact. This implies that cultural, behavioural, genetic and material information that flows through networks tends to be localized (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook 2001). This reconfirms the importance of diversity management, as without, natural human tendencies would keep minorities marginalized in the workplace.

Why diversity management is needed: discrimination, harassment, prejudice, stereotypes and mental biases

As largely analysed, diversity management deals with those differences which lead to discrimination in the workplace, more specifically, to *unfair* discrimination, which is the process of judging people according to unjust criteria (Noon 2017). The most evident cases are those of direct discrimination, which occurs when one is treated less favourably than another in a comparable situation on the grounds of one of the diversity categories previously analysed. Indirect discrimination occurs when an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice puts a person part of a diversity category at a disadvantage compared with another person. It is not indirect discrimination if the employer can justify its policy or action as a proportionate mean to achieve a legitimate aim. For instance, employers can advertise a job to female candidates only if it is a position to attend the women changing rooms of a fitness club (Noon 2017, 2000/78/EC). Pervasive indirect discrimination can become systematic discrimination, which is the result of established procedures and organizational culture which were not necessarily designed to discriminate, but create continuous disadvantage for some groups. This circumstance reflects the fact that the workplace was designed by a working population which was white, Christian, able-bodied, male and supported by unpaid domestic workers, housewives (Agócs and Burr 1996). This type of discrimination is particularly difficult to identify and to fight, as it is deeply entrenched in organizational processes and culture. A last relevant category of discriminatory behaviour is harassment. It is considered a form of discrimination when unwanted conduct related to the above characteristics is displayed with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment (Noon 2017, 2000/78/EC). These definitions show that individuals are discriminated or harassed, due to their belonging to a social group. However, individuals can belong to more than one social group, which can lead to employees being discriminated because of more than one

characteristic they possess. Multiple discrimination is used to describe a situation where a person is discriminated due to two or more characteristics in some sort of additive effect. While intersectionality is used to refer to the situation where the two or more characteristics do not simply have an additive effect, as they produce a different and potentially more disadvantaging experience for that person. (Noon 2017).

Discrimination in many of its forms often stems from prejudice and stereotyping. Having a prejudice is holding negative attitudes towards the individuals of a particular social group regardless of their individual qualities. Stereotyping is the act of judging people according to our assumptions about the social group they belong to, based on the belief that they all behave the same (Noon 2017). Stereotyping often derives from mental biases, natural mental short cuts individuals take to select and classify information. Categories are created to simplify the environment and specific characteristics are consequently attributed to the whole group (Bombelli 2010). Mental biases and stereotypes are to some degree natural and unavoidable, they become however of organizational concern when they develop into prejudice and, even worse, into discrimination and harassment on the workplace. Even though if less apparent why, also positive stereotypes may be problematic for diversity management, as referring to them legitimizes the overall use of stereotypes (Riach 2009). For instance, as largely discussed and refuted below, there are diffused stereotypes on older workers being less able, less motivated, less productive, harder to train, less adaptable and flexible and more resistant to change. However, they are also believed to be more stable, dependable, honest, trustworthy, loyal, committed to the job, and less likely to miss work or turnover quickly (Posthuma and Campion 2009). However, for the following discussion, gender stereotypes are of particular interest. Wide research has identified the stereotypical characteristics attributed to men and women. Agency is the defining male characteristic which determines men as achievement oriented (e.g. ambitious and task-focused), inclined to take charge (e.g. assertive and dominant), autonomous (e.g. independent, self-reliant, decisive) and rational (e.g. analytical, logical, objective). Stereotypes of women are not only different, they are clearly the opposite. As such, women are defined by communality which makes them concerned for others (e.g. kind, caring and considerate), with affiliative tendencies (e.g. warm, friendly, collaborative), deferential (e.g. obedient and respectful) and emotional (e.g. perceptive, intuitive, and understanding) (Heilman 2012). According to Heilman (2012) gender stereotypes can then be classified into two types, descriptive and prescriptive ones. Descriptive gender stereotypes designate what men and women are like, while prescriptive stereotypes designate what men and women should be like. The descriptive stereotypes listed above do not automatically affect women negatively, they only become problematic and of organizational concern when they promote negative expectations about women's performance because they create a perceived lack of fit between

women's attributes and the attributes needed for success in traditionally male dominated fields and leadership, thus hindering women's careers. This is the case because management and executive positions are believed to require characteristics which coincide with the stereotypic conception of men. Gender stereotypes affect many dimensions of women's work experiences, not only career advancement, but also hiring, starting salary, job placement, opportunities for skill development, and pay raises. What is interesting about stereotypes is that they influence also the interpretation of the exact behaviour or action. For instance, delaying a decision may be seen as prudent if done by a man, but as timid or passive if done by a woman (Heilman 2012). This occurs similarly concerning marital status stereotypes. Generally, it is assumed that single people lack responsibility, commitment, work ethic and dependability. But while married men are seen as more stable and dependable, married women are seen as a risk for the organization, especially in their child-bearing years (Gardenswartz and Rowe [1994] 2008). The second category of stereotypes, prescriptive stereotypes, negatively affect women because they establish expectations about what is proper female behaviour and consequently result in devaluation and derogation of women who violate these gender norms. For instance, women may face disapproval and negativity if they excel in in male gender-typed position, because it is not what they are expected to do and be (Heilman 2012). Prescriptive stereotypes may also be at the root of sexual orientation discrimination. Some studies have suggested that gay males and lesbians are discriminated against because they are believed not to conform to traditional gender roles. In fact, there is the stereotypic idea that gay males are less masculine/more feminine than heterosexual males, and that lesbians are more masculine/less feminine than heterosexual females. These stereotypes rely on a basis of truth according to some studies, which demonstrate that gay men and lesbians tend to describe themselves as having high levels of both feminine and masculine traits (Blashill and Powlishta 2009). This circumstance highlights both how much stereotypes shape our understanding of our environment and of ourselves, and that stereotypes are not harming per se. They become an issue when they impede individuals to recognize and accept something diverging form the stereotypic view and when they negatively affect a person's opportunities, as for instance gender stereotypes hinder women's careers. In other words, stereotypes are natural mental shortcuts which become of serious concern when they translate into discrimination.

Why investing in diversity management: the social justice and the business case

If introducing diversity management within an organization requires so much effort and therefore consumption of time and resources, it seems natural to ask why organizations should introduce diversity management at all. Answers typically revolve around two arguments. The social justice case

(Noon 2017) argues that it is a matter of fairness and justice, while the business case (Noon 2017, Kossek, Lobel and Brown 2006, Olsen and Martins 2012) argues that it is a matter of efficiency. The core idea of the social justice case is that there is a moral obligation to not discriminate, to avoid prejudice and stereotyping. Among the supporters of this argument, some argue for "equality of opportunity" which entails that everyone has the same opportunity to access jobs and promotions as there is procedural justice, the process is free from bias, consequently only skills and abilities determine who succeeds and who does not. Others argue for a deeper equality, for "equality of outcome", which focuses on the outcome of processes and points out that even when competing in a fair process, many start from a disadvantaged position. The fundamental idea is that treating people fairly is an end in itself, it is the right thing to do and should not be merely a mean to an end (Noon 2017).

The main criticism to this argumentation is that it is counterintuitive to business, where profits and efficiency are key, not morality. In that light, the business case for diversity is more appealing, as it argues that diversity management has a positive impact on the firm's competitive advantage and ultimately, performance. The consultancy firm McKinsey Company (2015) found that companies in the top quartile for gender, racial and ethnic diversity in their leadership teams are statistically more likely to have financial returns above the national industry average (McKinsey Company 2015 in Noon 2017). Financial achievements are reached because of the beneficial effects of diversity management on several organizational dimensions. First, diversity management improves resource acquisition and retention. It opens to a wider pool of talents from which to recruit and it attracts talented individuals from minorities or discriminated groups through the company's reputation of being particularly inclusive. It also avoids neglecting the talents which are already within the organization for promotion and career opportunities. Not taking advantage of talents, implies a loss because the potential of the human resources is not maximized (Noon 2017, Shen et al. 2009, Cox and Blake 1991, Dass and Parker 1996). Above this, the costs related to these employees would be reduced. Thanks to the more inclusive environment, absenteeism and turnover, which are higher among minorities and women, due to lower job satisfaction and perceived career opportunities, are expected to decrease (Cox and Blake 1991). The second main argument is that diversity within teams is a driver of innovation, thanks to the increased creativity fostered by the many perspectives and points of view offered by the diverse team members. Moreover, diversity within the organization helps identifying and exploiting new market opportunities and attract new customers. This is achieved thanks to minority employees' diverse insights and the cultural sensitivity, which entails knowledge on how to target specific segments. The competitive advantage here is given by the ability of the organization, through internal diversity, to see and respond to the increased external diversity. Also

problem-solving is improved thanks to the wider range of perspectives. With internal diversity, organizations better respond to environmental changes. Diversity enables less standardized systems which improve organizational flexibility allowing a quicker response to change (Gilbert, Stead, and Ivancevich 1999, Shen et al. 2009, Cox and Blake 1991, Seymen 2006, Dass and Parker 1996). Lastly, diversity management projects a positive corporate image, contributing to employer branding. Firms are recognizing the importance of corporate social responsibility for their public image, as consumers are becoming increasingly conscious about the environmental and social impact of their purchasing decisions. In other words, consumers may prefer to buy from organizations which they know to be inclusive and sensitive to diversity issues (Noon 2017, Shen et al. 2009, Cox and Blake 1991). As already hinted to before, to have a positive impact on performance, diversity management needs to be integrated with the overall organizational strategy. In the previous chapter, it has been explained how according to many scholars, HR practices need to fit with the organization's strategy to generate a competitive advantage. Consequently, diversity management, embedded in an HR strategy, needs to be part of the process to achieve business objectives. According to Kossek and Lobel (1996), diversity management contributes to performance by affecting positively individual outcomes which in turn improve organizational performance. They argue that diversity management improves individual commitment and competences, the perception of equity, and communication among diverse employees which all together ultimately enhance individual performance. These improvements will then be reflected in higher organizational outcomes such as increased flexibility, profitability, and effectiveness of organizational processes (Kossek and Lobel 1996). This interpretation of diversity management's effect on business performance combines the micro and the macro approach to Human Resources presented in the previous chapter.

Even if convincing at a first glance, the business case is criticized for several reasons. First, starting from this point of view, diversity initiatives are only justifiable as long as they contribute to profit, as long as their return is higher than their cost, which is hard to prove. Furthermore, the business case is circumstance and time contingent. For instance, it is relevant for organizations facing skills shortage, but not necessarily for others. By contrast, the social justice case applies to all organizations and market environments and it does not require proof as it is based on a moral principle (Noon 2017). However, the relevance that the business case has within academic research cannot be ignored. As it has been shown before, both micro and macro HRM studies aim ultimately at understanding the impact of practices on organizational performance. Therefore, the following discussion will take business case considerations into account, even though the social justice case, which in the following chapter will be further deepened with the integration of feminist arguments.

Against diversity management

Even though at least the business case is widely accredited and accepted as a motivation to value diversity management, there are also detractors. A claim attacking the roots of diversity management is that diversity is not desirable at all for organizations as it hinders effective communication and creates conflict. In fact, organizational cultures tend to homologize employees to facilitate communication and the overall work process. Of very different nature is the concern that diversity management and the attention it receives may actually harm individuals targeted by diversity practices. Focusing on diversity may create new and more sophisticated stereotypes. Individuals targeted by diversity practices may have never felt discriminated, but the diversity policies and practices suddenly point at them, underlining their diversity. (Bombelli 2010). In conclusion, many opposers argue on the line of diversity management being against meritocracy, representing reverse discrimination or devaluing truly capable individuals. These criticisms however are specifically against affirmative action, rather than diversity management per se (Von Bergen, Soper, and Foster 2002), therefore they will be critically looked at in the section dedicated to it further on.

2. **Cultural and ethnic diversity**

Cultural and ethnic diversity management is becoming an issue for organizations all over the world as the demographic structure changes, becoming increasingly multicultural and multi-ethnic, especially due to integrating markets and globalization (Seymen 2006). While many authors do not clearly distinguish between cultural and ethnic diversity (e.g. Seymen 2006, Cox and Blake 1991, Gardenswartz and Rowe [1994] 2008, Richard 2000), these dimensions, even though clearly overlapping in many issues, are not equivalent. Cultural diversity refers to differences in terms of shared values, norms, and beliefs, while ethnic diversity is generally associated with visible physical characteristics such as the skin colour, the eye shape, the hair texture, or the bone structure (Cox and Blake 1991, Gardenswartz and Rowe [1994] 2008). These two diversities are often, but not necessarily coinciding. For instance, an Indian engineer working in Germany may face issues related to both cultural diversity and ethnic diversity. A German employee working in Italy may more predominantly face cultural diversity problems, rather than ethnic diversity ones, as he/she identifies as Caucasian like the Italian native population, too. Lastly, the workplace discrimination African-Americans may face in the U.S. is based on ethnic/racial diversity rather than cultural diversity, as they share the American culture. Accordingly, accommodating cultural diversity through different degrees of multiculturalism is an especially relevant challenge in many European countries, where a

large number of international migrants with diverse cultural backgrounds live, while ethnic diversity is the main diversity concern in the U.S., with its history of discrimination against the black population and other minorities (Shen et al. 2009). Even the challenges these two diversities place on diversity management are different. While cultural differences mainly represent a problem in terms of hindered communication and misunderstandings (Seymen 2006), ethnic differences may lead to more or less ouverte discrimination (Deitch et al. 2003). Nevertheless, these two dimensions often present themselves together and other aspects concern both cultural and ethnic diversity in very similar ways. For instance, the business case concerning these dimensions of diversity, highlights, without distinction, the beneficial effects of the different perspectives and experiences (Cox and Blake 1991). Diversity management practices, as analysed in the following, often address both issues in an undifferentiated way. The discussion on cultural and ethnic diversity is made even more complex by the fact that there is a third dimension which is interrelated with these two but not perfectly matching: organizational culture diversity. Cultural diversity issues may arise from differences between employee and organizational culture, rather than national culture, as implied so far. Of course, national culture has considerable impact on organizational culture, however, organizations often develop distinct cultures (Meek 1988). Therefore, organizational culture requires a specific mention.

One of the most important studies about how different cultures can be described and how they impact the workplace is the Theory of Cultural Dimensions developed by Geert Hofstede between 1967 and 1973 based on IBM employees. Four dimensions are identified, which, he argues, summarize different cultures. These are: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity versus femininity. Later, two dimensions have been added: Long term orientation versus short term normative orientation and indulgence versus restraint. Power distance is the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. While high power distance leads to centralized and vertical organizational structures, low power distance tends to play down inequalities as much as possible leading to flatter and decentralized organizations. In individualism, people feel independent and look after themselves, while collectivism implies that people see themselves as belonging to a group and look after each other in exchange for loyalty. In terms of business practices this leads to individualistic countries supporting greater individual initiative and to base promotions on market value, while collectivist societies support work ethic rather than individual initiative and promotions are based on seniority. With "uncertainty avoidance" it is meant the extent to which people accept ambiguous situations and tolerate uncertainty. Since in low uncertainty avoidance countries people are willing to accept risks associated with the unknown, they tend to build less structured organizational activities,

have less written rules, have a higher employee turnover and more risk-taking managers. High uncertainty avoidance tends to lead to the opposite. Concerning "masculinity versus femininity", masculinity refers to the extent to which the use of force is socially endorsed. In a masculine society, the traditional "masculine values" such as achievement and exercise of power are important. Therefore, such societies tend to put great importance on earnings, recognition, advancement, challenges, and wealth. Moreover, masculine societies tend to be more gendered. On the other side, in a feminine society, caring for others and the quality of life are the central social values. In these countries, the business environment tends to be more cooperative and friendly, decisions are taken in groups and employment is secure as competition is not openly endorsed. Long and short-term orientation is related to the approach to change in time. In a long-time-oriented culture, since the world is in constant change, preparing for the future is always needed, these are more pragmatic societies. While in a short-time-oriented culture, in a normative society, the world is as it was created, therefore it is morally good to adhere to time-honoured traditions. Indulgent societies allow gratification in the form of having fun and enjoying live following impulses, while restraint stands for societies which limit the gratification of basic human drives with strict social norms, as duty, not freedom, is at the core of living (Hofstede n.d., Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

While there may be debate on the advantages of diversity for business regarding categories such as age diversity, ability diversity or sexual orientation diversity, as it will be shown in the following, there is consensus that appropriate cultural (and ethnic) diversity management ticks all the boxes of the business case for diversity. A multicultural and/or multi-ethnic organization is believed to have advantages in relation to all the previously explained fields: resource acquisition and retention, cost savings, marketing to new segments, creativity and innovation, problem-solving, flexibility and branding (Cox and Blake 1991).

Nevertheless, the existence of cultural differences represents organizational challenges on several levels. Even though the business case has proved cultural diversity to be desirable for organisations, if not managed well or overlooked, it can become an issue in terms of communication among employees with different cultural backgrounds. Actors from different cultures have different understandings of proper interactions and communication (Seymen 2006). For instance, for some, not making eye contact is a signal of being deceitful or unassertive, while in other cultures it may represent a sign of respect towards elders and authority figures. As individuals understand others' behaviour through their own culture, they tend to judge diverging behaviour as wrong. Moreover, communication barriers may arise simply from language differences due to cultural differences. Employees may be forced to work in a language which is not their native one, which may create

frustrations on both sides. Native speakers may have difficulties understanding heavy accents, while the non-native speakers, even if fluid, may be marginalized due to limited understanding of jargon. Additionally, non-native speakers may be perceived as less "clever" due to their more limited vocabulary (Gardenswartz and Rowe [1994] 2008). Despite problems related to interaction and communication, cultural difference may also lead to discrimination in its many forms. Many discriminatory behaviours in the workplace are deeply rooted in the culture of the nation the organization operates in. For instance, the social role ascribed to women and men by society's culture, are reflected also inside the organization and they may be discriminatory (Bombelli 2010).

While communication and interaction may represent a problem for employees of different cultural background, discrimination becomes the predominant issue for employees of another ethnic background compared to the majority group. In the past, research has focused mainly on blatant, but rarer, discriminatory behaviours and events such as the refusal of employment, but today, management scholars study increasingly more subtle manifestations of racism in the workplace (Deitch et al. 2003). In fact, blatant racial discrimination is outlawed in almost every legislative framework. In the U.S., the main workplace anti-discrimination law is the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Its Title VII makes it illegal to discriminate someone in matters of hiring, discharging, compensations, and terms and conditions of employment on the basis of race, colour, religion, national origin, or sex. (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). Similarly, the European Council directive 2000/43/EC fights direct and indirect discrimination as well as harassment in employment matters such as recruitment, promotion, dismissal, pay, employment conditions and benefits on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin (2000/43/EC). Since discrimination is outlawed, and blatant racism has become less socially acceptable in Western countries, today, the main issue for ethnic minorities in the workplace is represented by more ambiguous microaggressions (Deitch et al. 2003, Offermann et al. 2014). Some scholars have even termed these less ouverte forms of racism as "modern racism", "aversive racism" or "ambivalent racism" (Deitch et al. 2003). These include for instance the avoidance of ethnic minority individuals, unfriendly or rude verbal and non-verbal communication, the failure to help and assist or to provide performance feedback, and the involuntarily demeaning of an individual for its ethnic heritage, for instance mistaking a person of colour for a service worker. Considering that microaggressions lead to lower job satisfaction and physical and mental well-being, organizations should worry, as this may lead to lower productivity, higher absenteeism and other difunctional behaviours, which all lead to costs for the organization (Deitch et al. 2003). Such discriminatory behaviours are often unconscious from the part of the perpetrator who judges him/herself as non-racist and without prejudices (Deitch et al. 2003, Offermann et al. 2014). Many White individuals hold colour-blind attitudes, they believe race does not and should not matter,

therefore they treat everyone as individuals rather than as members of a category. This is per se fair and non-discriminatory and is often based on good intentions, but it denies a reality that persons of colour affirm: race matters. The colour-blind approach leads to not see White privilege and institutionally embedded discrimination as well as microaggressions, making individuals blind for many forms of discrimination. This in turn makes them more likely to display implicit, involuntary racial bias (Offermann et al. 2014, Gardenswartz and Rowe [1994] 2008). In fact, the acts can be so ambiguous that the victims themselves may not want or may not be able to label them as discriminatory acts and consequently not report them. Nevertheless, experiencing such treatment is associated with lower wellbeing in terms of mental and physical health as well as job satisfaction (Deitch et al. 2003, Offermann et al. 2014).

To overcome communication, interaction, and discrimination issues related to cultural and ethnic diversity and create a truly inclusive workplace which is able to extract benefits from diversity, HRM should aim at creating a "multicultural" organization where cultural and ethnic diversity is respected and valued and fully integrated and represented at all levels of the organization, also in informal networks. To reach this objective diversity training is considered a powerful tool. Awareness training is necessary to point out where and how discrimination might happen and make individuals conscious of it (Cox and Blake 1991). The aim is to challenge colour-blind attitudes as they reduce the perception of discriminations in the workplace (Offermann et al. 2014). The diversity training sessions need to widen the concept of what "discrimination" means and entails to include microaggressions and what are considered "minor" discriminations. Additionally, they should include self-regulation training to help individuals without prejudices to avoid involuntary racist behaviours due to automatically activated prejudices. (Deitch et al. 2003). The subsequent step should be skill building training, aimed at teaching employees about cultural differences and how to deal with them in the workplace, especially in terms of communication and interaction (Cox and Blake 1991). Some organizations put in place a very different and interesting strategy to overcome difficulties due to cultural differences, they aim at creating a super-national, common, organizational culture which is acquired by all employees instead of their original culture. In this case, HRM usually makes sure that managers rotate workplaces wandering from one culture to another to weaken their original culture and strengthen the organizational one (Seymen 2006). A non-discriminatory organizational culture which values diversity, is also a strong tool to fight ethnic discrimination based on individual bias and prejudices. It is interesting how organizational culture can be a mean to overcome issues of cultural and ethnic diversity, while at the same time it bears the potential for conflict.

Organizational culture is a set of unwritten and implicit shared rules, values, ethical standards, and ways of reasoning and acting, strongly determining employees′ behaviour and expected behaviour (Bombelli 2010, Seymen 2006). Some authors have described organizations as little societies, which, as such, have distinct cultures. Research on organizational culture has borrowed many of its main concepts from anthropology, especially from the structural-functionalist tradition, and has consequently defined culture and organizational culture differently according to the specific theoretical reference. Also the origin, the function and the observable elements of culture vary according to the theoretical framework that one adopts (Meek 1988). For instance, the structural-functionalist approach interprets culture as an adaptive mechanism by which individuals are enabled to live a social life as an ordered community in a given environment. Within this framework, organizations, because they are in functional interaction with their environment, are deeply permeated by the values of the ambient society. The ambient society′s culture is however only one of the three roots of organizational culture, there are also the organization′s history and past leadership and contingency factors such as technology or industry characteristics (Allaire and Firsirotu 1984). In the perspective of Meek (1998), the fact that organizational culture derives from the ambient society, from its history and from external contingency, implies that organizations *have* a culture, which is partly imported from outside and partly created by management. On the other side, organizations *are* culture, as culture is the product of negotiated and shared symbols and meanings, that emerges from social interaction (Meek 1988). A crucial dividing line between theories on culture is whether culture is considered integrated with the social system or it is conceived as separate from the social system. Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) argue that the social system is based on the interaction among individuals, while culture is the profound pattern of meaning, such as values, norms and beliefs. In other words, culture is the system of ideas behind what is observable. Consequently, they suggest that every organization has three interrelated components: a sociostructural system, which is the interrelation of structures, strategies, policies and processes, a cultural system, and the individual actors (Allaire and Firsirotu 1984). Similarly, Schein (2009) argues that culture is composed by three levels: artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. Artifacts are the visible organizational structures and processes, espoused values are the strategies, goals and philosophies that create an image of the organization, and the underlying assumptions are the unconscious, taken for granted beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions. These three levels of culture are ultimately about organizational external survival issues, internal integration issues and deeper underlying assumptions. Organizations develop assumptions about their mission and identity, about their strategic intent, financial policies, way of organizing work and measuring themselves, as well as about the proper means to correct themselves; these are issues related to the organizations′ external survival. To make sure that there is an internally

cohesive group, organizations develop common language and concepts and group boundaries. They form assumptions about the nature of authority, the type of relationships employees (level of intimacy) should hold and about the meaning attached to rewards and status. All this relies on deeper assumptions about the relationship of humans to nature, whether it is dominant, symbiotic or passive, and about the human nature itself, whether it is good or evil and whether it can be trusted or not. Deep assumptions are also about the human relationships (society is organized around the individual or the community), the nature of reality and truth, space and time, and about how to deal with the unknowable and uncontrollable (Schein 2009). Of course, this vast theoretical interest for organizational culture has also led to investigating the impact of organizational culture on performance. There is often reference to "healthy" or "unhealthy" organizational culture and climate (Meek 1988), and to "strong" organizational cultures leading to higher performance in comparison to "weak" ones. However, like for HRM, as seen in the first chapter, the success of a culture is strongly dependant on how functional it is to the organization's environment (Schein 2009).

Even though organizational culture may be a source of improved performance and of effective cultural and ethnic diversity management, as discussed above, problems may arise from it, too. As defined above, culture is based on *shared* values, norms, and beliefs. This implies that organizational culture is a unifying force within the organization. Diversity, in the sense of difference from organizational culture becomes an issue as, if organizational culture implies this internalization of norms and values, individuals not holding to this dominant, shared value system are considered outsiders. Additionally, there may be several cultures within the same organization. For instance, if the management is from a different social class than the workers, it may develop a different culture which ultimately leads to two distinct cultures within the same organization. In this regard, organizations are arenas of conflict and the dispute is often on values (Meek 1988), therefore, organizational culture, too, needs to be considered by cultural diversity management. However, problems may arise due to the organizational culture per se. Based on a specific organizational culture, the organisation may operate, maybe unintentionally, in fundamentally discriminatory ways, leading to institutional discrimination, or, as defined above, to systematic discrimination. Organizational cultures are often infused with gendered meaning in unwritten rules, customs, and habits. For instance, the use of sexual humour is pervasive and generates gendered social relations in the workplace, contributing to the subordination of women. Stereotypes are reinforced through jokes and humour leading to negative experiences within the organisation for some people. Fighting discrimination entrenched in organizational culture is difficult for several reasons. First, everyone is embedded in culture and organizational culture, therefore one can try an objective analysis and criticism "from outside", but the reasoning used to criticise the culture is itself a reasoning deriving

from that culture. Second, there is inertia which derives from several other factors. (Bombelli 2010, Noon 2017) First there is ″homosocial reproduction″ (see above). HR systems are based on models promoting homogeneity between individuals and the organization and decision makers tend to hire, promote, and evaluate people in terms of how similar they are to their own image. In other words, preferred employees are those who better fit with the dominant coalition (Kossek and Lobel 1996). The dominant culture is often not able to understand the requests of marginalized minorities which are perceived as whiny and little adherent to the organization′s main issues. And even when they understand their demands, they have no incentive to change a system which has benefitted them. (Bombelli 2010, Noon 2017). More generally, individuals resist to cultural changes because culture provides meaning and predictability. It is reassuring and represents one of the most stable parts of organizational life (Schein 2009). Consequently, many scholars recognize that introducing effective diversity management within an organization, is extremely difficult, as it requires making a profound cultural change, starting from the support of the highest management and the integration of the diversity objective in the strategic plan (Gilbert, Stead, and Ivancevich 1999, Shen et al. 2009, Ozeren 2014). Additionally, even if engaged with change, leaders and managers - even though they have more control over it than other groups - do not simply create and manipulate organizational culture, as culture is something tacit that managers do not necessarily fully realize. It emerges from collective social interaction, it represents the collective learning of a group, and while employees produce and reproduce culture, they transform it (Meek 1988, Schein 2009). Therefore, as explained above, diversity training is crucial, as it starts change within employees, who with repeated interaction may then contribute to organizational culture changes.

3. <u>**Age diversity**</u>

Even though the term "age diversity" itself is neutral and is potentially referred to all age groups, research and practice on the matter focus on older workers, as the demographic trend makes them a category of concern. With life becoming longer and retirement age being constantly postponed, many generations share the workplace, creating an issue of diversity management, communication, and knowledge sharing (Mapelli 2016). Age diversity management is therefore trying to react to this demographic change which is perceived as an economic and social problem (Riach 2009). Declining birth rates in Western societies may lead to labour and skill shortage in the future, as the younger generations entering the workforce will not be able to counterbalance the number of retiring workers. Therefore, age diversity management is a question of social and economic sustainability. The older

workforce needs to help business fight skill shortage, sustain economic growth, and contribute to meet the costs of the ageing population (Davey 2014). Consequently, HRM needs to make sure to match the needs of the aging workforce to exploit its full potential (Kooij et al. 2008). The peculiarity of this diversity category is that everyone will potentially be part of it, leading in some cases even to multiple discrimination or intersectionality. Nevertheless, or maybe exactly because of this, age discrimination is not considered by managers as relevant as other discriminatory behaviours, such as towards gender or culture. The latter are more salient in terms of influence on company image and brand, as well as of accessing a wider talent pool (Riach 2009).

As age diversity focuses mainly on older workers, the first question which arises is, who belongs to the category of "older workers". Usually, the term is used to refer to employees over the age of 40 up to the age of 75. Anyway, today, several scholars believe that time, or "chronological age", is an insufficient measure of age. Aging involves changes on the biological, psychological, social and functional levels and affects individuals in the personal, organizational and social spheres in different ways. Simply put, individuals may be of the same "chronological age", but they may be very different in terms of health status, career stage or family status. Therefore, to meet the needs of workers in the framework of age diversity management, it is not enough to look at their "chronological age", other factors need to be considered (Kooij et al. 2008, Sammarra and Profili 2017, De Lange et al. 2006). Sterns and Doverspike (1989) suggest that there are five different ways to conceptualize age: chronological age, functional or performance-based age, psychological or subjective age, organizational age, and the life span concept of age. Chronological age simply refers to the individual's calendar age and is measured by the number of years passed from its birth. Even though demographic, social, and economic changes, but especially innovation in the medical field, have reduced the significance of chronological age, it is still relevant as it is used as the most common measure of age. Functional age is defined by two variables, the psychological age, determined by the individual's cognitive abilities, and the biological age, defined by physical health status. This dimension of age recognizes that individual abilities and functioning change over time affecting individual performance. For instance, the ability to process and memorize information (cognitive ability) as well as sight, hearing and muscular strength (physical health status) decline. The evaluation of functional age depends on the circumstances and expectations of the work task. Even though of the same chronological age, a scholar may be considered young, while a bricklayer may be considered already old, because his work is physically more demanding. Psychosocial age, too, is the result of two different variables, one's self perception of age (psychological age), and the social perception of age (social age). Psychological age is also defined as subjective age and is determined by how much a person feels, looks and acts "old", with which age group it identifies and to which it would like to

belong. Social age, which can be, for instance, measured by the age perception of colleagues or of the employer, captures social norms and stereotypes related to age which shape our perception of age. The whole psychosocial dimension of age is particularly important because it affects self-efficacy which is at the basis of the motivation to act and do. Years of service (tenure) and career stage are the dimensions captured by the concept of organizational age. For long time tenure has been considered a measure of an employee's experience and competence and accordingly of status within the organization, while career stage places age in the context of the person's career or occupation. According to this last conceptualization, behaviour is determined by the career level a person is in. For instance, an older employee who has already achieved its career goals will slow down, be less motivated and put in work activities less effort. The last concept of age, the life span approach, focuses on the behavioural changes determined by being in a certain point in the life cycle, as this can determine family and economic constraints. In other words, "being 30" has a very different meaning for a single person and a person living with a partner and children. However, research has demonstrated that family responsibilities per se do not affect motivation to continue to work or to pursue a career (Sterns and Doverspike 1989 in Kooij et al. 2008, De Lange et al. 2006, Sammarra and Profili 2017).

Even though this five-categories conceptualization of age is widely used in research, another interesting systematization is the generational approach, which argues that it is not age per se to be relevant, but the generation of belonging. The core idea is that each generation has similar deep-rooted values and attitudes as effect of having experienced the same social values and pressures, economic trends and historical events. Today, four generations live together in the workplace: Veterans (born between 1925 and 1945), Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1981) and Millennials (born between 1982 and 1999). Different values are attached to each generation, for instance, Generation X and Millennials are considered more individualistic, more concentrated on themselves and more worried about their work-life balance, while Baby Boomers, having experienced a flourishing economy, see their relationship with the employer based on stability, loyalty and sacrifice. Because generations consider relevant different aspects of work, organizations need to take this into consideration in their HRM practices, for instance, they may shape benefit packages according to generational preferences. The main drawback of this classification in comparison to the previous one is that it cannot be generalized, as it is based on the U.S. If generations are constructed based on shared social, economic and historical experiences, it cannot be given for granted that the same classification developed based on the U.S. can be applied, for instance, to China that has experienced a different social, economic and historical development (Sammarra and Profili 2017).

Even though not of primary concern for business management, the law in Western countries forbids age discrimination in the workplace (Posthuma and Campion 2009, Davey 2014). The U.S. Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA) protects people who are 40 or older from discrimination in employment, concerning hiring, discharge, compensation, terms, conditions and privileges of employment because of age (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). The European directive 2000/78/EC bans direct and indirect discrimination as well as harassment also on the ground of age (2000/78/EC). In some countries, such as in the U.S. and the UK, legislation has also reached the abolition of compulsory, or default, retirement age (Davey 2014). Nevertheless, anti-discrimination legislation has limited effects due to the subtleness of age discrimination and the difficulty to identify and prove it (Posthuma and Campion 2009, Davey 2014). For instance, in the U.S., legislation appears to have reduced unlawful firing, but it has not changed much in terms of hiring of older workers (Davey 2014).

At the basis of age discrimination there are persisting stereotypes about older workers. These, as previously explained, often stem from the generalized culture concerning what it means and implies to grow older. Aging employees are believed to have lower ability, motivation, and productivity than younger workers, as well as being harder to train, less adaptable, less flexible and more resistant to change (Posthuma and Campion 2009, De Lange et al. 2006). All these stereotypes are mirrored in employment practices and decisions concerning recruitment, job allocation, training, performance appraisal and promotion. Especially relevant is the discrimination in recruitment (Davey 2014). Excluded older workers believe that they are discriminated because of their age instead of being evaluated for the experience and competences they have. What is particularly problematic for older individuals is recruitment discrimination when it comes to finding a new employment after being fired, often due to cost considerations. What makes finding a new employment particularly hard is the unwritten rule of not offering a lower salary than the last one, even when the applicant is willing to accept less (Bombelli 2010). Additionally, there is the perception that there is a "correct age" for a person to hold a position, regardless of qualifications, which reduces the possibilities for older workers to be selected. In terms of job allocation, managers tend to assign easier tasks to older employees due to the belief that their cognitive ability is declining, reason for which they are also offered less training opportunities (Posthuma and Campion 2009, Riach 2009). Older workers are considered a bad investment when it comes to training. In the eyes of employers, older workers have shorter job tenure, which means that the employer will have fewer years to benefit from the training investment. Actually, older workers are less likely to quit than younger ones who are looking around for career opportunities elsewhere. Concerning promotions, older employees tend to have lower ratings in interviews and performance appraisals by supervisors, which reduces their possibility to be

promoted (Posthuma and Campion 2009). What is particularly worrying about stereotypes concerning older workers is that they risk to become self-fulfilling. The discrimination older employees experience in recruitment, job allocation, training, performance appraisal and promotion may lead them to believe that they are truly too old for a certain job, even though they have all the necessary competences. Lower motivation and its consequences then, do not derive from aging itself, but from the negative stereotypes management holds about older employees (Sammarra and Profili 2017).

If the stereotypes presented were true, older workers would be considerably less productive, which is however not the case, as the ample literature reviewed by Posthuma and Campion (2009) shows. In fact, some studies demonstrate that performance actually improves with age when measured by productivity or peer-reviews, and if it declines, it is by very little. The potential decline is often explained by decreasing cognitive functioning, but this hardly affects job performance, as individuals find methods to compensate it (Posthuma and Campion 2009). Compensation is often achieved thanks to increased "crystallized intellectual abilities". Some studies point to the fact that while fluid intelligence, the one related to the processing of information and problem solving, such as working memory, abstract reasoning and speed of reaction, may decrease with aging, crystallized intelligence, the one related to experience, like general knowledge and verbal comprehension, increases (Kooij et al. 2008, De Lange et al. 2006, Sammarra and Profili 2017). Overall, employees age is less relevant than individual skill and health as driver for performance. In fact, there are more significant differences of performance within age groups than between age groups. Additionally, there is a very common, positive stereotype that older employees are more stable, dependable, honest, trustworthy, loyal, committed and less likely to be absent or turn over. The latter is proved by studies showing lower rates of absenteeism among older employees (Posthuma and Campion 2009). Moreover, it has been shown that older persons better manage interpersonal problems and emotionally complex situations, which may make them more suitable than younger employees for tasks burdened with high levels of social and emotional complexity and stress. Lastly, organizations should never forget the value of knowledge and abilities that older workers have acquired thanks to experience (Sammarra and Profili 2017). In addition to business considerations, there are also ethic and social reasons for keeping older workers in the workforce, especially considering the beneficial effects on older people's physical, psychological, and financial wellbeing (Davey 2014). In conclusion, caring about age diversity in HRM seems now a forced necessity in regards of the demographic trend mentioned earlier.

As there is no way around age diversity management, the question now is how to best implement it. HRM practices should be redesigned according to the different needs and preferences of the various

age groups. Reviewing literature, De Lange et al. (2006) report that older worker put emphasis on opportunities of growth and of utilization of skills, responsibility, interesting work, physical security, and salary, while younger employees are more concerned about autonomy, social responsibility, high job demands, job variety, feedback and provision of external goal assignment (De Lange et al. 2006) Like for other diversity categories, the more useful practice seems to be training. Managers should learn to recognize common age stereotypes in their thinking and know the evidence that refutes them, to recognize and avoid them when taking decisions (Posthuma and Campion 2009, Davey 2014). For instance, concerning recruitment and selection as well as performance appraisal, despite eliminating implicit age limits in hiring announcements and in promotion possibilities, recruiters and managers need to be trained in focusing on experience and competences rather than age. Organizations need to collect and analyse data on selection and promotion to identify the existence of potential distortions that penalize older workers. To avoid discrimination concerning training, it is necessary to avoid restricting training to specific age groups and monitor the training requirements of all employees to guarantee development opportunities at all ages, lifelong training programs need to be activated (Mapelli 2016, Sammarra and Profili 2017). A second crucial pillar HRM should care about, is the creation of effective communication and knowledge sharing mechanisms between older and younger workers to both gain from the experience of older employees and to initiate true inclusion. Older workers knowledge can be transferred on documents or directly to people, especially when it is silent, implicit knowledge, through traineeship programs, job shadowing, coaching, and mentoring. Opportunities of bridge employment for retiring employees can make sure that the knowledge they hold, which is crucial to the organization, is transferred to other employees (Sammarra and Profili 2017). An interesting initiative carried out by some organizations is "reverse mentoring", which is not simply the young employee teaching the older one (usually concerning digital skills), but an opportunity to share views on generational differences (Alò 2016). Age diversity management should largely consider job redesign to obtain the full potential of older workers. For instance, with psychological aging (see age operationalization above), individuals increasingly look for contact with others to obtain affective rewards (emotional satisfaction) and to support one's own identity rather than to gain resources (instrumental), which suggests that generative tasks, such as teaching and mentoring, may better suit older employees interests and abilities (Kooij et al. 2008). Considering that fluid intellectual abilities decrease with aging, while crystallized ones increase, as noted above, an efficient work assignment among workers implies giving tasks requiring fluid intellectual abilities to younger employees and duties where crystallized intellectual capacities are predominant to older workers (De Lange et al. 2006, Kooij et al. 2008, Sammarra and Profili 2017). Additionally, some studies interestingly suggest that instead of simplifying older employees' tasks, it is more conducive

to add cognitively complex tasks as this increases older people cognitive functioning and therefore productivity (Posthuma and Campion 2009). In conclusion, efficient age diversity management should allow continuing career development to give older employees a continued sense of "becoming" and avoid their careers to plateau. This requires a rethinking of the traditional, vertical career scheme, developing transversal, cross-functional careers (Kooij et al. 2008, Sammarra and Profili 2017).

4. <u>Ability diversity</u>

Another category diversity management deals with is disability. "Ability diversity" entails a very heterogenous social group, as very different experiences fall under the definition of "disabled people" (Cavanagh et al. 2017). In regards of the discussion above on group membership forging identity, when it comes to disability, individuals with disabilities hardly see themselves as part of a group as they seldomly share similar experiences in the workplace and in the wider community and they do not compose a group that shares customs and norms. There are several different sources of impairment leading to different obstacles and the degree of the impairment varies not only among individuals, but often fluctuates also during the lifetime of the person as it may worsen, or improve thanks to medication. Complicating the attempt to define this diversity category even more, is the fact that disability is contextual. Being dis-able to perform something depends on the specific activity required (Roberts 1996). To try to categorize this difficult minority group, it is usually distinguished between individuals with a physical disability, individuals with mental health problems and individuals with intellectual disability. But classifying individuals in these finer-grained social groups does hardly help diversity management on an operational level. For instance, blindness and hearing impairment are both physical disabilities, but they require very different practices on the workplace. Similarly, schizophrenia and depression are two mental health issues, but they hardly imply the same workplace accommodations (Cavanagh et al. 2017). Further demonstrating the difficulty in defining what "ability diversity" is, is the fact that, even though not typically included in ability diversity programs yet, overweight people are becoming an issue. "Fat people" are becoming part of paths of exclusion, because obesity is associated with laziness e little propensity to work. Many HR directors admit that at competence parity, they prefer the thin candidate (Bombelli 2010). Even though 785 million individuals in the working age worldwide are disabled and their employment rates (in OECD countries) are below 60%, few management studies have dedicated attention to ability diversity. Their focus is generally on the adjustments to adapt the workplace and the tasks to the individual's impaired capacity, on the cost increase for employers hiring disabled individuals and on the poor understanding

of HRM professionals and managers about disability issues. Very little attention has been given to the way the individual's impairment or the negative attitude of co-workers limit the possibility of participation (Cavanagh et al. 2017).

National legislations have articulated set of rules on disability on the workplace making legal compliance for organizations complex (Lunt and Thornton 1994). The previously mentioned council directive 2000/78/EC, outlaws discrimination due to disability in the European Union (2000/78/EC). In the U.S., Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) makes it illegal to discriminate against "qualified individuals with disabilities". According to ADA, employers have to accommodate the physical or mental impairments of a disabled qualified applicant or employee, unless doing so would imply an "undue hardship" on business activity (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). "Undue hardship" has to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and its proof lies with the employer, while it is clear that employers do not have to hire or promote unqualified or underqualified individuals (Roberts 1996). The principle of "reasonable accommodation" or "reasonable adjustments" is common in many legal frameworks, despite national differences. The employer must modify to a certain degree the work environment, often with the support of a public grant, to allow a person with disability to participate in the application process, perform the essential functions of the job and enjoy benefits and privileges like those enjoyed by employees without disabilities (Roberts 1996, Lunt and Thornton 1994, Cavanagh et al. 2017). Reasonable accommodation, according to ADA, includes also more debated practices which may lead to conflicts among co-workers, as it includes job restructuring, changes in schedules of working hours and reassignment of the employee with disability to a vacant position (Roberts 1996). Regardless of national differences, a second widespread tool is quotas determining the number of people with disabilities that must be employed by large organizations (Lunt and Thornton 1994, Cavanagh et al. 2017). Some countries foresee financial penalties for organizations not respecting the quota. A third set of common legislative actions are financial measures. Subsidies are paid to employers to make up for the lost productivity due to the hiring of an individual with reduced ability. These can take various forms, like wage subsidies covering the wage cost or one-off grants. But they can also consist in rewards for employing disabled people or in the coverage of the costs borne due to the "reasonable accommodation" (Lunt and Thornton 1994). The last widespread provision is specialist disability employment support services. Like there are employment, guidance, assessment, training and retraining services for non-disabled individuals, they are also provided for people with disabilities (Lunt and Thornton 1994, Cavanagh et al. 2017).

Regardless of the specificity of the disability, discriminatory behaviours remain the same, such as discriminatory recruitment and selection practices, pay inequalities, lower performance evaluations

and fewer promotions and training opportunities (Cavanagh et al. 2017). The discrimination persons with disabilities face on the workplace is usually based on misconceptions and stereotypes held by employers. Many believe that employees with disabilities represent a safety risk for themselves, co-workers and customers as well as a source of higher health care costs, that they have higher levels of absenteeism, lower levels of productivity and need more help to perform their duties (Roberts 1996). According to Cavanagh et al. (2017) part of the discrimination during selection is given by the low awareness by organizations of the governmental supports for hiring workers with disabilities (Cavanagh et al. 2017). Concerning the pay gap, research shows that, depending on the severity of their impairment, disabled men earn up to one quarter less than non-disabled men with otherwise similar characteristics (Lunt and Thornton 1994, Roberts 1996). In OECD countries, the workforce with disability has a lower income by 15-30% (Cavanagh et al. 2017). The reason for tight salaries to employees with disabilities may be employers knowing that these individuals have limited mobility in the labour market due to persisting discrimination. The consequences of the pay gap are underestimated if not looked at in connection with workforce drop-out rates. Considering that many individuals with disabilities are entitled to financial support from the state, those who gain a salary so low that it is hardly convenient to continue to work, may drop out entirely from the workforce due to this discriminatory practice (Roberts 1996). In relation to performance appraisal, there are negative biases often in the form of stricter performance standards (Thanem 2008, Cavanagh et al. 2017). Disables individuals are often stereotyped as low performing, low productive and incompetent. Consequently, disabled individuals are promoted seldomly; promotions are often denied or unreasonably delayed (Cavanagh et al. 2017). In fact, the small proportion of disabled individuals in paid work are found in semi-skilled or unskilled occupations, not in managerial positions (Thanem 2008). Additionally, disabled workers, regardless of their position, are usually strongly, or even excessively, supervised. Lower wages and lower job positions are partly consequence of discrimination in job-specific training which is rarely offered to workers with disabilities (Cavanagh et al. 2017). These circumstances affect the individuals' happiness and performance, as they lead to low job satisfaction, high turnover and absenteeism and lower rates of productivity.

In comparison to other diversity categories, such as the analysed cultural and age diversity, the business case for ability diversity is weak. Even though mentally disabled people may be seen as "flexible, compliant, and cheap labour" for simple tasks (Thanem 2008), employers perceive accommodating workers with disabilities as costly as they are perceived as less productive and lower performing (Thanem 2008, Cavanagh et al. 2017). However, many studies point to the fact that with appropriate training, support and inclusive management practices, workers with disabilities perform well. Organizations see workers with mental health issues as the most problematic. As previously

hinted to, employers are worried about their unpredictable behaviours and potential safety issues for the others. Additionally, individuals with mental illness take significantly more sick leave and have higher absenteeism and turnover rates. Consequently, affected individuals try to hide their condition to avoid that their mental health issues negatively affect their possibility of employment and advancement (Cavanagh et al. 2017).

Even though the benefits of having ability diversity within the organization seem to be non-existent or very little, organizations, as integral part of society, have the moral and social responsibility to care for ability diversity, as employment represents an important source of financial, social and emotional support (Cavanagh et al. 2017). According to Roberts (1996), diversity management concerning disability should be based on three core principles. First, if disability is seen as something negative within the organization, then it is a failure of the organization, not of the employee diverging from the dominant group. Second, the heterogeneity of the diversity category should be always kept in mind and individual differences must be considered. Lastly, unlike for other diversity categories, diversity management for disability must be extremely flexible, able to adapt to changed conditions of the employees. As hinted to before, the impairment may change over time both negatively and positively, thanks to medical advancement and new technologies for the workplace (Roberts 1996). This implies that organizations need to go beyond legal compliance. Making the "reasonable accommodations" is necessary, but not enough to create a truly inclusive workplace (Lunt and Thornton 1994). Again, diversity training is essential. Considering the widespread lack of understanding among HRM professionals and managers about the issues related to disability in the workplace, diversity management worry about training on how to properly manage and support workers with disabilities. Having research demonstrated the importance of co-workers' attitude for the successful inclusion and performance of individuals with disabilities, ability diversity management should actively target this issue (Cavanagh et al. 2017). For instance, diversity training raising awareness and illustrating to co-workers the most appropriate behaviour, may be helpful (Thanem 2008). Many misunderstandings and problems could be avoided through open communication, where employees and managers have the possibility to ask questions, people are taught not to ask out of politeness. Frank interaction may avoid that co-workers without disabilities avoid disabled employees rather than experience the embarrassment of saying or doing something wrong. Honest communication occasions may also improve the "reasonable accommodation" process, leading to better arrangements, as all voices, of both disabled employees and of co-workers are heard (Roberts 1996). Both employers and employees should be trained especially on mental illness as the social stigma around it leads to many people negatively stereotyping it and excluding affected co-workers (Cavanagh et al. 2017). Additional arrangements such as hours flexibility and

task accommodation can contribute to the effective meeting of the disabled employee's needs (Lunt and Thornton 1994). As for all diversity management practices, they are only effective if they are embedded in an organizational culture accepting and valuing diversity.

5. <u>**Sexual orientation diversity**</u>

Sexual orientation is for many the "last acceptable and remaining prejudice" and, in fact, organizational research has dedicated limited attention to it in comparison to other dimensions of diversity such as ethnic or gender diversity (Ozeren 2014, Ng and Rumens 2017). Advocacy for LGBTI rights has traditionally focused on civil rights such as marriage equality rather than equality on the workplace (Ng and Rumens 2017). As for ability diversity, sexual orientation diversity includes a variety of identities, as there are a lot of intra-group differences. The acronym LGBTI reflects this heterogeneity, but in terms of workplace policies and practice, transgenders and intersexuals are seldomly considered, as they have different requirements. In fact, diversity management literature almost exclusively deals with LGB (Ng and Rumens 2017). What makes dealing with sexual diversity more difficult for HRM, in comparison to other diversities is, that it can be hidden. In the U.S., 3.8% of the whole population identifies itself as LGBT (Ng and Rumens 2017) and consistently, the ratio of LGBT employees to the whole workforce is estimated between 3% and 12% (Ozeren 2014). However, these numbers are only very rough indicators, as many LGBT individuals decide not to "come out", especially in the workplace, to avoid exposing themselves to homophobia, harassment and discrimination and harm their career and work experience (Day and Greene 2008, Ng and Rumens 2017, Ozeren 2014). According to a Human Rights Campaign survey, 53% of LGBT workers hide their sexual orientation (Ng and Rumens 2017). Only 40% of LGBT employees report experiencing fair treatment at work (Day and Greene 2008), but anti-gay attitudes are seldom reported for fear of retaliation (Day and Greene 2008, Ng and Rumens 2017).

Even though discrimination and harassment on the workplace seem to be a common worry and reality for many LGB(TI)s, not as many legal frameworks as one would hope outlaw it. As it has been argued before, discrimination and tolerance for diversity is strongly culturally determined. Consequently, considering that sexual orientation discrimination is still pervasive in many societies, it is of no surprise that many countries, especially emergent economies, are reluctant to protect LGB(TI) employees from workplace discrimination (Ozeren 2014). In some countries, homosexuality is still considered a medical condition, in 73 nations homosexuality is illegal, and in 13 of these, death penalty is foreseen for same-sex acts (Ng and Rumens 2017). Even in traditionally liberal Western

countries LGB(TI)s are not as protected on the workplace as one would believe. While again, the Employment Equality Directive 2000/78/EC of the European Union outlaws employment discrimination due to sexual orientation, in the U.S., sexual orientation discrimination is prohibited only at state level; no federal law bans it (Ozeren 2014). LGB(TI) workers have no legal protection in 28 U.S. states, which in principle means that employees can be fired on the basis of their sexual orientation (Ng and Rumens 2017).

LGB(TI)s workplace issues are not only related to unjustified firing, they go from blatant harassment in the form of physical abuse to more subtle forms, like verbal harassment, inappropriate jokes, or lack of respect by peers and managers (Ozeren 2014). Microaggressions and ostracism are invisible to observers and difficult for the victim to prove (Ng and Rumens 2017). These behaviours can stem from a single, isolated co-worker, but also in concert with an organizational culture that is not inclusive of sexual orientation diversity. The problem with organizational culture and sexual orientation is that in many organizations heteronormativity and cisnormativity are prevalent. Heteronormativity is referred to how heterosexuality has a normative status in the workplace and divergent sexual orientations are perceived as "unnatural". Cisnormativity on the other side refers to the assumption that it is normal for individuals to have a gender identity which is the same as the sex assigned at birth. These believes shape organizational culture, making it unwelcoming for LGBs at work (Ng and Rumens 2017). Hostile national or organizational culture can lead to discriminatory outcomes in the HRM processes like inequality in wages and hiring processes or barriers to promotions and benefits. Many researches show that gay men earn less than their heterosexual counterparts, similarly to the pay gap women experience. On the other side, lesbian women earn more than heterosexual women in similar positions. This circumstance should raise many question. If it is the case because lesbian couples tend to have a more equitable division of household duties than heterosexual couples, this should ring an additional bell in relation to the unpaid care work carried out by heterosexual women. While if the wage gap is related to the more masculine traits lesbian women display, it should ring an alarm regarding how strongly gendered organizational positions are (Ozeren 2014).

As previously stated, firms should worry about sexual orientation discrimination just for the social case reasons. A supportive work environment leads to reduced anxiety, emotional exhaustion, social stress and depression as well as improved mental well-being for LGBs (Ng and Rumens 2017). However, there are also business case arguments supporting sexual orientation diversity management. Despite the already presented arguments of tapping into a wider talent pool and improving branding, sexual orientation discrimination leads to performance loss. Non-disclosure of sexual orientation may harm performance because much of the cognitive energy of the individual is used to hide one's sexual

orientation, leading him or her to underperform. On the other side, workers who are free to express their sexual orientation at work seem to display higher organizational commitment and greater job satisfaction (Day and Greene 2008, Ozeren 2014). The presence of LGBs in teams seems correlated with creativity and innovation. But still, 22% of heterosexuals report that they would feel uncomfortable working with a gay or lesbian co-worker (Day and Greene 2008). Against sexual orientation diversity management, some supporters of the "don't ask don't tell" policy, have argued that requiring employees to work with sexual minorities who display their sexual orientation, harms performance. However, empirical support for this argument is lacking, while research is increasingly demonstrating the contrary (Ozeren 2014).

At least for the sake of the bottom line, organizations should aim at creating an inclusive organization. To incentivize self-disclosure, while respecting the individual freedom of not doing so, companies need to create an organizational culture which is perceived as safe (Day and Greene 2008, Ozeren 2014). For instance, they may introduce an equal opportunity policy and an organisational LGB(TI) group. Explicit written rules to prevent sexual orientation discrimination are a necessary starting point but are not enough (Day and Greene 2008, Ozeren 2014). It must be made sure that sexual orientation diversity is taken into account in common HRM policies and practices, such as: safe compliant mechanisms, scrutiny of policies and practices to uncover bias, networking, diversity councils and representative institutions, and domestic partner benefits (Ozeren 2014). Moreover, training is crucial also for the management of this diversity dimension. For instance, HR recruiters and managers can be trained to avoid unwillingly discouraging LGB(TI) candidates during interviews by showing discomfort, by "fishing" for information about the candidate's sexual orientation or even by applying more rigorous criteria (Day and Greene 2008). It is believed that effective diversity training programs can fight homophobia, discriminatory behaviour, and prejudice. By raising awareness and encouraging dialogue, they help the management to confront sexual orientation related issues (Ozeren 2014).

III. Gender related HR critical issues

While individuals differ on many aspects, gender - and consequently gender inequality - is the oldest and most common diversity issue worldwide (Shen et al. 2009). Women represent 49,6% of the world population, however they are still treated and considered as a minority group, in opposition to the male dominant social group. In 2017, women represented 39,3% of the workforce worldwide. This relatively low percentage is given by perpetuating patriarchal cultures, where women hardly work. For instance, in the Middle East and North Africa, women are only 20,5% of the workforce. In OECD countries the percentage is of 43,9%, due to some considerable national differences, as the graph below suggests. However, in most Western countries, women make up almost half of the workforce. Both in the European Union and in the United States, women are 45,8% of the workforce, versus 41,7% and 44,3% in 1990 (The World Bank Group 2017).
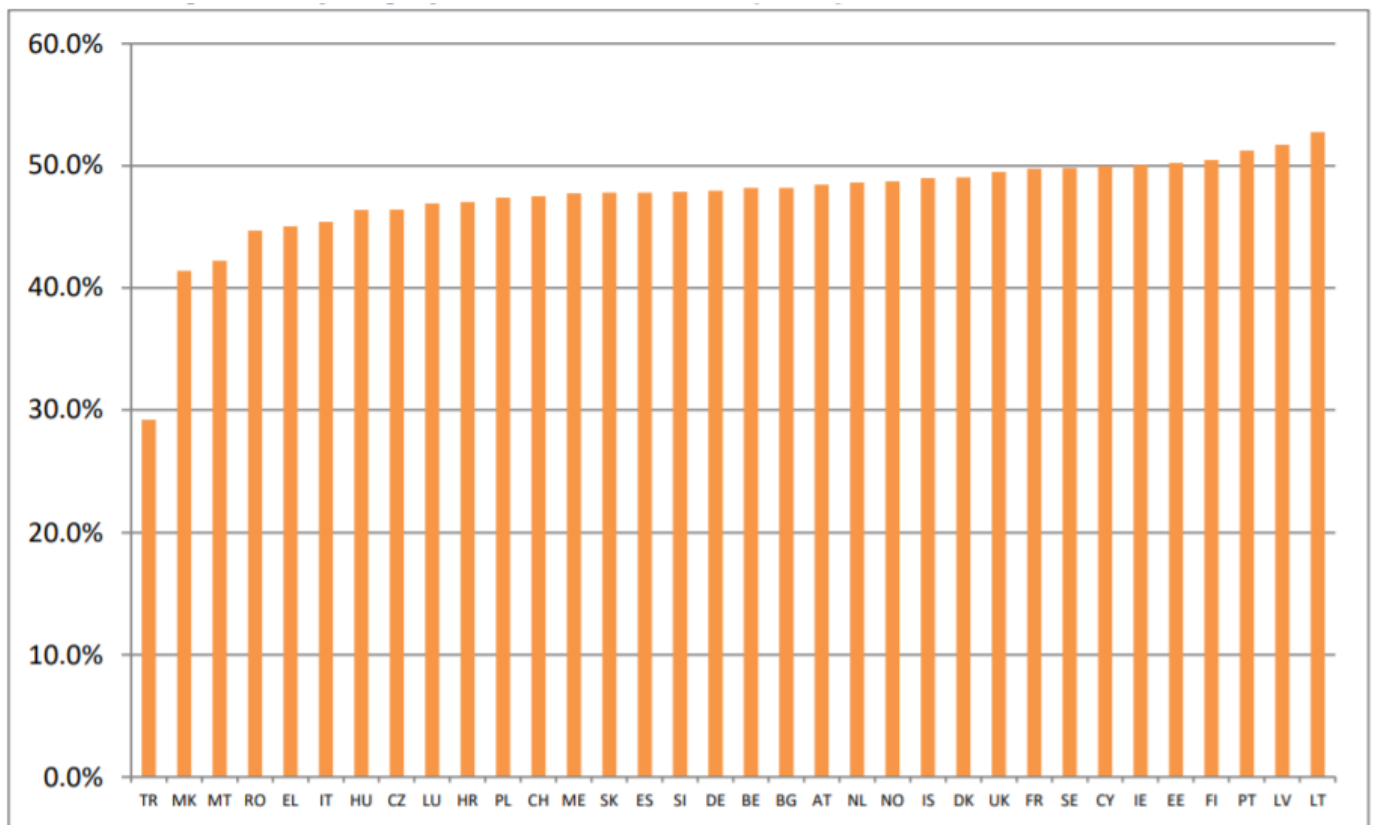

Figure 6: Proportion of employees who are women (2017) (Eurostat 2017 in Fulton and Sechi 2018).

This improvement in female participation has been achieved thanks to remarkable social and cultural changes, as well as legislation which clearly sanctions the equality of women in the workplace. Title

VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits to discriminate someone in matters of hiring, discharging, compensations, and terms and conditions of employment on the basis of race, colour, religion, national origin and sex. Later, The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 amended Title VII to make sure that women are not discriminated against due to pregnancy, childbirth or medical conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). Similarly, in 1976 the European Union approved the Council Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions (76/207/EEC). The fact that women are now almost half of the workforce and that legal barriers for women to actively participate in the workforce have long been eliminated in Western countries (European Commission's Expert Group on Gender and Employment (EGGE) 2009) and gender-based discrimination is outlawed, may suggest that women have overcome cultural and social barriers to enter the workforce and that discrimination in recruitment and selection, as well as in career advancement, is dissipated. This belief may be reinforced by the fact that there is academic consensus on the beneficial effect of women's workforce participation for organizations. As for cultural and ethnic diversity, gender diversity is believed to improve organizational performance on all levels suggested by the business case for diversity previously presented. For instance, women's presence on corporate boards is often associated with higher returns on equity, operating profits and share prices (Terjesen, Aguilera and Lorenz 2015). Nevertheless, women are disadvantaged in almost every aspect of employment, in hiring, income, promotions, turnover and authority (Purcell, MacArthur and Samblanet 2010). However, the majority of the dominant group does not see or does not want to see this. The general belief is that by now equality has been reached (Bombelli 2010). Of course, blatant gender discrimination has long been overcome in Western countries, however, more subtle and complex reasons, mainly connected with masculine organizational cultures and maternity, still put women at a disadvantage in matters of employment. How HR processes tend to disadvantage women and how diversity management may (or may not) help overcome this, need close attention to understand what contributes making 49,6% of the world population a minority social group.

1. Recruitment and selection: occupational segregation

The first step to enter into the workforce requires going through a recruitment and selection process, generally managed by HR practitioners either internally or externally to the organization. Recruitment and hiring are processes aimed at finding the worker most suited for a particular position. This should imply that organizations have primary interest in finding the most competent candidate regardless

any individual characteristic, such as gender. However, while competency should be gender-neutral, there are jobs considered more appropriate for female candidates and others for male ones (Acker 2006). In fact, even though women are almost half of the workforce, they are not represented equally across all jobs and industries. This would not be particularly alarming per se if it was not for the fact that women are crowded in the lower-paying jobs and fields. This circumstance is referred to as occupational segregation (Farber 2017, Gnesi, De Santis and Cardinaleschi 2016, Anker 1997). While the glass ceiling, which will be discussed further on, refers to a vertical segregation where women are crowded at the bottom of organizations, unable to climb the organizational ladder, occupational segregation refers to horizontal segregation across jobs and sectors (Blau and Kahn 2017). As of 2005, the top six occupations for women in Europe were: shop and salesperson and demonstrator, domestic and related helper, cleaner and launderer, personal care and related worker, other office clerk, administrative associate professional, and housekeeping and restaurant service worker. For men the main occupations were: motor vehicle driver, building frame and related trade worker, manager of small enterprises, building finisher and related trade worker, physical and engineering science technician, and machinery mechanic and fitter (EGGE 2009). Concerning occupational segregation in the U.S., it is emblematic that men hold only 30% of jobs in education, but 98% of jobs in construction (Equitable Growth 2017). Occupational segregation discussions often overlap issues related to the gender pay gap, because women's segregation is mainly in low-paying jobs (Elvira and Saporta 2001, Anker 1997, Equitable Growth 2017, Fernandez and Sosa 2005) as the data on the U.S. labour market shows. However, occupational segregation is only one of the many reasons for the gender pay-gap (Anker 1997), which will be discussed in detail in a following section.
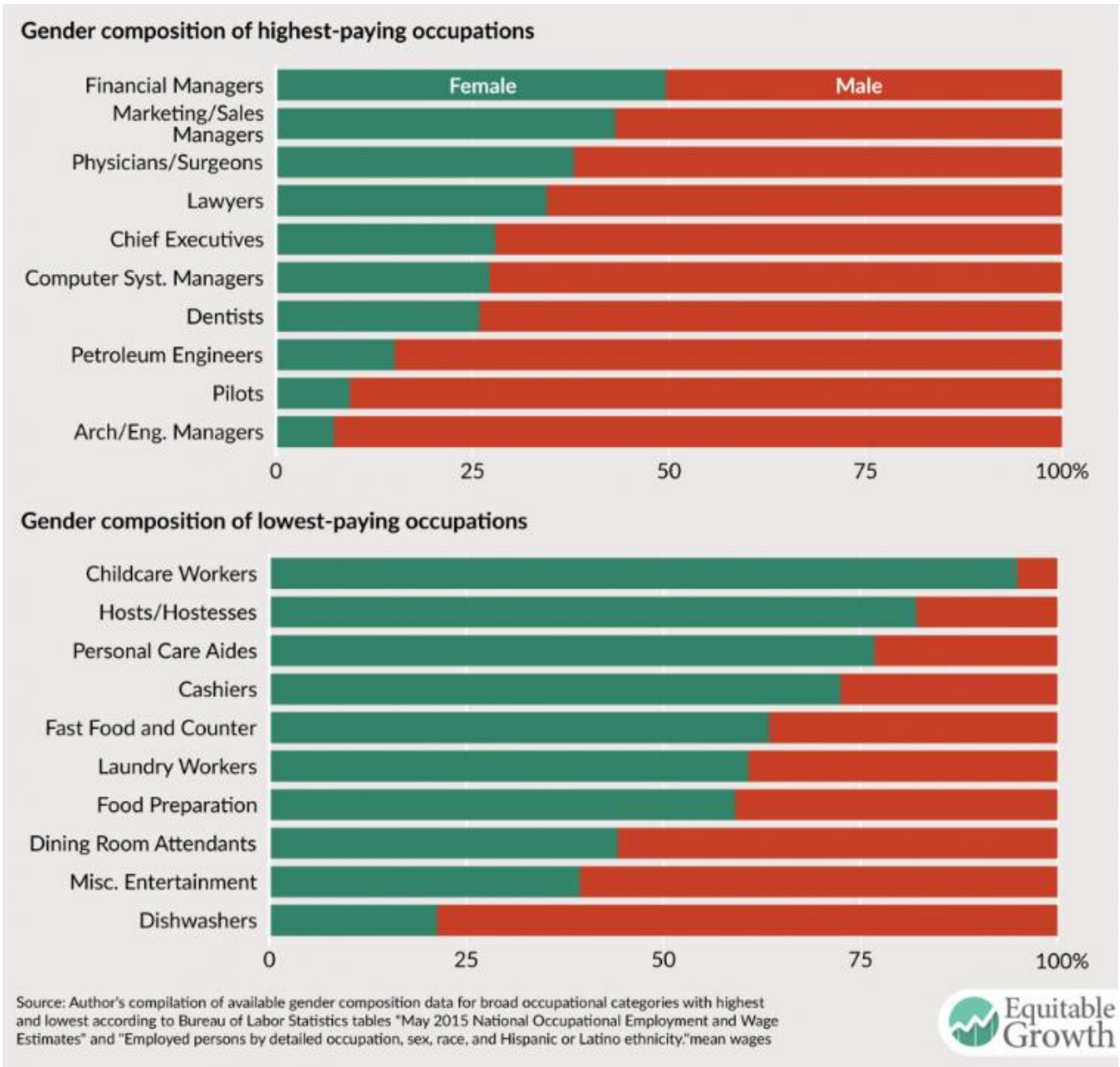
Figure 7: The gender composition of the highest- and the lowest-paying U.S. occupations, 2015 (Equitable Growth 2017).

This evidence raises the question whether there are pre-hire mechanisms or HR discriminatory behaviours during recruitment and selection that sort women into determined jobs and fields (Elvira and Saporta 2001, Fernandez and Sosa 2005). The mechanisms explaining occupational segregation are usually divided into labour supply and labour demand factors.

Labour supply explanations start from the argument that women prefer certain types of occupation rather than others. Because of their childrearing and care duties, women prefer jobs with flexible hours and which are relatively easy to interrupt for a certain amount of time. Or more specifically,

therefore women choose occupations with high starting salaries, relatively low returns to experience and relatively low penalties for temporary withdrawals from the labour force, and with flexible working hours (Anker 1997, Dolado, Felgueroso and Jimeno 2003, EGGE 2009, Fernandez and Sosa 2005). In fact, occupational segregation by gender seems positively correlated with the share of part-time jobs in the economy, which allow for more flexibility. Countries with a high share of part-time employment also display higher degrees of gendered occupational segregation (Dolado, Felgueroso and Jimeno 2003). On the other side of the spectrum, men are prevalent in high-paying fields where organizational cultures demand long hours and facetime in the office, which hardly accommodate flexibility for caregiving duties (Equitable Growth 2017). According to this point of view, it is women's choice to work in determined sectors in line with their endowments, constraints and preferences (Anker 1997). Many scholars have broadly attributed these preferences of women for certain jobs to socialization (Fernandez and Sosa 2005). At this point, it is enough to acknowledge that labour supply preferences are an argument used to explain women's predominance in low-paying jobs, but in the next chapter, the issues of women's preferences and choices, and of gendered socialization, will be granted the detailed discussion they deserve.

Explanations focusing on the labour demand side, emphasise employers' preferences, discussing why employers prefer to hire men rather than women. According to the neo-classical or human capital approach, female workers have lower human capital because they have less education and accumulate less work experience because of employment interruptions due to motherhood. Therefore, they are selected for jobs requiring lower human capital which are consequently also the lower-paying ones. Additionally, women are considered higher-cost workers. They are considered to have higher rates of absenteeism, to be late more frequently, to have higher turnover rates - which means that the employers need to spend in new hires' training more often - and to be less flexible than men concerning staying late and being available also during leave days. Again, it has to be noted that these female behaviours are predominantly connected to women having the burden of care responsibilities outside of work. In addition to these indirect costs, labour laws and regulations, such as the paid maternity leave, increase the comparative cost of employing females over employing males. Another explanation, which still assumes the employer's rationality, is the one based on *employers' taste for discrimination*. Employers tend to have a prejudice against those who are different, therefore they sustain a cost when they hire someone from the discriminated group. To avoid such cost, they simply hire fewer people from that group. Furthermore, another relevant set of arguments explaining why women are discriminated against in recruitment and selection processes is the *statistical discrimination theory*. Information gathering for recruitment is extremely costly, therefore employers decide based on the average differences between groups concerning variables such as productivity,

skills or experience. Because, according to human capital theory, women have statistically less skills and experience and are therefore less productive, employers prefer men over women and avoid bearing the cost of making an informed hiring decision (Anker 1997). Close to statistical discrimination there is the issue of stereotypes, as in the face of uncertainty, stereotypes become more salient in the hiring decision (Fernandez and Sosa 2005). Managers may unconsciously stereotype while hiring, selecting women for jobs traditionally dominated by women and men for job categories dominated by men (Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly 2006). In fact, women seem to be segregated in those occupations which require the characteristics stereotypically associated to women (Anker 1997, Fernandez and Sosa 2005). The top six occupations for men and women in Europe presented above prove this point. Women are concentrated in care occupations in line with the assumed female caring and nurturing nature, while men are more present in jobs requiring physical strength and resistance, mathematical and logical skills as well as managerial abilities. The Washington Center for Equitable Growth (2017) reports that the main reason for occupational segregation are assumptions about what kind of jobs are best suited to the different genders, rather than an effective allocation of innate talent between them (Equitable Growth 2017). For instance, Fernandez and Sosa (2005) observe in their study that managers hiring for a customer service call centre of a bank are likely to be influenced by gendered notions of what makes for good customer service interactions.

Another fundamental set of reasons why women are present in certain jobs and not in others is that they do not pursue education and training in determined (high-paying) fields. Simply put, more man than women work as engineers because more man than women pursue education in engineering (Anker 1997, EGGE 2009). As a project manager with an engineering background working for a French Oil and Gas company pointed out while talking about a highly competent female colleague, it is right to set targets to hire more women, but there simply aren't any to hire. In engineering school, he recalled, there was only a handful of women in his course. In 2014, in the United States, women were awarded 50% of bachelor's degrees and 46% of master's degrees in Science and Engineering. However, in the category "science" there are also psychology and social sciences included which are predominantly female fields. Looking only at engineering, women's low representation becomes more evident: women represented only 19,8% of bachelor's and 24,2% of master's degrees (NSF 2017). The fact that women are less likely to pursue degrees in the high-paying STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields is receiving increasing attention (Wagner 2015, Blau and Kahn 2017, Schlenker 2015). Women's little representation in STEM subjects has often been associated with their lower skills in mathematics. Even though there is no significant difference in math test scores in high school, there is still performance difference in top levels with men outperforming women in science and math tests and women outperforming men in reading and

language tests (Blau and Kahn 2017). Nevertheless, the gender gap in STEM cannot be fully explained by differences in abilities; personal preferences, expectations about labour market outcomes and socialization play a relevant role, too (Schlenker 2015). According to a study conducted by Microsoft across 12 European countries, interviewing 11.500 women between the ages of 11 and 30, the main reasons behind girls' low interest in science and technology are: a lack of role models doing STEM, little hands-on practical experience in STEM subjects, teachers talking little about STEM and not encouraging them to it, the uncertainty about the relevance of STEM, no equal employment opportunities in STEM professions, and the belief that STEM professions are not creative. What is particularly noteworthy is that, according to the study, girls become interested in STEM subjects at the age of eleven-and-a-half, but such interest starts to fade at the age of fifteen. This suggests that it is not innate little talent or interest that keeps girls and women away from STEM fields. Girls are often implicitly discouraged, while boys are implicitly encouraged, to pursue STEM subjects. Conformity to gendered social expectations, roles, and stereotypes, as well as a lack of role models, strongly influence girls' career paths. It is necessary to make sure that girls start to like science and technology and that they prove to themselves that they are perfectly capable in those fields before the bias kicks in. 57% of the interviewed girls and women stated that having a teacher encouraging them to pursue a career in STEM makes it more likely that they will do so (Trotman 2017). In line with the reasons for girls' low interest in science and technology, it is necessary to train teachers and to modernize school curricula to introduce real-world, hands-on math and science problems in the classrooms. It is also essential to give young students access to networks of STEM professionals, because school is the place where students anticipate how a career in STEM may be like (Jahn and Myers 2015, Trotman 2017). However, schooling is not the only source of gender differences in the STEM fields, the role of parents is fundamental, too. According to the expectancy-value theory of achievement, engagement, effort, and choices are closely influenced by the success an individual believes to be able to attain and how important he deems the task. Therefore, parents' beliefs and behaviours concerning their children's abilities and gender atypical occupations - and the perception children have of such beliefs and behaviours - are relevant for children's occupational aspirations, choices and attainments (Eccles 2015, Lawson, Crouter, and McHale 2015). More traditional mothers tend to overestimate their children's skills in gender-stereotypic fields, which in turn is associated with the children's own perception of ability (Lawson, Crouter and McHale 2015). This tendency however seems to be pervasive not only among traditional parents. Studies conducted by Eccles (2015) show that parents tend to believe that their daughters are better in English than in Mathematics and that their sons are better in Mathematics than in English, even though it is not the case, as the children's grades demonstrate. Also the amount of effort to reach such grades does not

vary according to gender, even though parents tend to believe that their sons' success in math is due to natural talent, while their daughters' success is mainly due to hard work. These beliefs tend to predict the children's own rating of their abilities. Mothers' rating of their daughters' math ability predicts the girls' rating of both their ability and interest in math. Even more interestingly, mothers' high rating of daughters' English ability predicts daughters' lower rating of their math ability and interest, regardless of how well they are actually doing in math. To put it simple, parents often have gender-stereotypic beliefs about their children's abilities and this impacts the perception that the children themselves have about their own abilities. Moreover, parents' beliefs may in turn determine the kind of experiences they offer their children, reinforcing gendered socialization and gendered career choices. For instance, girls are more often encouraged to read or asked to read aloud, they are encouraged to take dance lessons or to dance for fun, to take music lessons and play a music instrument, as well as to learn to cook and do other home-related activities. On the other side, boys are more often encouraged to do out-door and science related activities, such as to play and watch sports, to do math and science activities at home, to play computer and to build, make or fix things. These parental beliefs and behaviours may inadvertently push daughters away from sciences (math) and towards humanities (English) (Eccles 2015). In this regard, the findings of Lawson, Crouter and McHale (2015) are particularly interesting. They found that - probably because fathers tend to encourage children to more risk-taking, exploring, active, and initiative-taking leisure activities, thus expose them to a wider range of skill-building activities – daughters spending more time with fathers during childhood, tend to have less gender-typed professional aspirations and actual occupations in young adulthood (Lawson, Crouter, and McHale 2015). All these circumstances help explain the gender differences concerning STEM-related course taking, occupational aspirations and job choices, which are apparently more related to socialization than to innate talent (Eccles 2015, Trotman 2017). The fact that even women who graduate in STEM subjects are less likely than men to work in STEM occupations, reinforces the conclusion that it is not a matter of talent. Even those who have pursued education in a certain field, and have thus demonstrated ability in it, are likely to be excluded or segregated out of male-dominated fields (Schlenker 2015, EGGE 2009).

Two last mechanisms indirectly discriminating against women in recruitment and selection that are worth of special attention are homophily and networks. Because personal networks are an important resource to find jobs and because networks are often gendered due to homophily, as explained before, men and women are channelled by their networks to different (gendered) jobs during their search. It is common for employers to use the networks of employees as part of the recruitment strategies and to hire employee referrals. But because networks are gender biased, so are referrals (Fernandez and Sosa 2005). Because the relevance of networks and networking goes beyond recruitment and

selection, a separate section is dedicated to it in the following. Homophily affects selection and recruitment not only though network effect, but also because HR managers tend to bring people into the organization who fit the values of the decision-makers (Shen et al. 2009) who are predominately white males.

To fight the implicitly discriminatory mechanisms in recruitment and selection, but also in all other HR dimensions discussed below, organizations need to take a preliminary step. Organizational responsibility for diversity needs to be established (Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly 2006). Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly (2006) argue that a specific person or group needs to be assigned responsibility for diversity to avoid that diversity management goals become forgotten and suppressed by everyday urgency. On the contrary, it can be argued that the whole HRM needs to be made accountable for the implementation and the outcomes of diversity programs. If diversity practices and policies are suggested and implemented by a separate entity, they may be perceived as additional or even as conflicting with everyday HRM practices, and their legitimacy may be questioned. This has to be avoided as diversity management needs to become a fundamental and integral part of everyday HRM. Of course, this is easier said than done, therefore, an entity specifically assigned to change HRM practices in the light of diversity management objectives may be a necessary transitory step. Once this preliminary objective has been achieved, specific practices may be implemented to fight implicit discrimination in the various HRM practices. Noon (2017) explains that equality monitoring is the first necessary step to identify and fight occupational segregation. Equality monitoring entails the systematic collection and analysis of data about the composition of the workforce (Noon 2017). Thanks to this practice, organizations can recognize both vertical segregation, which will be discussed later, and horizontal segregation. They can identify if there are specific jobs which are female-dominated and if they are indeed the lowest paid. Once this has been recognized, it is possible to redress the situation either by implementing hiring targets to change the workforce composition in determined jobs or by reconsidering the wage structure within the organization to make sure that female-dominated areas are not the less paid. Other more specific practices are also possible. To avoid the "old boy" networking that excludes women, Purcell, MacArthur, and Samblanet (2010) suggest making sure that recruitment is open, for instance through job advertising or employment agencies, rather than informal through network referrals (Purcell, MacArthur, and Samblanet 2010). To face employers' taste for discrimination, diversity training may be useful to reduce managerial bias by highlighting how unconscious stereotypes might influence hiring decisions. To try to increase women's representation in STEM fields, HR practitioners of STEM organisations may develop collaborations with universities to be present during high-school students' orientation activities. According to Avery and McKay (2006) campus recruiting at predominantly female universities, as

well as presence at diversity job fairs targeting underrepresented groups, convey to students the impression that the organization values diversity (Avery and McKay 2006). This may be considered as an extension of talent management and employer branding practices many high-profile organizations already have. Employer branding, or employer image, is *"the mental representation of specific aspects of a company as an employer held by individual constituents"* (Lievens and Slaughter 2016:409), or in other words, it is the attributes that an individual associates with the organization as a place to work, which of course influence the individual job seeker's attraction to the organization. Many elements influence employer image, such as pay and advancement opportunities, brand equity, investment in human capital, general advertising, public relations, CSR policies, website aesthetics, interaction with recruiters and overall recruiting experience, (social media) word of mouth, content about the organization on mass media, or presence on Best Places to Work rankings (Lievens and Slaughter 2016). Organizations are increasingly trying to tie their employer brand to diversity, cultivating their diversity reputation, to be more appealing to minority and female job seekers (Avery and McKay 2006). This may be particularly relevant to attract women towards organizations working in STEM or in other fields particularly affected by gendered job segregation. According to Avery and McKay (2006), women place more importance on whether the organization values diversity, on the presence of similar colleagues, and on work-family balance opportunities. Organizations not only need to comply with these features, but they also need to convey the message to prospective female applicants that they do so. There are several means to achieve that, such as pictorial diversity and equal employment opportunity statements in recruitment ads. Both have been shown to be positively perceived by female job seekers. The first proves that the organization is inclusive and other women are successfully employed, the second, that the organization conforms to anti-discrimination legislation. Also where the ad is placed may be relevant; placing ads in media viewed more frequently by women may increase the percentage of female respondents and transmit the feeling that the company values diversity. Moreover, even though there is no consensus in the empirical literature, also having a female recruiter may lead more female applicants to accept an eventual job offer. Women tend to be more attracted to companies including statements about their commitment to diversity in their recruitment ads or featuring diversity initiatives in their recruitment brochures. Promoting awards for successful management of diversity, mentoring programs, and CSR initiatives towards women, such as the sponsoring of events targeting them, shows female applicants that the organization is actively committed to diversity. On the other side, organizations which do not have a record of successful diversity management or even have a reputation of discrimination should aim at communicating that they *seek* diversity. Eventually they may even admit that the only way they can achieve this objective is if women (and minorities) apply, and, if it is the case, apologize for past

discrimination. It is important that the communication conveys the message that the organization truly values diversity and that it does not only seek out female applicants to avoid appearing discriminating, to improve the public image, or to comply with legal mandates (Avery and McKay 2006). These practices may be particularly effective for organizations working in STEM fields, because, as Avery and McKay (2006) report, targeted recruitment practices enhance diversity perceptions among job seekers only if their distinctive (gender) identities are salient, which is obviously the case in STEM, considering the low representation of women. Nevertheless, all the above-mentioned practices seem to be able to scratch only the surface of the problems women face in employment, considering how deeply rooted and complex they are, which has already become clear by just looking at recruitment and selection. Five overarching barriers have emerged in this discussion and will reappear in every following section: motherhood, socialization, homophily, and culture, both national and organizational. Looking at The World Bank Group (2017) data on female workforce participation, it immediately becomes clear that cultural ideas about the role of women in society strongly determine women's workforce participation in the first place. Arab countries tend to have very low female workforce participation, while Western countries have consistently higher percentages. National cultures are often mirrored in organizational cultures, too, as discussed before, but even when they are not openly discriminating against women, current organizational cultures seem to represent a problem for women (and mothers) in employment. As it will become even clearer in the following, motherhood seems a condemnation for working women. So far, motherhood has been identified as the source of women's lower human capital and as the reason why women are considered higher-cost workers and why they are statistically discriminated against. Another recurring aspect will be the one of socialization. For what has been said so far, socialization is believed to be one reason for women's preference for certain occupations and their little representation in STEM fields. Because these issues go beyond the control of HR practitioners, it s clear that diversity management can only be useful to a certain degree. Now and in the following sections, only limited diversity management practices have been, and will be suggested, while in the following chapter it will be argued that diversity management can, side by side with institutions, become an agent of social change in the matters of motherhood, socialization and culture.

2. <u>Professional development: training, networking and mentoring</u>

Once hired, training, mentoring and networking, or more generally development activities, are important requirements for career advancement (Delaney and Lundy 1996, Forret and Dougherty 2004). On-the-job training is needed to acquire the necessary firm-specific skills which allow the

employee to perform well, to advance, and eventually receive pay rises (O'Halloran 2008). Networking allows access to valuable resources in the form of information, contacts and support which may be crucial for salary progression, total compensation, number of promotions and perceived career success (van Emmerik et al. 2006, Timberlake 2005, Forret and Dougherty 2004). Mentoring, in addition to be helpful for career advancement through activities such as coaching, sponsoring for promotions, exposure and visibility, protection from adverse forces and providing challenging assignments, can be a source of profound personal development thanks to the psychological support it provides to young employees (O'Brien et al. 2010, Ragins and Cotton 1999, Sosik and Godshalk 2000). Because these practices are so fundamental for personal development and career advancement, gender discrimination in these regards is particularly problematic, as it leads to few women in managerial and executive positions and in turn to the gender wage gap discussed further on.

In the first chapter it has been discussed how according to the Resource-based view, valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable resources are at the basis of an organization's competitive advantage (Barney 1991) and how these characteristics are hold by employees who are at the core of organizational success (Paauwe and Boselie 2003). Because people are a source of sustainable competitive advantage, organizations need to invest in their learning and development to keep being innovative and successful. In this regard, as argued in the first chapter, HRM has a crucial strategic role. Even though human resources are so fundamental, and organizations are recognizing that women too are highly valuable resources, studies show, not unanimously however, that women receive less on-the-job-training than men (Blau and Kahn 2017, O'Halloran 2008, Veum 1996, Grönlund 2012). Royalty (1996) found a lower incidence of on-the-job training using 1980-1986 data (Royalty 1996 in O'Halloran 2008). Grönlund (2012) found that the initial on-the-job training is 4 months shorter for women in comparison to the one men receive (Grönlund 2012). Based on 1979-2004 data, O'Halloran (2008), in line with other researches, finds that women receive on-the-job training of shorter duration, but at a higher incidence, while he does not find gender difference concerning training intensity (total hours of training/total hours of work). The high incidence may be due to women's higher job turnover which leads them to be more often new hires requiring initial training. Another possible explanation is that women are crowded in jobs requiring more training. Additionally, the higher incidence but shorter duration of training may hide the fact that women receive training of very little content or economic value. In fact, the duration of training is relevant, as longer, more intense training sessions represent a significantly larger investment in human capital than shorter, less intense ones (O'Halloran 2008). On the contrary, Veum (1996), based on 1986-1991 data found a greater training intensity for women, but no gender difference in duration or incidence. The greater training intensity can be explained by women working fewer hours and being

employed in entry-level positions which are per se associated with greater training intensity (Veum 1996). Contrary to this explanation, Grönlund (2012) finds that the level of initial on-the-job training is lower in female-dominated occupations. Employees in the most female-dominated fields have jobs requiring 4 months less of training than employees working in male-dominated fields (Grönlund 2012). To sum it up, there is no univocal consensus on gender-based differences in receiving on-the-job training, however, many studies find a disadvantage for women in one measure or the other.

The most common explanation for women being disadvantaged in on-the-job training, is that employers expect greater future returns from investing in men than from investing in women. Because investing in on-the-job training involves costs for both the employer and the employee, it is most likely to happen if the employment relationship is expected from both sides to last long, especially if the skills to be acquired are firm-specific. Because employers expect women to have higher turnover, to switch to less demanding jobs, to completely exit the workforce or at least to experience more employment interruptions, all due to motherhood, firms are more reluctant to invest in their training (Blau and Kahn 2017, O'Halloran 2008). This may also result in self-fulfilling expectations. If employers incorrectly expect women to quit their job due to motherhood and give them less firm specific training or assigns them dead-end jobs, faced with fewer incentives to remain in the job, women respond with the higher turnover the employers expected (Blau and Kahn 2017). On the other side it is also true that if women themselves expect breaks, they are less likely to seek out jobs which require high levels of on-the-job training (Grönlund 2012, O'Halloran 2008). Regardless of whether it is because employers do not hire women for occupations where on-the-job training is important or because women do not seek such jobs, this results in segregation, as women are excluded from jobs requiring on-the-job training (Grönlund 2012). Here, for the first time we notice how much gender related HR critical issues are interrelated across HR activities. Occupations' training requirements are another mechanism sorting women into different jobs during recruitment and selection and contributing to their occupational segregation in low-paying jobs. According to O'Halloran (2008), even though there seem to be an economic and rational explanation for employers investing less in training for women, this does not explain the whole gender difference. Even controlling for labour force attachment and expected tenure, a gender training gap remains, which is likely to be given by unobserved discriminatory tendencies. As hinted to before, discrimination in on-the-job training is problematic as it hinders advancement and pay rises, which in turn contributes to the gender pay gap, as it will be discussed further on. Additionally, the gender training gap is probably wider than measured by many studies, as they are only able to evaluate formal training, which is measurable. However, it should be considered that training can also be informal (O'Halloran 2008), where men

may have even greater advantage than in formal training programs due to more opportunities of networking and mentoring.

Social networks, in addition to be potential sources of informal training opportunities, are proved to be important elements for career advancement as they provide access to valuable resources (van Emmerik et al. 2006, Timberlake 2005). Networking is the building and nurturing of personal and professional relationships, both inside and outside the organization, to create a system of information, contacts and support (van Emmerik et al. 2006). Forret and Dougherty (2004:420) define networking behaviour as *"individuals' attempts to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career"* and identify five types of networking behaviours: maintain contacts, socializing, engaging in professional activities, participating in community, and increasing internal visibility. There seems to be a link between networking behaviour of individuals and career outcomes in the forms of salary progression, total compensation, number of promotions and perceived career success. Especially internal visibility and professional activities influence positively career success outcomes (Forret and Dougherty 2004).

Studies show that men have more developed networks and that networks benefit men's career advancement than women's (van Emmerik et al. 2006). Women appear to be excluded from relevant networks, especially at high levels (van Emmerik et al. 2006, Shen et al. 2009, Timberlake 2005, Forret and Dougherty 2004). Similarly, Timberlake (2005) argues that women have difficulties to access social capital, the reciprocity, trust, mutual understanding and shared values and behaviours that connect networks and communities (Timberlake 2005). A common explanation for these circumstances is homophily, the tendency, as explained in the previous chapter, to interact with others who are similar on a given attribute, such as sex. Similarity of personal characteristics facilitates the creation of ties, makes communication easier and behaviours more predictable, and fosters relationships of trust and reciprocity. Even though homophily does not need to be necessarily defined in terms of gender, several studies have demonstrated the prevalence of sex-based homophily as determinant of workplace relationships (Ibarra 1992). Additionally, if networking is a way to access resources, men will instrumentally prefer to interact with other men, as they are part of the dominant group which has access to higher status and more valuable resources. Because men are perceived to be more influential and powerful than women within organizations, they are more central in networks. This circumstance is proved by the fact that women too, even though they are of the opposite sex (no homophily drive) seek relationships with male co-workers rather than female colleagues for instrumental purposes. Differences between men and women in terms of achievement and position within organizations, make women, as a group, less desirable network contacts. Their little presence in management positions and their crowding in low-level jobs makes them less central than men in

networks (Ibarra 1992, Forret and Dougherty 2004). In addition to these explanations for women's exclusion from networks based on personal preferences, there is a second set of arguments based on structural limits. Here the explanation for male-dominated networks lies in the sex composition of the group. In other words, there simply is little availability of professional women, therefore they are not present in networks (Ibarra 1992). A third argumentation aimed at explaining women's lower presence and centrality in networks refers to women's tendencies and behaviours. Women are believed to engage in less networking behaviours and to use their networks less effectively. In fact, men's greater success in gaining promotions has been attributed also to their stronger engagement in networking and their more effective use of networks (van Emmerik et al. 2006). Out of the five forms of networking behaviours, Forret and Dougherty (2004) report that women engage less than men only in socializing. One explanation for this gender difference is found in different socialization which allows men to hold more instrumental attitudes, while women are expected to be more emotionally responsive to others. For women it is considered appropriate to show communal attitudes, while men are expected to show agentic behaviours. In fact, men are also more likely to seek contact with key people than women (van Emmerik et al. 2006). The ability to establish many relationships and activate social networks is a key element in career advancement. In fact, wide networks of weak ties seem to be more beneficial than smaller networks with stronger ties. This again, puts women at a disadvantage as their socialization makes them more comfortable in smaller, less competitive environments. Being more central parts of networks also advantages men over women in career advancements because knowledge and information that are shared in networks, create human capital which is promoted and paid by organizations (Timberlake 2005, Farret and Dougherty 2004). However, even if women engage in networking, networks seem to be more beneficial for the career progression of men. For instance, internal visibility is strongly related to total compensation and to the number of promotions for men, but not for women (Farret and Dougherty 2004).

The effect of women's little access and centrality in networks may be even wider than explained so far if it is considered that it can make it more difficult to find a mentor, too. Mentoring is the support of a more experienced and influential member of the organization (mentor) for the professional development of a less experienced employee (protégé) (Metz and Kulik 2014, O'Brien et al. 2010, Ragins and Cotton 1999). Mentors provide two forms of mentoring functions. First, they help in career development by engaging in actions that advance the protégé such as sponsoring for promotions or lateral moves, exposure and visibility, protection from adverse forces and providing challenging assignments. Second, they provide psychological support. This interpersonal aspect of mentoring includes supporting through friendship, acceptance, and role modelling to enhance the protégé's sense of competence, self-efficacy and personal and professional development (O'Brien et

al. 2010, Ragins and Cotton 1999, Sosik and Godshalk 2000). Like networking, mentoring is considered to have beneficial career effects for the protégés in terms of increased compensation and more frequent promotions (O'Brien et al. 2010, Ramaswami et al. 2010, Ragins and Cotton 1999, Sosik and Goldshalk 2000), but also provides more career mobility, job and career satisfaction, commitment and organizational socialization as well as lower turnover intentions (Ragins and Cotton 1999, Sosik and Godshalk 2000). A fundamental reason why this is the case is derived from signalling theory: a protégé's affiliation with a respected senior member signals its worthiness (Ramaswami et al. 2010). Unfortunately, also in this regard women experience differentiated access as they have more difficulties in establishing mentoring relationships (Shen et al. 2009, Metz and Kilik 2014, Ragins and Cotton 1999), even though there is conflicting evidence on the exact terms to which this is the case. In terms of likelihood of experiencing a mentoring relationship, there seem to be no gender difference (Ragins and Coton 1999, O'Brien 2010). However, there is discordance concerning the level and specific behaviour of the mentoring relationship. For instance, some studies argue that females receive more psychological support and less career development support than male protégés (O'Brien et al. 2010).

The reasons why women may have more difficulties than men in accessing mentoring relationships in the first place are several. First, there is a lack of female mentors because women are less represented in higher organizational positions where they have enough power and access to resources to mentor someone else. In other words, according to several studies, men are more likely to serve as mentors because of their, on average, higher organizational status. This is especially true in male-dominated fields. While on the other side the few women with the status to be effective mentors, are overburdened with mentoring request. This implies that while men may choose to initiate a mentoring relationship with someone of the same sex, women do not have this option (O'Brien et al. 2010, Ragins and Cotton 1996). Forced to cross-gender mentoring relationships, women encounter several difficulties. First, there may be an issue of little perceived similarity, which is an obstacle for the identification necessary to build strong mentoring relationships (O'Brien et al. 2010, Sosik and Godshalk 2000). Again, homophily leads to preferring interactions with individuals who are similar to ourselves. Based on this, there is homosocial reproduction which is people's tendency to advance those similar to themselves (Gilbert, Stead, and Ivancevich 1999). Furthermore, men may be reluctant to mentor women due to existing negative stereotypes and biases about women in the workforce (O'Brien et al. 2010). Another relevant set of reasons is related to cross-gender relationships' perception in the workplace (Metz and Kulik 2014, Ragins and Cotton 1996). Women may be reluctant to initiate relationships with male mentors due to the fear that this may be interpreted as sexual advance by the mentor himself or by colleagues (Ragins and Cotton 1996,), or they may fear

sexual advances from their male mentor (Sosik and Godshalk 2000). Additionally, because of the sex-role expectation of women being passive and waiting for relationships to be initiated with them, assertive approaches may be viewed negatively by both potential mentors and co-workers. Even though this may not be true, and these expectations may not hinder all women, the perception itself is enough to prevent some women from initiating mentoring relationships with male mentors. On the other side, male mentors may prefer male protégés to avoid discrediting office gossip and jealousy from their spouse (Ragins and Cotton 1996). For instance, a Project Manager in his early forties, working for a male-dominated engineering services company and planning a work trip of several days on the field with a protégé, admitted that he would not feel comfortable in bringing a female protégé along, out of fear of discrediting rumours which may harm his credibility and career. While on the one side such concerns may be understandable, on the other, a valuable learning opportunity and work experience would have been foregone to a young female employee just because of her sex. According to Ragins and Cotton (1996) these barriers mainly arise from little experience with professional women, especially in high managerial roles (Ragins and Cotton 1996). I would add, that these barriers are becoming more salient today thanks to the increasing attention that society and media are granting to women opening up about sexual harassment in the workplace. The *#metoo movement*, launched in the wake of producer Harvey Weinstein being accused of sexual harassment by several Hollywood film stars, has started a debate. On one side it is showing the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in many work settings and is encouraging women to openly talk about their experiences, on the other side, many men fear potential instrumentalizations by female co-workers. If and how this movement may have implications on cross-gender relationships in the workplace in the medium and long term may be of interest for future research.

Furthermore, the lack of women in mentoring positions is not only a problem for other women to find a mentor in the first place, but also because research suggests than mentoring relationships vary according to the sex of the mentor and the protégé (O'Brien et al. 2010, Ramaswarmi et al. 2010). Even though there is an inconsistent pattern of results in research exploring this matter, overall, male mentors seem to be able to positively influence their protégés more. For instance, protégés of male mentors have on average higher promotion rates and higher managerial levels than protégés of female mentors. Male-male mentoring relationships seem to be the most fruitful leading to higher compensation (but not more promotions) than any other gender combination. But also women with a history of male mentors reported higher compensation levels than those with a history of female mentors. Even though their compensation is still lower than the one obtained by their male counterparts, female protégés with male mentors seem to have the highest promotion rates, even higher than the ones of men with male mentors (Ramaswarmi et al. 2010, Ragins and Cotton 1999,

Sosik and Godshalk 2000). Because of their agentic characteristics, male mentors are more comfortable in providing career development support rather than psychological support to their protégés. In comparison to female mentors, men's higher organizational rank and status makes it easier for them to provide the necessary career development to the protégé (O'Brien et al. 2010, Ramaswarmi et al. 2010, Sosik and Godshalk 2000). Therefore, they may be preferred as mentors. Female protégés may value female mentors less because they see them as unable to help them break the social and structural barriers on the workplace, as they are part of the minority group, too. Men on the other side may be perceived as able to protect from discriminatory practices and help break the glass ceiling (Sosik and Godshalk 2000). Female mentors tend to be more focused on the nurturing and emotional side of the relationship, in line with gender social norms and expectations, providing more psychological support, which is still an important aspect of mentoring (O'Brien et al. 2010, Sosik and Godshalk 2000). However, Ramaswarmi et al. (2010) suggest that sex differences in mentoring outcomes may be sensitive to the sex ratio and sex typing of specific industries. The returns to a mentoring relationship seem to be the most significant in terms of compensation and career progress satisfaction, especially with a male mentor, for women in male-gendered industries, where women are underrepresented, and the culture is aggressive, engineering-intensive and competitive. In such settings, a male-female mentoring relationship is especially salient because it is particularly visible and it signals to other seniors that the female employee is a legitimate contestant (Ramaswarmi et al. 2010).

Disadvantages in on-the-job training, networking and mentoring hinder women's career advancement, while they could actually be tools favouring advancement. For instance, Forret and Dougherty (2004) consider networking a powerful tool to help women break the glass ceiling. As hinted to before, in terms of on-the-job training, HRM practitioners seem to have little power, as the reasons putting women at a disadvantage are deeply embedded in the social and cultural context, as they are tied to motherhood. Of course, organizations should, in the context of equality monitoring, collect data also on employees' participation to on-the-job training to make sure that there is no evident discrimination. However, more drastic, normative measures may be needed. According to O'Halloran (2008), assuming that the shorter duration of on-the-job training for women is due to discrimination and not differences in labour force attachment and expected tenure, affirmative action may reduce the training gap (O'Halloran 2008).

Despite the gender issues in networking and mentoring given by the lack of women in organizations, especially at higher levels, which is an overarching problem and will be discussed later in detail, HRM can intervene with specific programs. To help women overcome the barriers they face in networking, organizations can implement formal networks. Formal networks are formally prescribed

relationships aimed at achieving a certain organizational objective. They are public, officially recognized by the organization, with identifiable membership and an explicit structure. Examples are networks for young talents or diversity networks. Formal networks allow to get to know other members of the organization better and therefore provide information, mentoring, and support (van Emmerik et al. 2006). Being part of formal networks may help women tie those ties which enable them to become central parts of informal networks, too. Moreover, according to van Emmerik et al. (2006), HRM should provide training for women to develop their networking capabilities. In this regard, Ettus (2017), makes and interesting suggestion in an article on Forbes.com. She argues that networking should be reframed for women as "helping". While women do not perceive themselves good at networking, they think they are good at helping. Presenting networking as a "fancy word for helping" makes it less intimidating for women (Ettus 2017). Based on this, HRM should aim at identifying and teaching effective networking behaviours more suited to women's interaction style, rather than teach them how to network like men do. If women are socialized to be less agentic or instrumental, presenting networking as *reciprocal* helping, may help them thrive.

Concerning mentoring, as for formal networking, formal mentoring programs may not be ideal (Ramaswarmi et al. 2010, Ragins and Cotton 1999). If we assume mentoring to be relevant for career outcomes because it signals to other senior employees the worthiness of the protégé, then formal mentoring programs would be useless, as the mentor would not have chosen the protégé voluntarily (Ramaswarmi et al. 2010). Formal relationships may have less identification, comfort and motivation than informal relationships. In fact, protégés in formal mentoring reported lower career development and psychological support from their mentors, as well as lower income and lower satisfaction with the mentoring relationship than protégés in informal mentoring relationships (Ragins and Cotton 1999, Ragins and Cotton 1996). However, implementing formal mentoring programs may at least guarantee to women to have access to mentoring relationships at all. Even though, of course, this does not guarantee the level and depth of the mentoring relationship. Ragins and Cotton (1999) underline how formal mentoring programs may be developed as starting points for informal mentoring rather than substitutes for it. Programs may identify potential protégés and mentors, train them in activating and leading effective mentoring relationships, but then let them find their mentoring partner. The acquired skills and strategies can then be used to initiate also purely informal mentoring relationships further on. How exactly to tailor formal mentoring programs should receive special attention from HRM, as a study by Ragins and Cotton (1999) actually suggests that female protégés gain less than men from formal mentoring programs; they report reduced coaching, role modelling, counselling and friendship functions than their male counterparts. Implementing programs aimed at supporting women which then end up benefitting women less than men would be ironic. Furthermore, training

may focus on discussing sexual concerns in cross-gender relationships and how stereotypes and expectations harm women searching for a mentor. Potential male mentors should be made aware of the barriers women face and should be trained in becoming effective cross-gender mentors, for instance by communicating in a way that works for both sides (Ragins and Cotton 1996, Sosik and Godshalk 2000). Both men and women should be instructed on how to deal with potential sexual issues and initiating an open debate about it may help overcome them. Another interesting suggestion by Ragins and Cotton (1996) is to promote female mentors by including mentoring activities in performance appraisals and salary decisions considerations. This shall encourage women in middle-management positions who fear for their position and believe that they cannot afford it to spend time in mentoring (Ragins and Cotton 1996). It can be added that this may also help overcome queen bee issues and encourage solidarity among women.

3. <u>Performance appraisal and career</u>

Difficulties in terms of on-the-job training, networking and mentoring affect women's possibilities of advancement, however the issue of career barriers is more complex, especially at the highest levels of organizations. Despite their increasing presence in the workforce, women struggle to reach the high-payed managerial positions. Since the introduction of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) legislation, women have increased their presence in low and middle management positions, but their representation at executive and board levels remains low (Metz and Kulik 2014, Billing and Alvesson 2014). As of 2016, in Europe, on average only 23,3% of board members of the largest publicly listed companies were women. Only in ten European countries women account for at least one quarter of board members.
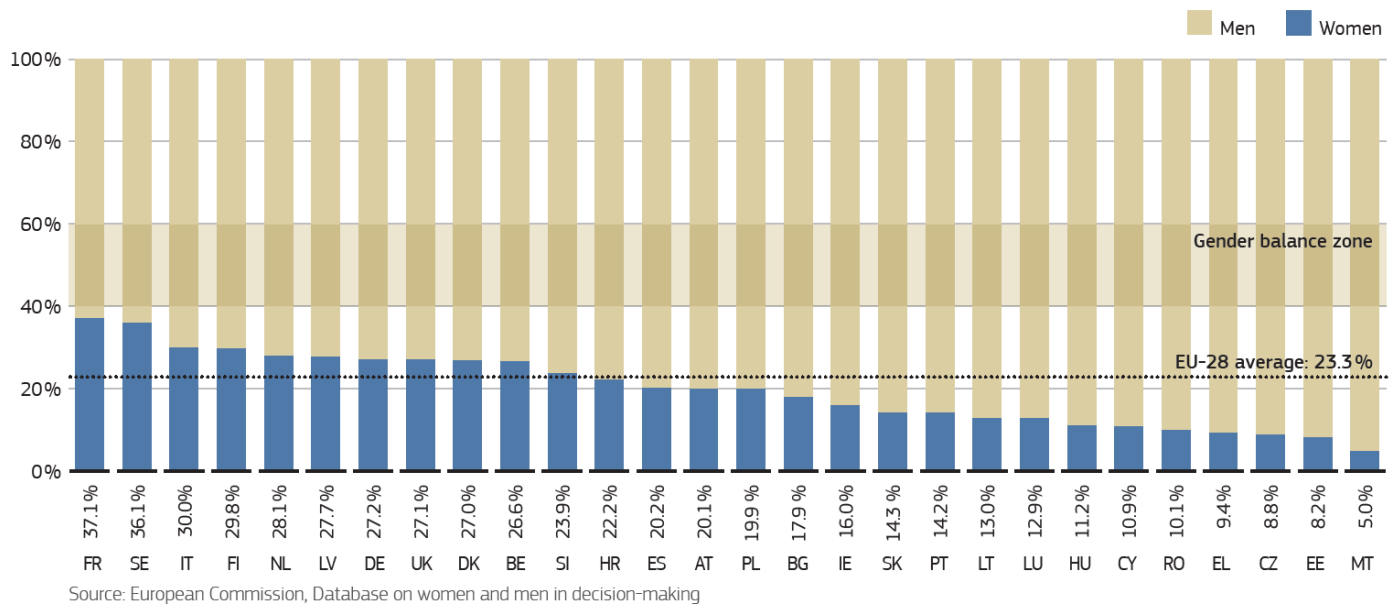
Figure 8: Representation of women and men on the boards of large listed companies in the EU, April 2016 (Jourová 2016).

Looking at even higher organizational levels the percentage drops sensibly lower: only 5,1% of the largest listed companies in Europe have a female Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (Jourová 2016). The situation is not very different in the U.S., where roughly 19% of the board positions of the Standard & Poor 500 are occupied by women and less than 5% of companies has a female CEO (Leibbrandt, Wang and Foo 2017, Cain Miller 2015). The phenomenon of women not advancing past a certain point in their career despite their qualifications and achievements is referred to as the "glass ceiling" (Purcell, MacArthur and Samblanet 2010). The U.S. Department of Labor defines the glass ceiling as *"those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management level positions"* (U.S. Department of Labor 1991). The data on board membership and CEOs show that the higher women move up the ladder, the stronger the glass ceiling effect becomes. For instance, while women account for approximately half of law students and entry-level law firm associates, they represent only 18,7% of equity partners in large law firms (National Association for Law Placement, Inc. 2018). While the glass-ceiling metaphor is often used in relation to white-collar jobs, the concept of "sticky floor" is used in research to refer to low-status jobs, where women face barriers to mobility to higher paying roles and to more prestigious jobs between organizations (Purcell, MacArthur and Samblanet 2010). Another interesting metaphor is the one of the "glass cliff" referring to women being appointed to senior leadership positions in periods of below average performance or scandal. "Glass cliff" refers to the high risk of failure in these positions. According to some scholars, on the surface this signals

confidence in women's leadership capabilities, in reality it allows to attribute the failure to women's inability to deal with crises (Metz and Kulik 2014, Billing and Alvesson 2014).

Probably the most commonly heard argument why women do not climb the corporate ladder is that they become less committed to work once they become mothers and prefer to dedicate more time to their family, while men remain focused on their careers (Purcell, MacArthur and Samblanet 2010, Metz and Kulik 2014). The belief that women display less commitment due to their childrearing activities is highly debated as there seem to be no empirical evidence for it. Female and male managers tend to be equally ambitious, committed and with similar career aspirations (Metz and Kulik 2014). The second assumption, that women decide to step back from their careers out of *personal preference* to take roles of primary caretakers requires closer attention and will be therefore discussed in detail in the following chapter. The underlying problem is that even though individual women display strong commitment and would not quit the corporate ladder out of personal preference, they still experience motherhood, or even the sole possibility of it, as a barrier to career advancement (Metz and Kulik 2014). This is due to social gender roles that ascribe childrearing duties to women and breadwinning responsibilities to men (Billing and Alvesson 2014, Metz and Kulik 2014). Because of these expectations, decision-makers in organizations assume that women will be less committed to work than men regardless of the specific individual woman. A process of statistical discrimination, as explained above, takes place. Even though organizations now generally put in place policies and practices to help women combine work and family, organizational cultures still tend to discourage women's access to those policies as it would negatively impact their career (Metz and Kulik 2014). Emblematic in this regard is egg freezing becoming part of benefit packages of organizations such as Facebook or Apple. Recognizing the importance of family and career for women and the fact that they cannot avoid maternity, these organizations suggest women to freeze their eggs to at least post-pone maternity in order not to jeopardize their careers (Rottenberg 2017). This implicitly admits that at current circumstances, in their organization, it is impossible to combine maternity and career. Postponing maternity, rather than encouraging it at the years of highest fertility, is a worrying approach considering the demographic trend discussed earlier.

The argument based on maternity not making women suitable for high demanding positions is however an excuse to cover more problematic structural elements hindering women's careers. First, the issues highlighted in the previous section impede women's development and advancement, especially homosocial reproduction and the lower opportunity of mentoring (Purcell, MacArthur, and Samblanet 2010). Homosocial reproduction represents a problem in performance appraisals as it reduces the probability of promotions for women. Tsui and Gutek (1999) reported that there is consistent evidence showing that a higher similarity between supervisor and subordinate in terms of

age, race or gender, leads to higher ratings in performance evaluation (Tsui and Gutek 1999 in Shen et al. 2009). This is of course problematic considering that supervisory positions are mainly hold by white males. Additionally, Purcell, MacArthur, and Samblanet (2010) highlight that women need to perform beyond baseline requirements acceptable for men's promotions, plus, they often face stricter performance standards. Rooted in discrimination in development activities, too, there is the problem of few women having gained enough qualified experience to access high-paid managerial positions. In other words, women do not have the "human capital" to cover decision-making positions. As hinted to before, human capital theory argues that education, company tenure, training, work hours and work experience lead to increased productivity and thus have to be awarded with higher status and pay. In this regard there are two considerations that need to be done. First, human capital factors do not affect women in the same way as men. Education level, work experience and tenure do not contribute to women's advancement as much as they contribute to men's (Metz and Kulik 2014, Billing and Alvesson 2014). Second, eventually lacking human capital partly derives from reduced training opportunities, as discussed above.

In addition to limited networking and mentoring, homosocial reproduction and fewer training opportunities hindering women's advancement, there is also the more fundamental problem of stereotypes and gendered leadership ideals. As discussed previously in the framework of stereotypes, management and executive positions are believed to require characteristics which coincide with the stereotypic conception of men (Heilman 2012, Purcell, MacArthur and Samblanet 2010, Metz and Kulik 2014). Due to this association of leadership with male traits, some have suggested that women do not possess the psychological abilities to cover managerial positions successfully (Billing and Alvesson 2014). Being men the dominant group in organizations, corporate positions are designed by men for men. Because of this, even in a non-discriminatory appointment process, women are disadvantaged. Even imagining a completely neutral process where there is a list of required personal characteristics for a position and for each candidate the met requirements are ticked off, women would be disadvantaged. This is because the list of personal traits is likely to be based on characteristics inspired by a male leadership model emphasizing decisiveness, assertiveness, and strength. While, according to Billing and Alvesson (2014), women are assumed to be more cooperative, empathic, and communicative. Women are expected to fit in roles specifically designed for men. This becomes even clearer if we consider that the women who advance are those who display personal attributes more similar to those stereotypically associated with men (Purcell, MacArthur, and Samblanet 2010). This can however have backlash effects on women, too. On one side, displaying masculine characteristics is necessary to show the needed characteristics for leadership roles, on the other side, breaking prescriptive stereotypes, not behaving in a feminine way, provokes negative reactions and

disliking by subordinates (Heilman 2012, Metz and Kulik 2012, Billing and Alvesson 2014). This means that women have little discretion in determining their own leadership style and "female leadership" is actually the result of external pressures (Billing and Alvesson 2014). This discussion raises the question whether women have indeed different leadership styles or not. However, because it is not the fact that they have a different leadership, but the common assumption that they have it, to impact women's possibility of advancement, this question will be analysed in detail in the following chapter in the broader debate on whether men and women are "different" or "equal". Furthermore, it needs to be considered that not only leadership positions are gendered, but also organizational cultures tout court. As discussed in the framework of organizational culture, many firms display "masculine" cultures which represent hostile ambiences for women's advancement (Metz and Kulik 2014). Again, in turn, women-hostile organizational cultures may simply be a reflection of national cultural assumptions about women and leadership (Billing and Alvesson 2014). Of course, we are overall experiencing a slow de-masculinization of leadership and new forms of leading are emerging. Participatory, non-hierarchical, flexible and group-oriented styles are increasingly appreciated. Some organizations declare to be increasingly looking for flexibility, social skills and team orientation (Billing and Alvesson 2014). These ideas on leadership may benefit women as they are more androgynous than exclusively masculine.

Literature on diversity management has produced a variety of practices to address systematic barriers to women's successful careers. As it will be largely discussed in the next chapter, it is important to introduce policies and practices which allow a less stressful combination of work and family duties, to avoid women being cut out when they leave for maternity and then come back. This also entails encouraging male managers to benefit from family-friendly policies. Secondly, continuous diversity training should focus on exploring issues of gender in the workplace, monitoring biases in decision-making and increasing awareness on stereotypes and prejudice towards female leaders (Metz and Kulik 2014). As compensation is able to exert change in employees' behaviour, at least in the short-term (Barber and Daly 1996), another practice which may prove itself successful is the one tying the achievement of diversity objectives to the evaluation and pay (or benefits) of managers, to force them keep diversity issues in mind (Shen et al. 2009). However, determining diversity objective while it is not clear yet what effective diversity management is, is highly problematic.

Even though there are these "soft" diversity management practices to fight the glass ceiling, because of the structural impediments to women's careers, affirmative action is necessary. As highlighted defining diversity management in the previous chapter, some authors distinguish between diversity management and affirmative action. However, for the previously explained reasons, the broader definition of diversity management including affirmative action as consistent part of it, is adopted.

To fulfil a feminist interpretation of diversity management, quotas have to be applied to achieve the first basic objective of representation, without which further gender equality in the workplace cannot be achieved. Several countries have already established quotas in their legislation. In Europe, seven countries have a form of quotas in place: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy and Spain (Jourová 2016). In 2011, for instance, Italy adopted the so-called "Golfo-Mosca Act" (law 120/2011), named after the two parliament members who proposed the law. According to that provision, listed companies have, starting from August 2012, to renovate their board and control bodies making sure that at least 20% of the members are from the least represented gender, that is, women. Starting from the subsequent board appointment, until 2022, when the law will cease to be effective, the percentage needs to be raised to a third (Guglielmetti 2012, De Vita and Magliocco 2018). However, Norway is considered the example to look up to with its requirement of at least 40% of men and 40% of women on all listed company boards. It was the first country to introduce quotas already in 2003 for state-owned countries and then in 2008 for all publicly traded firms (Terjesen, Aguilera and Lorenz 2015). Of course, quotas vary not only in terms of percentage, as they range from 30% to 40%, but also in terms of which companies must apply them and which are the sanctions for failing to do so. For instance, Austria has only introduced a 35% quota for supervisory boards of state-owned companies, while France has a quota of 40% for non-executive directors of both listed and non-listed companies with over 500 employees or €50 million revenues. Sanctions vary from light forms such as the non-consideration of non-complying companies for public subsidies and contracts in Spain to the refusal to register the board and the dissolution of the non-complying company in Norway. In Italy, the gender quota is set at 33% of management and supervisory boards of listed and state-owned companies. The sanctions in case of non-compliance are fines and eventually the loss of office of the non-complying board if the situation is not redressed. In 2012, the European Commission submitted a proposal for a directive on gender balance among non-executive directors of private and public listed companies. The proposal set a 40% minimum of non-executive members of the board to be of the less represented sex. Member States would have required organizations to report on the composition of their board and eventually applied sanctions for organizations not conforming to the set minimum. As of July 2018, however, the Directive has not been approved, as some Member States, particularly Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic do not want binding measures at EU level, but rather advocate for national measures or non-binding EU initiatives (Urtasun, Regner, and Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou 2018). The U.S., regardless of the low percentage of women in the boards of directors, have not adopted gender quotas (Cain Miller 2015, Leibbrandt, Wand and Foo 2015). According to Terjesen, Aguilera and Lorenz (2015) there are three institutional factors which explain the introduction of gender quotas and consequently

explain why some countries have adopted these measures and others have not. These three factors are: the female labour market and gendered welfare policies, left-leaning government coalitions, and a legacy of path dependant gender equality initiatives in the public arena as well as in corporate governance codes. The idea behind the first factor is that countries with greater family policies are more entrenched with ideals of gender equality and are therefore more likely to introduce quotas and provisions to facilitate the participation for women on boards, given their overall cultural and social values. Similarly, gender quotas are more likely to be introduced in countries where gendered policies already exist, for instance in countries where quotas are already in place for political parties and institutional bodies. In other words, government and political institutions play a major role in shaping the development of corporate governance regulation concerning gender equality (Terjesen, Aguilera and Lorenz 2017). What is relevant is that organizations are embedded in institutional environments and tend to reflect it. As the ambient society influences organisational culture, as previously explained, it also influences, together with the institutional environment, organizational policies and practices. Gender equality is strongly embedded in national culture, as previously hinted to. This demonstrates that for effective diversity management and concrete change, collaboration between public institutions and organisations is necessary. Countries may also decide to introduce non-binding gender quotas in the corporate governance codes enforcing a "comply or explain" principle. In this case, organizations have to report on gender diversity recruitment efforts and board gender composition and eventually explain why voluntarily set targets have not been reached. The functioning of such soft measures is based solely on the pressure generated by industry standards and stakeholder expectations (Jourová 2016, Terjesen, Aguilera and Lorenz 2015). It is also possible to introduce "soft" quotas in the form of a "tie-break" system or a "threshold" system. With the tie-break system, when there are two ore more equally qualified candidates, it is permissible to base selection on characteristics such as sex. This is to reverse the circumstance that often, when there are equally qualified men and women, men are preferred due to non-job specific considerations such as the fact that the women may become pregnant or the ability of men to fit in the masculine organizational cultures. In that sense, using systematically a criterion such as gender is more transparent. The threshold system requires candidates to achieve minimum qualification standards, but then allows managers to make choices in favour of candidates based on criteria of diversity (Noon 2010).

The fact that some countries have adopted gender quotas and others have not and that some organizations have voluntarily introduced gender equality targets and others have not, points to how controversial gender quotas are. In fact, as argued before, the opposers of diversity management usually argue against affirmative action rather than against diversity management practices in general.

The most common argument against quotas is one of meritocracy. Opponents argue that firms should be free of appointing simply the best candidate (Noon 2017). However, meritocracy is less pervasive than one might hope. The decision is not always based on pure meritocracy because of the above-mentioned reasons, such as homophily, "old boy" network and stereotypes. Individuals of the majority group are sometimes promoted due to these mechanisms, despite more worthy women. In other words, meritocracy is an argument used to cover the failure to promote individuals from minority groups. Moreover, the concept of merit is not necessarily value neutral. Deciding whether it is based on talent and ability or on effort and achievement may imply advantages or disadvantages for different groups. If the latter are the decisive criteria, individuals from underprivileged backgrounds and low-ranking universities may be more meritorious than others from top universities even though these have better qualifications (Noon 2010). Negative reactions towards affirmative action, perceived as reverse discrimination have led to discrimination suits. There is a claim for a gender-blind, fair and meritocratic system. It seems however quite hypocrite to worry about social justice only once one has become potential victim of injustice. White males feel that they are losing hiring and promotion opportunities due to the necessity to fill quotas (Von Bergen, Soper, and Foster 2002, Noon 2010). Runner up is the argument of devaluing the beneficiaries of quotas. The reasoning is that quotas are demeaning for women as there may be suspicion that one has been appointed not for merit but to fill a quota. Individuals hired under the auspices of affirmative action are perceived as less competent than majority workers and less qualified for the position they hold (Gilbert, Stead, and Ivancevich 1999). Some beneficiaries of affirmative action themselves oppose it for this reason, as they feel stigmatised, undervalued, and under-rated. For instance, women hired within the framework of affirmative action tend to report greater stress, less job satisfaction, and select less demanding work assignments than women who do not perceive they are hired as part of affirmative actions (Gilbert, Stead, and Ivancevich 1999, Von Bergen, Soper, and Foster 2002). A study by Leibbrandt, Wang, and Foo (2017) shows that not only quotas increase the distaste for female leaders, but also increase sabotage by co-workers. When there are quotas and peer-reviews as part of employees' appraisal and pay determination, there is the tendency, especially by other women, to misreport the performance of female colleagues. However, to avoid this specific type of backlash it is enough to avoid combining quotas and peer-reviews, as quotas per se have desirable impacts if performance is measured objectively by a supervisor (Leibbrandt, Wang, and Foo 2017). Even though there may be backlash for the beneficiaries of quotas, not accepting quotas implies being condemned to structural discrimination; there is no ideal solution.

Among the discussed practices, affirmative action in the form of legislative binding quotas may represent the first necessary step to achieve gender equality in the workplace. As Noon (2010) affirms,

the neo-liberal market with its market forces, without state-intervention, is not producing change fast enough concerning gender equality. Non-binding gender equality targets in organizational governance codes based on the "comply or explain" principle, are not enough. Also the tie-break system cannot be considered satisfactory because it does not take into account that women are discriminated against in terms of opportunities to gain work experience and to demonstrate higher levels of competency, and therefore are less likely to have the exact same qualifications as men. The threshold system on the contrary takes this into account as it establishes only the minimum requirements for a position. With the threshold system, if both a male and a female candidate fulfil the minimum requirements and are therefore both competent and able to successfully fill the position, the female candidate can and should be appointed even though she may have a year less of experience due to maternity leave. This makes sure that only necessary job requirements are taken into account and not also considerations not related to meritocracy, such as the fit the masculine organizational culture or the lower cost of employing a man due to the fact that he will not get pregnant (Noon 2010). The arguments against gender quotas seem indeed compelling at a first glance. For long time I have argued similarly believing that if you are good enough and determined enough, you will be able to climb up the corporate ladder. However, as widely explained, there are too many ceilings and personal determination is not enough to break them (Slaughter 2012). Individuals tend to appoint those who are similar, which, without quotas, leads to the perpetuation of the status quo, alias the dominance of white males in top positions. Quotas lead board members to question their assumptions about what qualities are needed, avoiding gendered promotion requirements and positions Additionally quotas force them to consider the "talent pipeline" and improve the development opportunities for women to make sure that they have gained enough experience to be appointed. The existence of gender quotas forces organizations to identify, develop, promote, and retain suitable female candidates over all levels of the organization to avoid having no suitable female candidates at the moment of appointment of the board. (Noon 2017). Gender quotas for boards have so far proved to be effective in increasing women's representation. They have led to an improvement in female representation far greater than any individual firm, industry or country level initiative previously identified (Terjesen, Aguilera and Lorenz 2015). Representation is the first basic and necessary step for any other diversity management initiative. For instance, as explained before, the core problem of networking and mentoring for female employees is the lack of women in managerial positions. It is necessary to bring women in high-level positions to overcome problems in specific matters such as networking and mentoring. Shen et al. (2009) report that a higher representation of women is more likely to produce organizational policies and practices which take women's specific necessities into consideration. A Ford Foundation study of non-profit boards has demonstrated that there is a cascading effect from

hiring practices: A more diverse board resulted in greater diversity in recruitment (Shen et al. 2009). Increases of women in top management is also associated with increases of women in middle managerial positions (Metz and Kulik 2014). Another study found that the absence of women in senior management positions increases the wage gap at all levels within the organization, while when women attain managerial positions, the wage gap, also among non-managerial workers, decreases (Purcell, MacArthur, and Samblanet 2010). Once women's representation in organizations has been achieved, quotas become superfluous and can be abolished. If women, representing half of the workforce, become also half of the high managerial positions, gender equality on the workplace will be able to perpetuate itself. In this scenario, women will have the same possibilities as men to advance as they will too, for instance, experience homosocial reproduction and networking in their favour. In the words of Billing and Alvesson (2014), a critical mass is necessary for the under-represented group to have equal opportunities as the dominant group. Additionally, being there women in key decision-roles, promotion requirements, positions and leadership ideals will stop being gendered and based on stereotypic male characteristics.

4. <u>Pay and benefits: The gender pay gap</u>

Presenting the history of HRM in the first section, it has become clear that the aim at the basis of the evolution of different pay systems has been to capture the wage-effort relationship. Even though this is still a crucial element, today the debate has gone further. Pay and benefits are now a core part of strategic HRM. Through effective pay management, HRM aims at changing behaviours, encouraging those that the organization is particularly interested in (Barber and Daly 1996, Grugulis 2017, Thompson and Ryan 2017), and at fostering organizational commitment and retention. The most common pay systems today are time-based, where the compensation is based on the number of hours worked (Grugulis 2017, Thompson and Ryan 2017). Because these schemes do not provide information about the effort put in those hours, they are often integrated with bonuses based on performance ratings (Thompson and Ryan 2017). The pay system which has received the most attention is PRP, performance related pay, or PBR, payment by results. PRP schemes set targets for employees whose performance is then rated, and bonuses are paid against those targets. Even though the principle behind PRP is straightforward - those who perform well are paid more - its application is extremely complicated. First, focused on meeting the target, employees may engage in behaviours which overall damage work, for instance they may fail to help colleagues. Second, it is difficult to identify performance criteria which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and tangible. Third, performance pay raises issues of equity: Performance evaluation may be biased by personal

relationships with the managers (Grugulis 2017). If individual performance pay erodes collaboration with colleagues, the first to be damaged by a less collaborative environment, in line with homophily tendencies, would be diversity employees. And, again, if performance pay may be distorted by personal relationships, women, and diversity employees, may be damaged, for the above discussed reasons. Even though both the time-based and the performance-based reward systems display weaknesses, they seem rational HRM practices that, at least in theory, if correctly applied, reward fairly, regardless of gender. However, empirical studies demonstrate the existence of a gender pay gap.

The gender pay gap refers to women earning less than men. Its extent may vary according to how exactly it is measured. Globally, the gender pay gap is at 23%: for every dollar a man earns, a woman earns only 77 cents (UN Women, n.d.). It tends to be larger in developing countries than in developed ones (UN Women, n.d., Grimshaw and Rubery 2015) but affects every sector and industry (UN Women, n.d., Wagner 2015). Eurostat (2018) measures the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of men and women expressed as a percentage of the average gross hourly earnings of men. With this measurement it finds out that in 2016 women's gross hourly earnings were on average 16,2% below those of men in the European Union and 16,3% in the euro area, ranging from 5,2% in Romania to 25,3% in Estonia (Eurostat 2018).
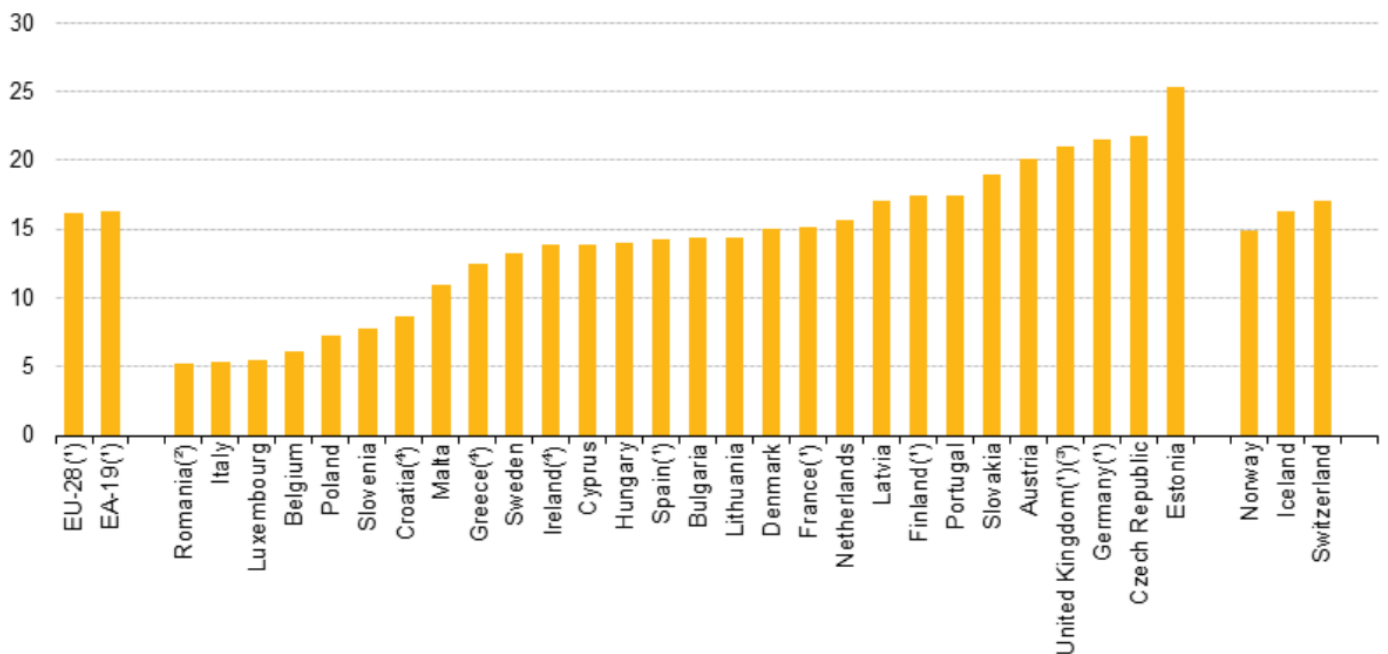

Figure 9: The unadjusted gender pay gap, 2016 (difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees as % of male gross earnings) (Eurostat 2018).

In the U.S. the situation is not too different. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2016, women with a full-time job earned 80% of what their male counterparts earned. Similarly, according to the Pew Research Centre, in 2017, women's median hourly earnings for both full and part-time workers were 82% of those of men (Bellstrom 2018). In other words, women make on average roughly 80 cents for every dollar a man earns. Over time the pay gap has been narrowing (Blau and Kahn 2017, Farber 2017), for instance, in the U.S., before the introduction of the Equal Pay Act in 1963, women earned on average only 54% of what men earned (Farber 2017). Women's relative wages began to rise sharply in the 1980s and continued at a slower and more uneven pace afterwards. By 1980 the female/male wage ratio reached 64% and arrived at 74% in 1989. The gender pay gap has decreased slower at the top of the wage distribution and still remains larger there. Factors, like increased education level, labour market qualifications and experience, employment commitment, collective bargaining coverage and reduced labour market segregation, have contributed to this narrowing (Blau and Kahn 2017), however, the pace is generally slow. It is estimated that if the gender wage gap continues to decrease at the current rate, in the United States, it will take until 2058 to close the pay gap (Wagner 2015). On a global level, considering that developing countries have a wider gender pay gap, it would take until 2069 to reach pay equality (UN Women, n.d.). Of course, the reasons behind the gender pay gap are more complex than straight discrimination, as, at least in Western countries, wage discrimination on the basis of sex is prohibited by law. In the U.S., the Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibits sex-based discrimination between men and women working in the same establishment under similar working conditions, performing the same jobs which require analogous skills, effort and responsibility (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). In Europe, in addition to national legislation previously existing, the European Union has established pay quality in its founding documents. Article 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union establishes that "each Member State shall ensure that the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value is applied" (Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union art. 157).

There are several complex reasons behind the gender pay gap and research is still conducted on how much each factor contributes to it. Probably the strongest contributor is motherhood. In fact, the gender pay gap for mothers is even higher. This circumstance is referred to as the motherhood penalty (Farber 2017, UN Women, n.d., Blau and Kahn 2017), which captures the consequences women face on the workplace when they become mothers (Farber 2017), or as the motherhood pay gap, which represents the pay gap between mothers and non-mothers and the pay gap between mothers and fathers. This is different from the gender pay gap as the latter measures the pay gap between all women and all men in the workforce regardless of their parenthood status (Grimshaw and Rubery

2015). Highly educated women earn on average 7% less per child compared to childless women, while the percentage increases to 15% for women in low-wage employment (Farber 2017). This is consistent with the findings that, especially in some European countries, the motherhood pay gap increases with the number of children. While having one child only brings a small penalty, having two or even three children leads to a significant wage penalty. The motherhood penalty varies greatly among countries. In Europe it is particularly high in the United Kingdom, where it reaches 21%, while it is near to zero in France and Denmark (Grimshaw and Rubery 2015). Concerning men, some studies show that fatherhood, on average, increases men's wages; they get a fatherhood premium rather than a penalty (Farber 2017, Grimshaw and Rubery 2015, Blau and Kahn 2017). Angelov, Johansson and Lindahl (2016) found that after 15 years a child was born, the pay gap within the parents' couple increased by 32% from the pre-child difference, considering the wage and the actual hours worked (Angelov, Johansson and Lindahl 2016). This may be due to motherhood penalties and fatherhood premiums acting together.

As motherhood has been identified as a driving factor of the gender pay gap, the reasons for the motherhood penalty are reasons for the gender pay gap in general, too. The main factors fuelling the gender pay gap can be categorized in three analytical frameworks: rationalist economics, sociological, and comparative institutionalist. The rationalist economics approach argues that employment breaks due to motherhood lead to women having a "reduced human capital". Human capital declines because of: the depreciation of knowledge and skills acquired in education and at work, reduced working hours, and the lost skills due to returning to a different occupation or job position. Even the sole anticipation of breaks due to motherhood reduces women's human capital as they invest less training, due to lower expected returns, and have a lower inclination to seek out high-paid jobs with more responsibility that they fear not being able to fulfil once they have become mothers (Gnesi, De Santis and Cardinaleschi 2016, Blau and Kahn 2017, Grimshaw and Rubery 2015, Elvira and Saporta 2001). The second explanation for the motherhood gap provided by this theoretical framework is that mothers seek employment in family-friendly jobs which are lower-paying, for instance in part-time positions or in positions with less responsibility (Angelov, Johansson and Lindahl 2016, Grimshaw and Rubery 2015). Employers are able to offer lower wages to certain groups of employees attracted by non-pecuniary characteristics such as family-friendly policies and practices, like flexible work hours or limited demand for travel (Grimshaw and Rubery 2015). Overall, women tend to work less hours than men after they have become mothers. In fact, among wage and salary workers in the U.S., in 2013, 25,6% of women and 13% of men worked part-time. Over time, working fewer hours translates into having gained fewer years of experience (reduced human capital), which in turn means that the pay is lower (Wagner 2015). Based on 2010 data, the difference in experience is believed to

account for roughly 16% of the gender wage gap (Blau and Kahn 2017). The second approach, the sociological one, suggests that women on average earn less because employers make decisions based on the expectations of the burden of care responsibilities on women's time and energy in regards of gendered family roles (Grimshaw and Rubery 2015). This approach highlights that not only motherhood per se puts a penalty on women, but the sole possibility of it, is enough. The argument is that because women expect career interruptions, they are less inclined to make large investments in training and to accept high demanding jobs which may require longer working hours and more travel (Blau and Kahn 2017, Grimshaw and Rubery 2015). According to economic theory, it is rational for employers to hire and promote on the basis of expected future productivity. However, as employers apply a group-based logic, it is discriminatory behaviour (Grimshaw and Rubery 2015). Additionally, this assumption about women's lower commitment due to reduced time and energy may be self-fulfilling. Because employers assign dead-end jobs to women and invest in less job specific training for them, women may be less stimulated, consequently become less committed and eventually quit, as expected by the employer (Blau and Kahn 2017). The second argument by the sociological theoretical framework is that employers undervalue women's skills and experience which are rewarded unfairly in female-dominated occupations. The last source of the motherhood pay gap is the lack of child care facilities and other family-friendly measures, which is considered a market failure. The comparative institutional approach highlights national structural reasons for the pay gap. Countries do not provide supporting work-family policies such as paid parental leave, their tax and benefit system exert influence on a mother's status as economically dependant or independent form a spouse, and they lack in implementation of labour protection allowing that women work informally or under precarious contracts. Additionally, the extent of the pay gap depends on the countries' overall wage structure and the cultural and family contest (Grimshaw and Rubery 2015). Even accounting for all these factors, studies tend to find part of the motherhood pay gap as unexplainable. There may be unobservable variable that may explain it, for instance unobservable productivity differences between mothers and non-mothers, but it is generally attributed to discriminatory tendencies by employers. Mothers are perceived by employers as less competent and less committed in comparison to women without children (Farber 2017, Blau and Kahn 2017). For instance, evaluators tend to appraise workers who identify as mothers as less competent than when they are informed that the female candidate does not have children (Grimshaw and Rubery 2015). A field experiment sending resumes and cover letters to firms advertising job openings reported that equally qualified mothers were called only half as often as non-mothers. Fathers on the contrary were not disadvantaged in comparison to non-fathers (Correll, Benard and Paik 2007 in Blau and Kahn 2017).

In addition to the factors leading to the gender wage gap tied to motherhood, there are several which apply to women regardless of their parenthood status. These are lower education level, employment in lower paying fields (occupational segregation) and roles (glass-ceiling), and different psychological attributes. As hinted to before, while lower levels of education may have contributed to the gender wage gap in the past, this is not the case anymore in most Western countries (Wagner 2015), as women not only have closed the education gap, they have even subverted it. Girls have traditionally outperformed boys in secondary school (Blau and Kahn 2017), and now they have caught up also in terms of numbers. According to Statista's (2018) data, as of 2015, in the U.S., women earned 57% of bachelor's degrees, 60% of master's degrees and 52% of doctoral degrees (Statista 2018). In Europe the situation is similar. In 2015, women were 53,2% of those studying for a bachelor's degree and 57,1% of those pursing a master's degree but only 47,8% of those involved in doctoral studies (Eurostat 2017). However, the difference remains in pursued major and consequently in occupation field, as discussed in a previous section. Segregation in specific industries and jobs is still a key driver of the gender wage gap (Wagner 2015, Gnesi, De Santis and Cardinaleschi 2016, Elvira and Saporta 2001). For instance, in Germany, the wage gap between art and humanities graduates compared to engineering graduates is 40% when entering the market and it persists over the whole career (Görlitz and Grave 2012 in Schlenker 2015). Overall, occupation and industry differences are believed to account for 49% of the wage gender gap today, especially because typically female occupations pay less for similar measured characteristics (Blau and Kahn 2017). In addition to this horizontal segregation across fields and jobs, there is vertical segregation, alias, men occupy higher paid and skilled positions within the same occupation, which strongly contributes to the gender pay gap. As explained before, due to the glass ceiling there is a lack of women in senior and executive positions across all sectors (Gnesi, De Santis and Caridnaleschi 2016). Shen et al. (2009) consider the underrepresentation of women in senior positions the main reason for the gender pay gap.

As anticipated, another relevant set of arguments explaining the gender pay gap and why women are less represented in high managerial positions is based on women displaying different psychological attributes and non-cognitive skills. Women have been found to be less willing than men to negotiate and compete, as well as to be more risk averse. Moreover, men are found to place higher importance on money (Barber and Daly 1996, Blau and Kahn 2017), to have higher self-esteem and to be more self-confident and disagreeable, and to believe that they control their own fate (Blau and Kahn 2017). Women negotiating their salaries less than men (Farber 2017, Blau and Kahn 2017) may be due to several factors, such as the lack of guidance and mentoring, the lack of confidence and the expected reaction of the employers which is still often negative (Farber 2017). Several experiments by Bowles,

Babcock and Lai (2007) have proved this latter circumstance. Evaluating written accounts for candidates, evaluators penalized female candidates more than males for initiating negotiations. Analysing videotapes of interviews, male evaluators penalized female participants more than male participants for negotiating, while female evaluators penalized candidates of both sexes (Bowels, Babcock and Lai 2007). In other words, the same trait, the ability to negotiate, may be perceived differently for men and women, eventually penalizing women. As largely discussed in the previous section on appraisal and careers, there are gendered social expectations and breaking them means paying a price. Concerning competition and risk aversion, due to their lower inclination to competition, women may avoid certain highly competitive occupations or business environments. Similarly, women may avoid occupations with high levels of risks, which however pay higher wages to compensate the riskiness. Even apparently irrelevant variables such as self-confidence may impact women's wages. For instance, self-confidence may contribute to a worker's productivity and thus salary. When evaluating the impact of psychological attributes on the pay gap it should be kept in mind that they are strongly related to the field segregation discussed above. Different psychological attributes influence the choice of schooling, occupation and industry leading to the abovementioned low representation of women in certain fields. Maybe because they have more direct and indirect effects, the influence psychological attributes have on the gender pay gap is unclear, accounting for 2,5% to 28% according to the different studies (Blau and Kahn 2017). Once these psychological explanations are taken into account it is not possible to avoid the question whether these differences are given by nature or by socialization. For example, the fact that women assign less importance to monetary rewards may be due to experiences of pay discrimination. If they anticipate the inability to obtain high pays, they adjust their reward value accordingly. Also, because the gendered family roles assign women to domestic work and men to paid employment, women may feel less pressure to earn high wages (Barber and Daly 1996). Due to the complexity of the issue however, and its being central to feminist thought, special attention will be dedicated to it in the following chapter.

Lastly, most studies conclude that there is a part of the gender pay gap that specific factors cannot account for. This unexplained part of the gender gap is often ascribed to employers' bias and unconscious discrimination (Farber 2017, Wagner 2015, Blau and Kahn 2017, Elvira and Saporta 2001, Gnesi, De Santis and Caridnaleschi 2016). For instance, a study found that women in the U.S. earn 5,4% less than their male colleagues with similar age, education and years of experience as well as the same job title, in the same firm and location (Chamberlain 2016). As illustrated above, having accumulated less experience over time due to motherhood and the consequent time-off, is often adduced as a main explanation for the gender pay gap. However, there is evidence that women face lower salaries even at the very beginning of their careers, when experience is not a determining factor

yet. Female college graduates, graduating with similar grades, in similar majors and accepting similar jobs to their male colleagues, have on average a 7% lower starting salary (Wagner 2015). Even women who graduate from STEM subjects earn less than their male counterparts, also after controlling for university performance (Schlenker 2015). Additionally, as illustrated in regards of the glass ceiling, human capital factors do not affect women in the same way as men (Metz and Kulik 2014, Billing and Alvesson 2014, Gnesi, De Santis, and Cardinaleschi 2016), and in fact, experience is not evaluated the same for men and women. The most typical studies demonstrating this, are those providing to an employer identical resumes, with identical qualifications listed, where the only difference is the sex of the applicant. Employers are more likely to offer the job to the male applicant and the starting salary is between 7% and 15% higher than the one offered to the female applicants (Wanger 2015).

As pay inequality is not only a matter of social justice, but a main cause of job dissatisfaction and lower motivation, diversity management needs to help fight it (Shen et al. 2009). In regards of the two main pay schemes presented above, the time-based one and the performance-based one, both present problems in terms of effective gender diversity management. Concerning the time-based pay system, the main issue is that women are still in charge of the majority of household and care activities and therefore work fewer hours. This however does not mean that they do not get their tasks completed or do not reach their objectives. As the attention that PRP systems have received by scholars and practitioners demonstrates, it is not about the time that the employee spends at the office, it is about his ability to perform well. This may suggest that to guarantee gender equality in matters of pay and benefits and close the gap, performance-pay schemes are necessary. Gnesi, De Santis, and Cardinaleschi (2016) explain that some argue that performance pay contributes to decrease the gender pay gap by returning equally skilled females and males as the pay scheme is based on productivity and merit. However, this argument does not capture the complexity of the issue as presented above, as it ignores that women's performance and characteristics are perceived and paid differently than men's. Wagner (2015) notes that as in performance pay systems, front-line managers have the responsibility of evaluating performance, all the issues illustrated in the section on appraisal and careers arise. Additionally, also in performance evaluation, even assuming the evaluator is not biased, as previously explained, the criteria themselves may be gendered. In fact, there is no clear evidence on the matter. Some studies show increased pay gaps due to performance pay in Spain and in the United States, while in Italy the impact seems to be positive (Gnesi, De Santis, and Cardinaleshi 2016). To overcome these faults of the performance pay scheme, some authors suggest measures such as transparent and measurable pay determinants like education, yeas of experience or quantitative performance measures (Wagner 2015). This however again captures the problem only to a certain

extent, as experience differences remain a problem. The discussion has clearly demonstrated how complex and deeply rooted the causes of the gender pay gap are. Therefore, diversity management can only be effective in accordance with institutional interventions facing the cultural and social roots of the gender pay gap. As the comparative institutionalist approach suggests, the intervention of national institutions is absolutely necessary. Since the main factor contributing to the gender pay gap is motherhood and the consequent time-off, the main tool to keep narrowing it, is effective work-family social policies (Grimshaw and Rubery 2015). Subsidized quality day-care is a fundamental first step (Grimshaw and Rubery 2015, Farber 2017). Paid parental leave of adequate duration and with income related pay for both mothers and fathers is the second one (Grimshaw and Rubery 2015, Wagner 2015). Paid maternity leave with the possibility to return to the previous job is considered particularly effective in reducing the pay gap as it increases women's attachment to the workforce even after childbirth (Wagner 2015, Grimshaw and Rubery 2015). Flexible employment arrangements are necessary for both mothers and fathers to provide freedom to individuals to choose a working schedule based on their personal capacity and priorities (Shen et al. 2009, Grimshaw and Rubery 2015). However, again, this raises the issue of mothers deciding to reduce their working hours allowing their spouse to concentrate on paid employment in anticipation of pay and career discrimination. Nevertheless, it is overall necessary to change typical organizational cultures to make sure that they are family-friendly (Grimshaw and Rubery 2015). Because the joint development of policies and practices between organizations and institutions is so relevant not only in regard to the gender wage gap, but to several other gender equality issues, deeper analysis about it will be carried out in the next chapter.

5. __Employees' voice and industrial relations__

A typical diversity management practice, especially in the U.S., is to identify individuals from minority groups and organize them in councils, where they have the possibility to speak about their specific problems in the workplace and suggest diversity management practices (Bombelli 2010). Also creating platforms for open discussion, for instance in the framework of diversity training, has been often mentioned as a necessary and useful tool. As suggested before, they may be for instance appropriate circumstances to ask those questions that out of politeness employees would not ask to co-workers with a disability or to discuss sexual concerns in cross-gender mentoring. However, as Bowen and Blackmon (2003) suggest, employees of minority groups may not speak up due to the fear of expressing an unpopular opinion which may lead to co-workers isolating them. In fact, organizational voice is strongly influenced by individuals' perceptions of the attitudes of co-workers

towards an issue. People tend to speak up when they believe their position is supported and remain silent when they believe it is not. Research on selling issues to top management suggests that employees speak out if they believe their voicing an issue will be effective, relatively low risk, and where top management is perceived as supportive (Bowen and Blackmon 2003). This may lead to members of minority groups to remain silent. Women, especially in male-dominated fields and organizations, may avoid speaking up out of fear of isolation and backlash. Here, again, the problem is strongly related to women's low representation, especially in managerial roles. Male colleagues, and the male management, not recognizing women's different experience of employment and of the workplace, may consider women's concerns as superfluous and even annoying. Therefore, on one side, diversity management should aim at creating safe spaces where minority individuals feel they can speak up freely. Diversity councils and focus groups can be a powerful tool for employees' voice. On the other side, because single employees may fear to speak about their minority concern, collective voice in the form of unions may be helpful in addressing some wider issues.

At a first glance, diversity management and trade unions and collective bargaining may seem conflicting. While the core concept of unions has always been "equal opportunities", based on the liberal "sameness" model of equality, they now have to deal with the diversity concept strongly emphasizing the individuum, which may be seen as undermining the solidarity at the basis of unions' influence and power. While diversity management is often rooted on a business case rationale, as previously exposed, unions base their action on social justice. This strong focus of scholars and organizations on diversity management, which is performed through the HRM function, may marginalize unions making them superfluous. However, using business case arguments for the purpose of bargaining (Kirton and Greene 2004) and accepting the wider definition of diversity management suggested in the chapter before, where equality objectives are the first step of successful diversity management, unions may contribute to the discourse. However, before being able to contribute to gender diversity management, unions need to analyse and overcome the gender equality issues they still have internally, and the problems collective bargaining may represent for women and minorities. According to Delaney and Lundy (1996), unions and collective bargaining promote diversity as almost all union contracts provide guarantees against unfair treatment, however, because unions often negotiate uniform contracts, it may become difficult to deal with the unique needs of individual employees (Delaney and Lundy 1996). In fact, unions' bargaining is traditionally based on obtaining standardised treatment of employees through common terms and conditions (Kirton and Greene 2004).

Becoming an increasing share of the workforce, women have started to be increasingly present in trade unions, too, especially since second wave feminism in the 1970s (Ledwith 2012). According to

the Bureau of Labour Statistics, in 2017, in the United States, 11,4% of male and 10,0% of female wage and salary workers were members of a union, for a total unionization rate of 10,7%. In 1983 – the first year for which comparable data is available - the gap was sensibly wider: 24,7% of male and 14,6% of female wage and salary workers were unionized (U.S. Department of Labour 2018). In the European context there is great variety both concerning the union membership rate per se and the representation of men and women (Fulton 2015, Ledwith 2012). As of 2013, the union density in the European Union ranged from roughly 70% in Finland, Sweden and Denmark, to only 8% in France and Lithuania. The average level of union membership across the European Union, weighted for the numbers of employees in the different Members States, is of 23%. In 2011 in the Netherlands, men had a union density of 23% while women had a union density of only 17%. On the other side however, in 2014, in Poland no difference between men and women's unionization rate was found. In some countries even, the contrary is true. In Hungary, Sweden, Ireland and the UK, women are more likely to be union members (Fulton 2015). In 2018, the average proportion of women members in the national confederations of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) was of 46.1%, only slightly lower than the proportion of women among employees in the countries covered by Eurostat (46.5%). Overall, despite some countries where women are less represented than men, there does not seem to be an issue of female representation in terms of membership per se. However, like in organisations in general, women are not represented in senior decision-making roles in proportion to their membership rate (Elvira and Saporta 2001, Ledwith 2012). Women are represented as members, but not recognized as leaders, both in Europe and in the United States (Ledwith 2012). Unfortunately, there are only few studies on women's representation in trade unions' decision-making roles and the reasons for it (Blaschke 2015). Looking at the very top, out of 42 leadership positions in the 39 (out of 89) national confederations responding to ETUC's 2018 Annual Gender Equality Survey, only 11, 26,2%, are held by women. Concerning this matter, Italy is a rare positive example. Out of the three main unions present in the country, two, CGIL and CISL currently have a female general secretary (Fulton and Sechi 2018): Susanna Camusso is general secretary of CGIL since 2010 (CGIL, n.d.) and Annamaria Furlan is general secretary of CISL since 2014 (CISL, n.d.). On a wider level, including vice-presidents, deputy general secretaries, treasures and top leaders, women represent on average 37,2% of these positions, ranging from confederations with more than 50% of women in those roles, to others with not even one top position covered by a woman (Fulton and Sechi 2018). Like for organizations, too, the representation of women in union hierarchies decreases as one climbs up the ladder (Ledwith 2012). Concerning collective decision-making bodies, such as committees, women are on average 33,5% of the members (Fulton and Sechi 2018).

The little representation of women in trade union decision-making roles may be problematic for a variety of reasons. As hinted to before, collective bargaining may hinder diversity management by negotiating uniform contracts which do not allow for specific measures taking diversity into consideration. This is particularly problematic if the uniform contracts themselves are based on male employment norms. As widely discussed in the context of organizational culture, gender may be hidden in apparently neutral policies and practices which however create masculine organizational cultures. The same is true for unions because "neutral" collective bargaining agendas have been historically set based on the "universal worker", a male, full-time, white worker (Dickens 2000, Ledwith 2012, Kirton and Greene 2004) and the content of agreements still remains implicitly male-oriented (Ledwith 2012,). When this happens, collective agreements may institutionalise discriminatory practices. The equality agenda risks to remain separated from the bargaining agenda, while it should be the core of the mainstream bargaining agenda itself, as equality should be a main concern in all areas of employment agreements and not only a trivial concern of women (Dickens 2000). Therefore, women's representation in decision-making bodies is an important precondition to pursue women's interests (Blaschke 2015). However, women trying to achieve high levels in unions face to a large extent the same barriers discussed for organizations in general. Because promotion to leadership positions is also based on informal processes where leaders encourage members and warn off others, it is easier that the current male leadership encourages other men rather than women (Ledwith 2012) due to the various processes of homophilic reproduction discussed previously. To help women thrive, unions are putting in place women's officers, women's committees, conferences, programmes of mentoring, and education and training. Small changes can be introduced, such as co-chairing, rotating roles, buddying, shadowing and mentoring to prepare women for leadership position (Ledwith 2012). A further problem for women in unions is that actually not all women have interest in equality struggles (Dickens 2000, Colgan and Ledwith 2000). In fact, women engaged in trade union activism can be classified into four groups. First, there are women who are active to pursue a limited "welfarist" agenda aimed at rectifying injustice experienced by women. Second, there are women denying differences between men and women and therefore pursuing the traditional solidaristic union agenda. Then there are women engaged mainly due to their socialist ideology but who are aware of feminist consciousness (socialist-feminists) and then there are those driven by their feminist beliefs informed by socialism too (feminist-socialists) (Colgan and Ledwith 2000). In addition to be aware of other women's concerns, women in trade union decision making roles need to be able to put forward claims effectively to gain the support of gender-aware male negotiators (Dickens 2000). Colgan and Ledwith (2000) suggest self-organization by women within trade unions to organize women's priorities and action. Women's self-organization can be the appropriate space

to debate women's concerns, develop consciousness and priorities, as well as policies, practices and strategies to get into the trade union agenda. This platform can be especially important to develop a shared gender consciousness by sharing experiences of work, society and family on which to base collective strategies and action (Colgan and Ledwith 2000). In light of what discussed before, this may be the platform to aggregate single employees' voices into a collective voice.

Because trade unions can largely contribute to equality in the workplace they should be actively considered. In fact, women in unionized employment generally enjoy better terms and conditions than those who are not. Unionized workforces generally experience less pronounced inequalities than non-unionised ones, because formal equality policies are more likely to be developed (Dickens 2000, Kirton and Greene 2004). Union membership also raises workers' pay in general (Elvira and Saporta 2001) and, according to some research, it also narrows the gender pay gap (Gnesi, De Santis, and Cardinaleschi 2016, Elvira and Saporta 2001). The latter is probably achieved by the bureaucratic procedures determining wages of employees covered by the same collective bargaining agreement, which reduce arbitrariness and consequently the possibility of discrimination. Additionally, unions tend to homogenize wages both within establishments regardless of jobs, and across establishments setting pay equity policies (Elvira and Saporta 2001). There is little research on the exact effect of unions on the gender pay gap and the ones existing are often based on old data. For instance, Elvira and Saporta (2001) base their analysis on establishments from nine different manufacturing industries, with proportions of female workers ranging from 5,6% to 92,7%, on 1974-1985 data. They conclude that, overall, collective bargaining coverage reduces the gender wage gap. Specifically, they found such evidence in six out of nine studies industries, one showed no significant relation and other two, interestingly those with a higher percentage of women, showed a greater gap in unionized establishment than in non-unionized ones (Elvira and Saporta 2001). Gnesi, De Santis, and Cardinaleschi (2016) come to the conclusion that in Italy, decentralized bargaining, reduces the gender pay gap by increasing the probability of receiving performance pay. However, as discussed above, the effect of performance pay on the pay gap is still unclear and the positive effect, if present, seems to be little.

Nevertheless, because the role of trade unions and collective bargaining may encompass wider social change, it will be picked up and further discussed in the next chapter. Trade unions becoming engaged in diversity management may be beneficial not only for minority groups, but also for unions themselves. The business case for diversity argues that diversity improves organizational outcomes and performance. Analogously, it can be argued that unions need diversity, or specifically women, too. Unions' membership and power is continuously declining in almost every Western country (Kirton and Greene 2004, Ledwith 2012). In 1983, in the U.S., 20,1% of wage and salary workers

were union members, today only 10,1% (U.S. Department of Labor 2018). Also in the European Union trade union membership has been declining over the last few decades (Fulton 2015). Attracting more women by focusing on equality issues may be a strategy to revert this trend. According to Ledwith (2012), organizing new workforces into unions, may be a mean of renewal and mobilization. Unions may be able to influence the discourse on diversity towards a more sophisticated approach, making sure that in addition to "diversity", the concern for old inequalities remains (Kirton and Greene 2004).

IV. A feminist interpretation of HR gender diversity management

In the previous chapter, the barriers and difficulties in different HRM activities that women face in employment have been illustrated. Looking at the analysed causes of their hurdles it is possible to identify five overarching issues:

- national culture;
- socialization of girls;
- motherhood;
- organizational culture;
- homophily.

The problem with culture is that it defines (gendered) social roles. These, as already illustrated, are then mirrored and incorporated into organizational culture and determine how girls are socialized and how motherhood is conceived, too. In the following it will be argued that socialization, or more broadly, society, make women what they are. Therefore, it is culture, through socializations, which makes women "less suited" to paid employment. Analogously, as Kymlicka (2002) explains, the problem is the way society has constructed motherhood. The incompatibility that the patriarchal society has created between paid employment and childrearing has led to the discussed employment barriers for women and has consequently made women dependant on men. (Kymlicka 2002). The source of inequality is not motherhood per se, but the distribution of childcare responsibilities and the way motherhood is socially defined. Organizational studies typically recognize these mechanisms as the causes of women's disadvantage but then do not dig deeper as they are believed to be beyond the control and "jurisdiction" of organizations. On the contrary, it can be argued that with HR diversity management as a strategy of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), organizations can help fight such deeply rooted causes of gender inequality, thus contributing to women empowerment and a just society in the light of feminist theory. Scholars have emphasized the strategic role of HRM and the business case for diversity management but according to Hansen and Seierstad (2017) workforce diversity's importance goes beyond the narrow organizational setting. Therefore, diversity management may be able - guided by feminist theory – to positively impact not only organizations, but society, too.

There is widespread misunderstanding about what "feminism" is and entails, which is proven by the increasing number of women refuting to define themselves as "feminists". First, feminism has two souls, there is feminism as a social and political movement and there is feminism as a political philosophy. Feminist political thought of course represents the theoretical background of the feminist movement, but this has not always been the case. For instance, liberal feminism has been mirrored in

the active engagement of suffragettes fighting for women's civil and political rights, but 1990s choice-feminism did not correspond to a feminist movement. The second aspect concerning the understanding of feminism which needs to be clarified is that there is no single feminism, but rather several feminisms. The feminist debate has evolved over time and has at the same time produced contrasting voices. There have been many issues at the centre of the feminist debate, starting from civil and political rights to pornography and sexual pleasure. On many issues feminists have not agreed but amplified the debate with opposing arguments. Concerning the first matter raised, the focus will be on feminism as a political philosophy, as studying feminism as a movement falls within the realm of the historical discipline and is of no help in suggesting a feminist approach to gender diversity management. Considering the variety of issues and arguments within the feminist philosophical thought itself, only those relevant to the present discussion will be analysed.

1.   Diversity management as a CSR strategy to reach feminist objectives

The first point that needs to be set is why feminist theory may matter for organizations. It will be argued that it can be relevant for organizations because in the framework of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) it may suggest ethical responsibilities for organizations and it may represent the philosophical background for legislation and therefore for legal responsibility. More generally, it may formulate objectives towards which organizations may strive through CSR as both feminist theory and CSR are deeply concerned with fairness and justice. As defined by Strauss (1957), political philosophy aims at understanding what "the good life" and the "good society" is. It attempts to acquire knowledge about the right and good political order, it tries to define what the common good is (Strauss 1957). Like for instance liberalism, marxism or utilitarianism, feminism tries to identify what makes a good and just society. However, political philosophy has always been dominated by men and has therefore somehow excluded a female perspective. Therefore, feminist political philosophy tries to represent women's point of view on what a good and just society for both sexes looks like. Being organizations the economic unit of society they are part of the picture, too.

The classical economic argument states that the management of organizations has only one responsibility, the one of maximizing profits for owners and shareholders with the only limit of not incurring in behaviours against open and free competition. Friedman (1962) has argued that social matters are not business' concern, they shall be resolved by the free market system. Eventually, if the free market does not solve social problems, the government and legislation should intervene (Friedman 1962 in Carroll 1999, Carroll and Shabana 2010 and Hansen and Seierstad 2017).

Nevertheless, the idea that organizations have responsibilities towards society, beyond those of making profits for shareholders, has been around for centuries now and has become a consolidated standpoint in the 1960s when in the U.S. social movements fighting for civil rights, women's rights, consumers' rights and environmental protection, started to pressure for legislation regulating organizations and forcing them to be responsible entities (Carroll and Shabana 2010, Carroll 1991). In the early 1970s, the U.S. legislation acquired these concerns and established the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OHSA), and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), sanctioning that the environment, employees and consumers are legitimate stakeholders of organizations (Carroll 1991). Three elements are important to notice in this regard. First, organizations have incorporated concerns on fairness and justice in the form of CSR (Carroll 1991). Second, employees are recognized as one of the most important stakeholders' group for organizations, and consequently CSR is closely related to HRM (Starostka-Patyk, Tomski and Zawada 2015). Third, equality/diversity concerns, driven by civil rights and women's rights ideals, are part of the social legislation at the root of CSR. Therefore, not only HRM is implicitly tied to CSR but also diversity management.

With social legislation it had been officially recognized, that organizations have impact on their social and natural environment in a variety of ways. In fact, the European Commission (2018) defines CSR as *"companies taking responsibility for their impact on society"* (European Commission 2018). Garavan and McGuire (2010) recognize that today there are even growing expectations about organizations focusing on social, environmental and economic goals in addition to securing profitability, as the increasing literature and managerial concern with CSR demonstrate, too. CSR's definitions, even if not necessarily unanimously, point to the aim of acting for reasons other than profitability or other economic returns. The objective is to contribute to a more sustainable development by improving the quality of life of employees, of their community and of all the stakeholders, tackling environmental, economic and social issues (Garavan and McGuire 2010). One of the most famous systematic conceptualizations of CSR is the *Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility*. developed by Carroll (1991).
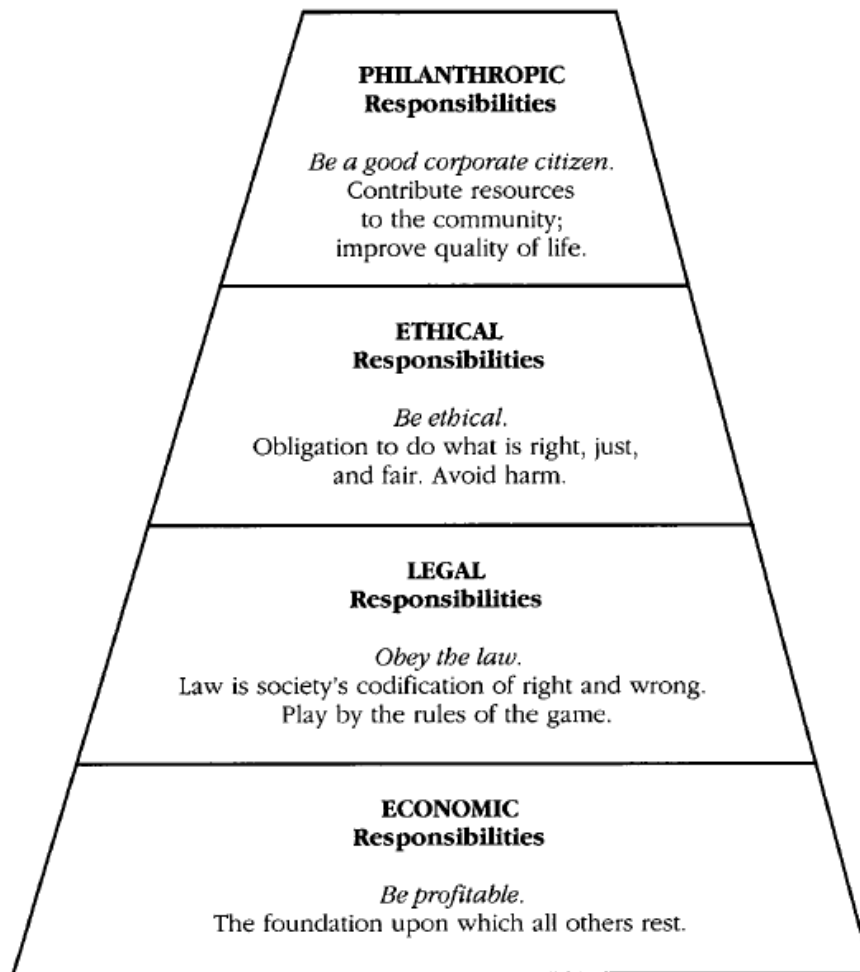
Figure 10: The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility (Carroll 1991).

In the first place, organizations are the economic unit of society, therefore they have to produce and sell - to a profit - goods and services that consumers need and want. Organizations have the responsibility to maximize earnings per share, to be consistently as profitable as possible, to keep a strong competitive position and to maintain high levels of operating efficiency. Second, organizations are expected to comply with laws and regulations. They need to be law-abiding corporate citizens and produce goods and services which at least meet the minimal legal requirements. In addition to economic and legal responsibilities which already embody ethical norms about fairness and justice, there are also practices which are morally and ethically expected or prohibited which are not codified into law. Ethical behaviour goes beyond mere compliance with laws and regulations but is still relevant to organizations because it is expected (Carroll 1991, Carrol and Shabana 2010, Hansen and Seierstad 2017). Organizations are not immune to considerations about what is good or bad and what is right or wrong, as the fact that many have codes of ethics and behavioural requirements, prove (Garavan and McGuire 2010). Lastly, the top of the pyramid is represented by philanthropic

responsibilities. These are only desired by society, not required like economic and legal responsibilities or expected like ethical ones, therefore they are less important than the other three categories. Philanthropic activities may include donations to the arts and education or to the community's welfare or investing executive time in favour of development projects (Carroll 1991, Carroll and Shabana 2010, Hansen and Seierstad 2017).

Like for diversity management, much research has been conducted on the beneficial impact of CSR on organizations and therefore on why organizations should implement CSR activities from a business perspective. Looking directly at the bottom-line, in the purest sense of a business case for CSR, empirical research is inconsistent in finding benefits but there is agreement on the positive impact of CSR on a variety of levels, including indirect measures of organizational performance such as customer satisfaction. The first common argument is that it is in business' long-term self-interest to be socially responsible. If business needs a certain environment to function, it must act in a way that guarantees its viability also in the future. The classical economic theory, some suggest, fails to recognize the long-term negative effects of the profit maximization principle in the short run. To be profitable in the long run, organizations need to engage in CSR and eventually suppress some short-term profit opportunities. A second argument it that some organizations, distasting government intervention, may prefer to prevent it by self-disciplining themselves in line with society's expectations (Carroll and Shabana 2010). Furthermore, in a Resource-based view perspective, the relationship between the organization and its stakeholders, managed though CSR, may become one of such valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable resources providing competitive advantage (Starostka-Patyk, Tomski, and Zawada 2015). More directly in terms of performance improvement, CSR is believed to reduce costs and risks. The reasoning is that stakeholders represent potential threats to the viability of the organization. To mitigate these threats, it is necessary to engage in social and environmental practices. In that light, equal employment opportunity (EEO) reduces the risk, and consequently the cost, of high turnover and absenteeism and low morale. Similarly, environmental efficiency may reduce operating costs. Second, CSR may produce competitive advantage enabling a differentiation strategy. For instance, anti-discrimination law helps recruiting and retaining talented employees from a wider pool (Carroll and Shabana 2010). Or simply, sound relationships with employees, constructed though CSR, increase the firm's ability to attract and retain talented individuals (Starostka-Patyk, Tomski, and Zawada 2015). Moreover, CSR helps developing reputation, legitimacy and improving the firm's relation with customers (Carroll and Shabana 2010, Hansen and Seierstad 2017). In fact, CSR is believed to increase brand loyalty. Stakeholders may prefer a firm over competitors specifically because the firm engages in CSR activities. Consumers

may be influenced in their buying decision by the CSR reputation of an organization. Following a similar reasoning, CSR is believed to be able to attract investments as institutional investors do not invest in firms which violate their mission, values and principles (Carroll and Shabana 2010). In fact, research points out that younger generations are increasingly interested in investing sustainably (Morgan Stanley 2017). Here, it is interesting to notice how many arguments sustaining a business case for CSR are overlapping with those of the business case for diversity. EEO legislation, or more generally anti-discrimination legislation is often mentioned as part of CSR, while it is also considered, as argued before, and as widely discussed in the following, the first basic step of diversity management. The ability to attract and retain talented employees, as well as reducing turnover, absenteeism and increasing morale and commitment, are benefits attributed both to CSR and diversity management. This shows that even though CSR and diversity management are two different sets of managerial practices, they have elements in common and diversity management can also be understood as a CSR strategy.

Even though there is a lot of academic and managerial interest in CSR and a business case claiming its validity from an economic perspective, there is little engagement concerning how CSR principles can be translated into concrete processes and practices able to achieve social and ethical objectives. Thanks to its ability to implement change and to influence organizational culture, HRM may be seen as a useful tool to effectively implement CSR and its objectives (Garavan and McGuire 2010). Through HRM (and diversity management) socially responsible values can be introduced in the organization to create a more sustainable organizational culture (Starostka-Patyk, Tomski, and Zawada 2015). In other words, HRM is a powerful device for organizations to have the positive social impact CSR pledges for, which in political philosophical terms means, that HRM can contribute to the achievement of the "good life" and "good society". More specifically, because feminist political philosophy ultimately aims at introducing women's voice in the justice debate, it can target HR gender diversity management towards policies and practices that work equally well for both men and women. By favouring a truly inclusive participation of women in the workforce, HR diversity management favours women's economic empowerment and access to key decision-making roles from which to create that good and just society feminist political philosophy pledges for. Simplified, the suggested connection is the following: feminist political philosophy aims at identifying what a good and just society is including women's perspective, organizations care about fairness and justice in the form of CSR and can therefore contribute towards the ideal society identified by feminist political philosophy, and HR diversity management, interpreted as part of the CSR strategy, can be the tool to reach the objective. While for diversity management there is a strong focus on its business

rationale and is directed internally to the organization, through CSR which has been traditionally focused on the outside of the organization and is rooted in justice case arguments (Hansen and Seierstad 2017), it is possible to give to HR diversity management a social role. While research has focused on the impact of diversity management on the organization, also the potential impact of diversity management on society should be investigated. The content that this social role should promote will be suggested in the following, analysing the most relevant debates of feminist theory in light of what has been said so far.

2. Equal Employment Opportunity, affirmative action and diversity management from a feminist perspective

As the development of feminist theory demonstrates, the idea about how a just society should be to be fair towards women changed over time. Similarly, the approaches about how to manage women in organizations have evolved over time, too, often interpreting and trying to put into practice the current social beliefs on that matter, eventually incorporating feminist thought as well. In the following, the parallels between feminist theory and the management of women in organisations will be illustrated.

a. Anti-discrimination laws and liberal feminism

The paramount example of anti-discrimination law is U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) legislation. EEO legislation, to which has been often referred to, was introduced in the U.S., like CSR, as a response to the civil rights movement in the 1960s (Shen et al. 2009). In fact, its main example is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which made workplace prejudice and discrimination based on sex, race, colour, religion and national origin, illegal (Gotsis and Kortezi 2015, Yakura 1996). Simply put, EEO legislation is a set of anti-discrimination laws. The main laws enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) are those discussed in the chapter analysing different categories of diversity: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, The Pregnancy Discrimination Act, The Equal Pay Act of 1963 and The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). Of course, even though not labelled EEO, other countries have developed analogous anti-discrimination laws based on the same principles. For instance, despite Member States' national legislation already existing on the matter, the European Union has established the principle of "equal treatment" in matters of employment and occupation. Equal treatment is the core principle of directives such as the already presented Council Directive

76/207/EEC outlawing gender-based discrimination in employment and occupation and Council Directive 2000/78/EC prohibiting employment discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (Council Directive 76/207/EEC, Council Directive 2000/78/EC). Equal opportunity policies aim at establishing formalized procedures to access jobs and promotions based on merit, regardless any other characteristic. The rationale for equal opportunity is based on liberal political philosophy's ideal of equality: every individual has the right to universally applicable standards. Therefore, bureaucratic procedures for hiring and promotion - that is, universal standards - which limit the discretion of potentially prejudiced individuals, allow for perfectly meritocratic evaluations regardless of "irrelevant" characteristics such as sex (Webb 1997). The aim of such legislation is to create a gender-blind society; a society where gender is never taken into account in the awarding of resources and benefits (Kymlicka 2002). The liberal approach aims at granting equal opportunities by treating people the same through fair procedures based on the idea of sameness (Hansen and Seierstad 2017). In that light, because the process is non-discriminatory and fair, unequal outcomes would be only caused by unequal merit, thus meritocracy would be granted (Webb 1997). To sum up, the core ideals behind EEO, or more generally, behind anti-discrimination laws are: equality, neutrality and meritocracy (Yakura 1996).

Anti-discrimination law is rooted in liberal political philosophy, in fact, its rationale can be strongly found in liberal feminist thought, the first trend within feminism. Feminism was born among the women who took active part in the French Revolution, as a movement with the same claims of the revolutionaries: equality and universal human rights (Cavarero 2002). However, what we now consider the First Wave of feminism only acquired a concrete shape in mid-nineteenth century, developing into two schools of thought, liberal and socialist feminism. Liberal feminism asked to apply the same values of the French revolution not only to men, but to women, too. Women remained excluded from the equality claims of the French Revolution which fought for equality among men, but not for equality between men and women. Feminists' main claim was that women are, like men, human beings and therefore naturally autonomous, rational and moral. Therefore, they must have the same rights, deriving from these natural characteristics. Liberal feminists' demands can be summed up in following slogan: "we have the same rights, of natural or divine origin, as men; we fight for our rights to be recognized; be equality among human beings, regardless of their sex, realized." In other words, they asked the state for "neutrality" in relation to sexes. The crucial element is the refusal of the theory of women's natural inferiority: it is history and society created by men which make women subordinated, not nature. The separation of social roles designating women to family and men to paid work was not a central issue in liberal feminism, however some authors already hinted to it. Harriet

Taylor believed that only freeing women from the burden of all household and care work true emancipation could be achieved (Restaino 2002).

The similarity between what has been said on anti-discrimination law and the main principles of liberal feminism is evident. Liberal feminists have fought to be recognized as equal to men, they have asked for "universal" human rights to be applied to them too, for "neutrality" regarding their gender, for their sex not to count. This is exactly the principle at the root of anti-discrimination law and EEO: because women are human beings like men, they cannot be discriminated against; because all individuals are equal, they need to be treated with the same universal, neutral procedures to make sure that irrelevant characteristics such as sex, do not count; employment practices need to be gender-blind. According to Restaino (2002) liberal feminism led to the achievement of important goals for women: the right to vote, the possibility to inherit and own private property, and the access to higher education and employment (Restaino 2002). Similarly, anti-discrimination law has contributed to achieve an important objective for women in employment: representation (Webb 1997). However, even though the achievements of liberal feminism were considerable, after World War I, second-wave feminists noticed that they were largely normative rather than substantive. The legal recognition of gender equality had not been able to eliminate concretely the vast disparities between sexes (Restaino 2002). In the same way, even though equal opportunity (and affirmative action) has contributed increasing the representation of women in the workplace, other substantial problems such as occupational segregation in the lowest-paying jobs, the gender pay gap, and the inability of minorities to climb the hierarchical ladder, remain (Webb 1997, Thomas 1990). This is the case because, as largely demonstrated in the previous chapter, women's problem in organizations is not open discrimination that can be fought claiming equality of opportunities but is way more complex and systematic. The core fault of anti-discrimination law is its gender-blindness, as will be illustrated further on. The limited effectiveness of liberal feminism made second-wave feminists question the objective of equality itself. Simone the Beauvoir, a precursor and leading figure of difference feminism, started to delineate a new path, which underlined the differences among men and women rather than the equality (Restaino 2002). In fact, the ongoing struggles women face in employment raise the question whether employment legislation based on equality and sameness is desirable and effective.

b. The equality vs. difference debate

"Equal to what?" – the issue of gendered standards and roles

With the theoretical evolution of second-wave feminism, the debate between equality and difference becomes one of the central issues in feminist philosophy debate. Liberal feminism and its equality principle are accused of three main shortcomings. First, as historical evidence shows, affirming equality at a normative level is not enough to create substantive equality (Restaino 2002). Second, liberal feminism identifies some principles and values, such as human rights, as universal, ignoring that they are not necessarily accepted as such all over the world. They are values of a white, Western, heteronormative, middle-class, which can hardly be applied universally without falling into the trap of cultural imperialism, especially when they are used as a basis for transnational feminism (Anthias 2002, Changfoot 2007). Lastly, aiming for equality, the question "equal to what?" arises. As it has been explained, liberal feminism argues that being women human beings just like men, they deserve the same rights. Women are therefore "equal" to human beings. The concept of human being is however symbolically not neutral. Originally, the way it was developed during the French Revolution, the principle of equality was targeted at male individuals. The objective was to replace the existing political order based on inequalities and differences with a new political and social order based on equality among men, but for sure not equality between men and women. When the revolutionaries talked about "human" rights and "human" beings they did not talk about a neutral entity but about an individual with male characteristics. Our language uses men as one of the genders of the human species, but also as universal paradigm for the entire species itself. Consequently, asking for equality means aspiring to the homologation of women to the male paradigm, which will never allow women to be something more than a bad imitation of men (Cavarero 2002). On the other side, recognizing that women are different from men, allows them *"to be"* not only in relation to men.

This argument of theoretically neutral standards but practically gendered concepts raised by difference feminists against liberal feminism has a clear parallel in organizational studies, as illustrated in the previous chapter: women are expected to fit into roles that are believed to be neutral but are actually designed on a male archetype. Like women are expected to equal a "neutral" model of human being, so are female employees expected to fit into "neutral" roles. Many scholars argue that the liberal gender-blind approach asks not to take gender into account in hiring, salary or promotion decisions, but forgets that gender was considered a priori in the very definition of such roles and evaluation criteria. Gender neutral policies are not neutral, they are deeply gendered (Kymlicka 2002, Kimmel 2005). Kymlicka (2002:379) argues that liberal anti-discrimination law *"sees sex equality in terms of the ability of women to compete under gender-neutral rules for the roles that men have defined. But equality cannot be achieved by allowing men to build social institutions according to their interests, and then ignoring the gender of the candidates when deciding*

who fills the roles in these institutions. The problem is that the roles may be defined in such a way as to make men more suited to the role, even under gender-neutral competition". Pragmatically, if organizations have an organizational culture which requires long hours and facetime in the office it is implicitly assumed that men will cover positions in the organization, because staying in the office until late is only possible if you are not the primary caretaker of children. Employers requiring long hours are implicitly assuming that someone else is taking care of the household and the children. This is the main reason why organizational culture is one of the five overarching problems for women in organizations. More specifically, as Webb (1997) noted, the way in which job requirements are specified means that men and women will appear differently suited for the job. Moreover, as previously discussed, leadership roles - what a good manager and leader is - are shaped on stereotypic male characteristics. Therefore, the gender-blind approach suggested by liberal feminism, or liberalism more in general, and incorporated into anti-discrimination legislation, is not able to lead to substantial equality. Furthermore, it does not implement meritocracy as it claims. As widely discussed in the previous chapter in relation to gender quotas, meritocracy is not granted without an eye on gender, because employers tend to prefer men over equally qualified women or even over more qualified women due to their fit with male-dominated organizational culture and their impossibility to become pregnant.

"Different how?" – the issue of defining women

If equality is not a principle to strive for, then the concept of "difference" becomes a possible substitute. However, "difference" raises a set of questions and issues, too. First, stating that women are different from men raises the fundamental question: *how* do women differ from men? Or, in other words: *what* are women? In her masterpiece "The Second Sex", de Beauvoir ([1949] 2016) answers that while liberal feminism would answer that women are human beings arbitrarily defined with the word "women", she believes that of course, women are like men human beings, but each human being has its particular situation. In other words, arguing that women, as human beings, deserve the same rights as men, does not impede to recognize and accept that there are concrete differences (Restaino 2002). Nevertheless, her answer leaves open what women's "particular situation" is, how women differ from men. Indeed, second-wave feminism is often criticized because in the attempt to describe the differences between men and women the sexes are depicted through stereotypes (Cavarero 2002, Anthias 2002). Highlighting differences, especially the physical and "sexual" ones, there is the danger of characterizing women as procreation machines strongly determined by their nature of mothers. The stereotypic description Heilman (2012) provides of women is indeed strongly defined by

women's role as caregivers. Women are described as kind, caring, considerate, warm, collaborative, obedient, intuitive and understanding (Heilman 2012), all characteristics which may be used to argue that women are naturally determined to be mothers and caregivers. In fact, in the previous chapters, it has been shown how stereotypes are harmful to women in the workplace. For that reason, adopting a difference approach may be indeed problematic for gender policies and practices in organizations. On the other side, difference feminists claim that highlighting sameness devalues the concerns of women for caring activities and raising children. Radical feminists have claimed women's cultural difference from men to provide a positive identity to women and to criticize the priority of production over reproduction (Webb 1997). The *possibility* of motherhood is something that makes women different from men, but it does not determine women. It has been stated that motherhood is a major problem for women in employment, however, to be more precise, it is not motherhood per se, but the conceptualization of motherhood in society. Motherhood is seen as incompatible with paid employment, but this does not need to be the case, as it will be illustrated further on.

Moreover, in the quest of defining women, the question arises if "women" as a category exist in the first place. Of course, as previously discussed, there is difference *within* social groups. Women diverge on a variety of characteristics, such as age, class, ethnic group, sector, and occupation. Therefore, some believe that they cannot be expected to have a unified economic interest (Dickens 2000, Colgan and Ledwith 2000). Arguing that women are different from men implies assuming that there is a common unifying experience of being a woman. A focus on unity may submerge the relevant differences but a focus on differences may undermine the possibility of strategic unity, which is important because distinctiveness motivates to change the social status of the group (Colgan and Ledwith 2000). However, as the collapse of the feminist movement demonstrates, there are no women as a consolidated, unified social group. This debate in feminist theory is especially relevant for diversity management because women may have very different experiences in relation to employment, thus needing very different policies and practices. Not all women may care about the possibility to balance work and family, as they may not want to have a family at all. On the other side, other women may not be interested in projects related to networking and mentoring to advance in their career, because their priority is not a successful career. As it will be explained below, to avoid that diversity management practices reinforce the role of women as caregivers, because they only focus on work-life-balance, it is necessary to implement practices which can benefit both men and women. Nevertheless, it is possible to state that, overall, women are different from men beyond the differences constructed by socialization and gender roles, without denying the diversity among women themselves.

A further substantial problem is that introducing the concept of "difference" opens to the possibility of discrimination and unfair treatment exactly on the basis of such difference. For instance, one could justify women's relegation to the domestic sphere arguing that the differences they present compared to men, make them more suitable to domestic care activities (Changfoot 2007). These worries have concerned organizational scholars too. Billing and Alvesson (2014) worry that the emphasis on gender difference may imply that the gendered division of labour may appear to some extent natural (Billing and Alvesson 2014). "Difference" can be used both for diversity (in the diversity management sense of valuing diversity) and for discriminatory practices. In terms of positive differentiation, some supporters of diversity have come to put higher value on typically feminine traits. They have argued that distinctive feminine characteristics make women better suited for management's todays challenges (Webb 1997). But still, differences can be used to reaffirm women's inferiority, justify their exclusion from certain public roles and reinforce occupational segregation where women are hired, or not hired, for their feminine characteristics (Webb 1997). In relation to occupational segregation it has been demonstrated how it is fostered by the belief that certain jobs are more appropriate for women and others for men due to their different characteristics (Acker 2006, Equitable Growth 2017). Difference is associated with an "other process" where someone is measured against a standard (men) resulting then "different" (Riach 2009). In other words, "difference" is not politically neutral, it can be constructed as an ideological weapon of domination (Restaino 2002). Following this reasoning, the doubt raises that what we perceive as differences today, are actually an artificial construct of the patriarchy to justify women's subordination. De Beauvoir herself, a representative of difference feminism, states, *"one is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature (…)"* (de Beauvoir [1949] 1974 in Kaufmann 1986). Being a woman is no fixed reality, women are not born as such, they become such though society's pressures (de Beauvoir [1949] 2006). These ideas are framed today in the concept of socialization. There is a set of cultural sanctions, motivations, pressures, practices and distinctions which train children the behaviours and beliefs that are "appropriate" to their sex (Digby 2003). De Beauvoir than goes on explaining that since women are the result of a social construct, it is necessary to wait for a future society where women are really free to recognize which are truly the differences between men and women (de Beauvoir [1949] 2006, Changfoot 2007). With Simone de Beauvoir, feminist thought raises for the first time two of the issues that I have argued are part of the overarching problems of women in employment: socialization and national culture. If what we believe women

are, is not what they *naturally* are, but what socialization and society's culture make them, then it is socialization and national culture which make women less suitable than men for paid employment.

<u>Affirmative action and equality or affirmative action and difference?</u>

Affirmative Action, or Positive Action, originated, together with EEO, in the U.S. in mid 1960s to early 1970s as an attempt to remedy for past and continuing discrimination of certain minorities, including women (Agócs and Burr 1996, Iyer 2009). Affirmative action *"means positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and culture from which they have been historically excluded"* (Fullinwider 2018: n.d). It tries to implement the ideals of anti-discrimination law by increasing the numerical participation of women and other underrepresented minorities (Iyer 2009). This is tried to achieve by encouraging individuals from under-represented groups to apply for jobs and promotions and by making changes to the workplace, in order to make it more suited for individuals diverging on some dimension from the majority group, thus increasing their retention. Typical affirmative action practices are for instance recruitment campaigns in locations known for the high density of minorities, vocational training courses exclusively for 55+ employees, or flexible working hours to accommodate family needs (Noon 2017). Indeed, it has been proved that affirmative action programs are able to increase the representation of women in the workplace without reducing organizational performance of productivity. Organizations with affirmative action programs tend to have a higher proportion of female employees than organizations without affirmative action programs or which only follow equal opportunity strategies (Iyer 2009). Like equal opportunity legislation, affirmative action is usually legally mandated (Gotsis and Kortezi 2015, Yakura 1996), but there are companies which have introduced affirmative action programs voluntarily (Iyer 2009) as illustrated by the two examples below.

<u>Box 1: Boston Consulting Group (BCG)'s affirmative action and diversity management programs</u>

BCG, a globally leading consulting organization, has introduced a variety of diversity management and affirmative action practices which have led it to be ranked in 2015, by *Fortune* and Great Place to Work, among the top 5 of the 50 Best Workplaces for Diversity. Other awards have been assigned specifically for gender diversity practices, for instance, *Working Mother* magazine has

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frequently named BCG one of the top 100 companies for working mothers. **Women@BCG** is the umbrella program aimed at increasing the number, the success, and the satisfaction of women in the organization. BCG also has a **Pride@BCG** program supporting LGBT individuals, a **US Ethnic and Diversity Network** and a **US Veterans Network**. BCG's commitment to gender diversity has paid off in terms of representation as 45% of employees, 44% of management, and 26% of executives at BCG are women. The main programs of diversity management and affirmative action are:

Apprenticeship in Action (AiA)

Being apprenticeship a large part of its talent-development model, BCG conducted an audit on how apprenticeship culture and process was working for women. Based on the results, it launched in 2014 in North America the AiA program, to redress the identified shortcomings and improve satisfaction and retention among women. The program's main initiatives are:

- Introduction of "strength-based development" by training all managers to deliver feedback linking each employee's strength to an area for development, to avoid a focus predominantly on weaknesses (e.g. rather than telling someone who is quiet that he or she needs to speak up in meetings, their ability to extract insights out of analysis is highlighted and it is suggested that they share it at the next meeting).
- Assignment of senior sponsors to every senior female manager to improve relational connectedness (mentoring and sponsorship).
- Training of managers to make personal connections, to invest in individuals' success, to guide and advise, and to stay in touch between projects, with the aim of avoiding that relationships are viewed, especially by women, as transactional.
- Training on avoiding unconscious bias.
- Coaching of all consultants on how to develop and promote effective communication styles. While coaching was previously focused on delivering tough messages and landing a point of view, encouraging women to have a more "male" communication style, to "be more aggressive" or to "take up more space", today it is focused on facilitating two-way dialogues and building connectivity.

Predictability, Teaming and Open Communication (PTO)

PTO is a program mainly focused on improving work-life balance by discussing upfront rules of how a team will work together. For instance, the team sets in advance when the workday will end and the hours during which team members will be unavailable.

Flexibility@BCG

BCG has several flexibility programs. **FlexTime** allows part-time arrangements to reduce weekly work hours. **FlexLeave** gives the opportunity to take up to two months of time off during the year while still retaining company benefits. **FlexPaths** gives access to a selection of wide experiences for personal and professional development such as social impact activities, work abroad, leaves of absence, or courses leading to advanced degrees. For instance, some women have taken a leave to work on political campaigns and to study microfinance in Africa.

(Source: BCG, n.d., Roche and Dasgupta 2018, Stohlmeyer Russell and Moskowitz Lepler 2017, Lesser 2016, Lovich 2016).

Box 2: Generali's affirmative action and diversity management programs

Generali, one of the major players in the insurance industry globally, has started, based on the core value "value our people" and the blueprint "we are colourful", to implement affirmative action and diversity management programs, especially concerning cultural, gender, age, and ability diversity. This organization is especially interesting as it shows how the issue of diversity is approached in the initial phase and how practices are developed. Nevertheless, today's figures already report that women represent 38,4% of the Board of Directors and 16,7% of the Group Management Committee.

Group Diversity & Inclusion Council

In 2017, a Group Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Council was established. This is set up by the **D&I Champion** of each Country, Region or Business Unit and is supported in the analysis, setting, and implementation of goals by the **Group D&I Specialist Network**. The Council's final aim is to establish goals and actions to promote diversity and inclusion and implement them in the local businesses. In 2018, a D&I action plan is expected to be defined and the executive phase shall start, along with a Group Communication plan to make sure that employees are informed about programmes and initiatives. The first activities planned for 2018 are:

- Audit of HR processes to identify critical issues regarding inclusion.
- Launch of an ad hoc training programme to promote the participation of women in the Boards of Directors.

- Launch of projects to promote interculturality and inclusive mindsets.

Managerial Acceleration Program (MAP)

The Managerial Acceleration Program (MAP) has been already launched in 2016, but in 2017 specific training modules on Diversity & Inclusion have been introduced. The program addresses about 9000 managers with a dedicated online platform, two days of in-classroom training, and a final session to define changes in management practice. In 2018, specific webinars targeting subconscious prejudices and promoting inclusive management, and another program dedicated to the Group's leaders on subconscious prejudices and their impact on decision- making are expected to be introduced.

"Be bold for women" and "Inspiring Leaders on Diversity and Inclusion"

Several programs aim at raising awareness about diversity issues among the Group's leaders and managers. The "Be bold for women" program addresses 46 international talents, 23 men and 23 women with different levels of seniority, with the aim of creating a work environment with greater gender balance. Similarly, the first edition of "Inspiring Leaders on Diversity and Inclusion" was launched in 2017 in Milan inviting 100 participants among the Group's managers and leaders.

Flexibility and work-life balance

Several flexibility and work-life balance practices have been introduced: flexible working hours, part-time work, working time account, parental leave, and company crèches for employees' children. With variations between countries, employees are granted paid leave provided for by law, national collective agreements and supplementary company contracts for circumstance such as for example pregnancy, maternity/paternity leave, a child's illness, medical appointments and clinical tests, study and exams, care for disabled relatives. Additionally, **Smart working**, which allows employees to work more often from home, has started to be tested and implemented.

"Generali Hackathon – Diversity & Inclusion"

In 2017, Generali Country Italia launched, together with H-Farm and promoted by Elle Active!, the first "Generali Hackathon - Diversity & Inclusion". 120 participants, employees of Generali Italia, Alleanza, Genertel and Genertellife, and of other organizations, were invited to develop projects on age, cultural, ability and gender diversity within a framework of a 12 hours non-stop session. The projects had to target five pressing issues: maintaining motivation and engagement over the whole career path, guaranteeing equal opportunity across all HR processes, promoting an

organizational mindset and leadership which promotes diversity and avoids exclusion, new working methods which allow a better management of individual activities, time and competencies, developing an organizational culture which values parenthood.

Source: Generali, n.d., Generali 2017.

Both anti-discrimination law and affirmative action are rooted in the principle of equality, but while anti-discrimination law is based on equality of opportunities, affirmative action is based on equality of outcomes (Hansen and Seierstad 2017). Therefore, affirmative action does not only passively grant equal treatment, it requires to monitor and change organizational policies and practices which may be biased (Iyer 2009). Affirmative action plans usually entail a monitoring program starting with an analysis of organizational practices, a statistical comparison of the employed workforce and the labour pool with the required qualifications and experience, and a consequent establishment of goals and timetables to increase the number of underrepresented groups within a certain timeframe, eventually eliminating or changing organizational policies and practices (Yakura 1996, Iyer 2009). A typical example of affirmative action practice is to publicly advertise for each hire and promotion to avoid the "old boy" network to fill the position (Iyer 2009). Preferential selection may be used as a "positive step" to reach the representation goals (Fullinwider 2018), therefore to characterize affirmative action's goals, the term "quota" is often used. Indeed, many affirmative action plans use quotas, but they are usually flexible, and they do not necessarily have to. However, because of the usage of quotas, affirmative action is often referred to as positive or reverse discrimination. In fact, the border line between affirmative action and preferential selection is very subtle and a lot of confusion is present in the literature and the debates concerning these issues (Yakura 1996, Oswick and Noon 2014). Some authors clearly distinguish positive discrimination as the preferential treatment of persons because of certain characteristics - that is quotas - from affirmative action as a set of practices to help employees from under-represented groups to advance, for instance, changing working arrangements to make the workplace more suited to their needs (Noon 2017). Positive discrimination, understood as hard quotas, is illegal in some countries which however have implemented affirmative action (Noon 2017, Iyer 2009).

Even though affirmative action is intended to implement anti-discrimination legislation, the two practices are based on very different principles. Equal opportunity and equal outcome are strikingly different concepts that cannot be assimilated by arguing that they are both concerned with "equality". As Yakura (1996) highlights, while core ideals of anti-discrimination law are neutrality and gender-

blindness, affirmative action requires employers to look at group-based characteristics. Affirmative action acknowledges differences between groups and suggests different treatment due to those differences (Yakura 1996). Therefore, I suggest that to overcome confusion and to initiate research on affirmative action from a different, eventually more fruitful perspective, affirmative action should be anchored to difference feminism's ideals rather than to liberal ones. Now, affirmative action practices try to increase women's representation in roles that, as argued before, are designed by men for men. On the other side, taking "difference" as root principle, affirmative action practices may focus on redefining those male-gendered roles rather than trying to forcefully make women fit in them. Only by recognizing difference it is possible to fully value diversity and to implement affirmative action effectively, for instance in the way the American Association of University Professors (2014) suggests: policies and practices need to be scrupulously examined to make sure that they are non-discriminatory both in principle and in practice, it needs to be avoided that facially neutral provisions have an adverse impact on women. Additionally, "sex-sensitive selectivity" (that is quotas) may be considered appropriate (American Association of University Professors 2014). The new core idea would be that we do not need affirmative action because we are equal, but because we are different, and therefore differentiated policies and practices may be more appropriate. With this reconceptualization also the tension between antidiscrimination law/EEO and positive discrimination would be overcome. While if affirmative action is considered as the implementation of antidiscrimination law, it is impossible to see quotas as part of affirmative action because they contrast the idea of neutrality, they would become perfectly legitimate if affirmative action was rooted in difference feminism. In that light antidiscrimination law, or EEO, and affirmative action would become two clearly distinguished approaches to women in employment. I am not saying that affirmative action cannot be understood as the operative arm to implement non-discrimination in practice, and therefore be traced back to the equality principle and liberalism; I am suggesting though that rooting affirmative action in the difference principle, may free it from the tension between non-discrimination principles and positive discrimination in the form of "preferential treatment" and quotas, and therefore give it a renewed impulse.

Diversity management overcoming the equality-difference dichotomy by introducing the principle of inclusion

As difference feminism developed as an answer to liberal feminism's shortcomings, the question arises whether diversity management too was developed as a reaction to EEO's limits. According to some, indeed, diversity management was born in mid-1980s in the U.S as a response to affirmative

action which had spurred much controversy. In that light diversity management is the response to the public opinion pressuring for a least interventionist approach (Agócs and Burr 1996, Gotsis and Kortezi 2015, Oswick and Noon 2014). According to others, diversity management does not represent a less centralized and voluntary alternative to affirmative action but is complementary to mandatory legislative action and is actually able to address issues that affirmative action has left untouched such as the effective integration into the workplace of those individuals hired within affirmative action frameworks (Agócs and Burr 1996, Gotsis and Kortezi 2015). This however, does not automatically imply that diversity management was born out of difference feminism's concerns or that it has necessarily parallels with it. Of course, the feminists' focus on difference rather than equality may have a certain correspondence with the shift from sameness to diversity. However, difference feminism has a strong collectivist root, that diversity management does not have. Some authors (Gotsis and Kortezi 2015, Hansen and Seierstad 2017, Oswick and Noon 2014) have noted how EEO and affirmative action are of collectivist nature focusing on group characteristics rather than individual characteristics, while diversity management is rooted in a more individualistic approach looking at individuals' peculiarities to be used for increased organizational performance. The assumption at the basis of diversity management, assuming that it *is* something completely different from the practices discussed so far, is that every person is unique and because individual uniqueness has to be valued, everyone is included in the concept, also members of the dominant group (Yakura 1996, Oswick and Noon 2014). However, Yakura's (1996) understanding of diversity management would lead us to reaffirm equality: if everyone is "diverse", then the concept of difference is useless, and the one universal similarity should be reaffirmed: all individuals are human beings. Nevertheless, as reported before, Gardenswartz and Rowe ([1994] 2008) believe that this is not operationally useful for organizations, because in their experience, diversity matters, as it shapes the way employees fulfil their tasks and interact with colleagues and therefore how operations overall are performed (Gardenswartz and Rowe [1994] 2008). The concept of diversity is naturally rooted in the one of difference: diversity management recognizes that there are differences *between* groups and that there are individual differences *within* groups. This theoretical construct fits well with a third conceptual variable: inclusion. While some scholars have traced a line between diversity and inclusion, arguing that in the same way that diversity has substituted equality, now inclusion is substituting diversity, other argue that there is no clear distinctive feature between these two concepts, especially on an operating level, where they overlap. In line with other scholars, it is argued that diversity and inclusion are co-dependant: it is necessary to have a policy of diversity, that is to recognize the importance of valuing differences, to then commit to inclusion. The concepts of equality, diversity and inclusion are different, but they do not exclude each other as anti-discrimination approaches (Oswick and Noon

2014). Understanding diversity management as a tool for inclusion, the dichotomy between equality and difference may be overcome: individuals are different, both individually and as members of different social groups, but because they are all human beings, the ultimate aim is everyone's true inclusion.

c. <u>Women's choices and preferences at the basis of the disadvantage in employment</u>

In the previous chapter one argument explaining women's disadvantage in almost all HR sectors was particularly recurring: women's preferences. For instance, the labour supply explanation for occupational segregation argues that it is women who choose specific jobs, because they allow flexibility and are compatible with motherhood. Moreover, women *prefer* to dedicate more time to the family and to take the role of primary caretaker, therefore they do not climb the corporate ladder, not because of the glass ceiling. Some organizational studies then comment that the reason for such differences may be socialization or anticipated discrimination, but the matter is usually not further investigated. To fill this gap, much can be taken from feminism, as "choice" is the core ideal of a feminist school of thought and the criticisms raised to it may provide an interesting insight.

<u>Choice-feminism and post-feminism</u>

Third-wave feminism, or choice-feminism, was born out of a split, concerning issues of sexuality, in the second-wave of American feminists in the 1990s. It aims at overcoming the clash among feminists through an inclusive and non-judgemental approach. The core idea of third-wave feminism is to accept non-judgmentally every choice women make, therefore it is also named "choice-feminism". Feminism's aim is reduced to simply give women choices (Snyder-Hall 2010). This pluralistic and self-determinist approach has its roots in different critics to second-wave feminism. First, choice-feminism developed in clear contrast to second-wave's rigidity, which imposed on feminists and women behavioural standards impossible to attain. Second, the concept of "women" collapsed. In other words, the idea discussed before, that all women share something in common, that they have a common gender identity and a common experience of being a woman, faints. Therefore, it was necessary to acknowledge that every woman is different and makes different choices. Accordingly, also the aim of a cohesive feminist movement is abandoned (Snyder 2008). "Girl power", the claim to freely express one's femininity through playing on seemingly sexist images and symbols in terms of clothing, makeup and pursue boundlessly sexual desire, becomes a central aspect of third-wave feminism (Snyder 2008, Brunell 2015). Third-wave feminism accepts all acts and choices, even if

they perpetuate patriarchy, because it recognizes that there is a tension between gender equality and sexual pleasure. To fulfil their desires, women may want something that jeopardizes gender equality, they may want to exit the workforce to be housewives. From this perspective, it is considered feminist to retreat out of the workforce to be a stay-at-home mother, it is considered feminist to engage in sex work, and it is considered feminist to play with femininity, as long as everything is done with "feminist consciousness" (Snyder-Hall 2010). "Feminist consciousness" is defined by Baumgardner and Richards (2000) as *"knowledge of what one is doing and why one is doing it"* (as cited in Snyder-Hall 2010). Ultimately, choice-feminism was reduced to accepting all choices women make and finally the choices were reduced to one choice: pursuing a demanding career or having a family life. Because of the focus on "choice", women were not encouraged to do both, the discourse was mainly either/or. Due to the laissez-faire approach of choice feminism, today, many scholars talk about post-feminism. Post-feminism is used to define the sensitivity of Western societies for women's empowerment in the sense of their ability to make choices, but also the belief that there is no need for a feminist movement anymore, as feminism's objectives have been accomplished (Rottenberg 2017). Rottenberg (2017) however argues that many recent events show that a feminism with the value of "balance" is rising. The main discourse today is around the fact that even though feminism has apparently reached its scope, middle-class women still struggle to combine career and the rearing of children. Slaughter and Sandberg are considered new feminists giving voice to this concern (Rottenberg 2017). Both authors speak to white, middle class, well educated women and encourage them to both invest in their careers and dedicate time to their families, in other words, to achieve a work-life balance. This, in comparison to the ether/or option suggested by choice-feminism is an innovation and suggests that Western societies are not in a *post*-feminism phase yet.

Choice-feminism has three main faults, first it does not consider the relevance of institutions, second it has determined the end of feminism as a political movement, and third, most importantly, even though it is all about choice, it does not investigate what determines choices. It simply assumes that women's choices done with feminist consciousness are purely *free* choices. As Snyder (2008) and Snyder-Hall (2010) put it, choice feminism has given too little attention to how desires and choices are constructed by society's structures and cultural traditions and to how an aggregation of individual choices can have a negative impact on gender relations at large (Snyder 2008, Snyder-Hall 2010). Women's desires are socially constructed and ideas about gender roles internalized. Society and the state, historically created by men and for men, have not just created external restrictions on women; they have shaped women in a way that they seem to freely choose what they in fact are restricted to by the national culture. (Hirshman 2006 as cited in Hirschmann 2010, Hirschmann 1996). This

argument is rooted in de Beauvoir's statement previously discussed that women are socially constructed. Therefore, culture, as argued before, is a predominant force hindering women's careers. For women it is still harder to make a career compared to men, as largely analyzed in the chapter before. As Okin (1989) explains, this means women will have less bargain power within the couple to achieve a more equal share of housework and childrearing duties and it may make sense to give priority to the partner's career as he will not face the same hurdles in his career path (Okin 1989). The "choice" of some couples to conform to social gender roles and make the male the main breadwinner and the female the principal caregiver is a rational choice defined by the differential career opportunities offered according to gender (Metz and Kulik 2014). A disadvantaged situation at work, together with the sole expectation of being the parent primarily involved in child raising, affects women's decision about education and work from when they are very young on. While it may be true that women do not choose to work in particular fields which require high levels of education and experience, it is also true that they may decide not to pursue such investments in their education and training, because they know they will have less labour market opportunities than men (Anker 1997, Sandberg 2013). Knowing the difficulties around combining work and family, women accept part-time, low paid jobs and stop aspiring for the more prestigious ones, as widely discussed in the previous chapter (Sandberg 2013). Women advancing in their career become aware that supervisors see managerial roles as necessarily requiring full-time availability, thus "choose" to leave and pursue professional paths allowing more flexibility (Metz and Kulik 2014). Choices are not completely free as they are not taken in a vacuum, they are influenced by external circumstances such as culture, social roles, and especially, career possibility expectations. The choice of some women to exit the workforce should not be accepted a-critically, as it implies that they become economically dependent from their male partner. This puts them in a position of vulnerability and subordination where they cannot withdraw from the relationship without severe costs or even threat with leaving, to make their voices heard within the couple. Therefore, they have to silently accept situations they don't like. In the worst cases, women are bound to violent partners because otherwise they cannot provide for themselves and, eventually, for their children (Okin 1989). Because it is more difficult for women to economically support themselves outside of marriage, they have more interest in maintaining it. This puts power into men's hands who can exercise greater control within marriage (Kymlicka 2002). For this reason, the ability of organizations to retain female workers after childbirth has a crucial social value.

3. Diversity management as part of feminism-inspired social change

This discussion has demonstrated how the circumstances women face in employment have significant social consequences on many levels, ranging from how girls are socialized, to wives' potential dependency on their husbands and what this implies. However, research on diversity management has not investigated the positive impact that effective diversity management may have on society. The business case for diversity, as discussed in a previous chapter, has focused on the impact of diversity management on organizational performance, while the justice case has simply stated that treating people fairly is an end in itself. However, a true inclusion of women in employment is able to change the social structure fundamentally. If gender diversity management is the organisational tool to reach true inclusiveness in the workplace, then gender diversity management may impact society and foster social change. The direction that social change should have, should be informed on political philosophy studying what a just society entails, therefore gender diversity management should be informed on feminist political philosophy's concerns. Organizations already take their social impact into account in the form of CSR. Therefore, it has been argued that HR diversity management should be considered a tool to implement CSR ideals. To have such a wide-reaching impact, diversity management has to be understood in its widest interpretation, including the objective of representation through affirmative action, as explained previously. This is the case, because it is unrealistic to change the systematic barriers women face in employment without actively involving legislation and institutions, as already claimed. Organizations and institutions together can change society step by step to make it fair to women.

In the previous chapter the HR diversity management practices that organizations should implement to help overcome systematic discrimination have been discussed. Most importantly it is necessary as a preliminary step to make organizations' HR departments accountable for diversity management objectives and to establish continuous equality monitoring collecting and analysing data to identify implicitly discriminatory practices. Institutions need to make organizations accountable for the achievement of both voluntarily set and legally mandated diversity objectives, such as the achievement of gender quotas. Carrol and Shabana (2010) refer to the practice of corporate social reporting where organizations provide information on the company's economic, environmental and social performance (Carroll and Shabana 2010). It is necessary to make organizations report on their CSR, including their efforts and achievements in gender equality. These reports need to be public and easily accessible by stakeholders, including consumers. This may encourage organizations to take action, as reporting a clear lack of women in senior management, for instance, may have a backlash.

Highly talented women may prefer another employer and socially conscious consumers may prefer to buy from another company. It is also necessary from side of institutions to control the truthfulness of such reports and implement sanctions for unmet objectives and false reports. In addition to sanctions, incentives for met objectives, or for over-achieving organizations may be introduced, for example in the form of tax benefits. To be manageable for institutions, such programs shall only be applied to listed companies and performed at intervals longer than only one year. Objectives, of course, should represent the highest possible ambition as well as a progression over time, that is, that each target should go beyond the previous one. Once this has been established, all the previously suggested practices may be introduced. The most effective one in spurring social change is diversity training in the form of awareness training, assumed that it is conducted properly and that it is implemented as a long-term program, not as a one-shot training session. Diversity training can have a strongly educational role both for employers and decision-makers within the organization and for employees. Decision-makers need to be made aware about how biases and stereotypes may influence their decisions, for instance in hiring and performance appraisals and promotions. Employees too should realize they may behave unintentionally guided by bias and stereotypes. They also need to be made aware about the barriers their female colleagues face in the workplace and where and how discrimination may happen. According to Kimmel (2005) and Digby (2003) men do not recognize their advantage over women in employment. Because their gender gives men privilege, it is invisible to them. Men do not realize that they are privileged due to their sex, like a white person does not recognize the privilege it has as a white person over a black one, race is invisible to him or her. Only when a characteristic becomes source of disadvantage or harm it gets noticed (Kimmel 2005, Digby 2003). According to Metz and Kulik (2014) men denying the existence of systematic discrimination on the workplace is one of the strongest barriers to women's careers. Because men are the dominant group and the majority of decision-makers in organizations, it is crucial that they have an understanding of the systematic, underlying gender inequity in organizations (Metz and Kulik 2014). As outlined before in the context of cultural diversity, some organizations attempt to overcome difficulties due to cultural differences creating a super-national, common, organizational culture (Seymen 2006). Similarly, organizations may be able to create super-national cultures based on gender equality. With many organizations constructing such cultures, because organizations are the economic unit of society, this may start to influence the wider society and organizations may become agents of social change. Making employees aware about how gender differently impacts individuals may inform their behaviour also outside of the office. Considerations done during diversity training may spill-over into private-life decisions and behaviours; for instance, in childrearing, which would be extremely beneficial due to the consequences of gendered socialization for women.

Of course, to achieve change, the involvement of institutions is fundamental, as already explained. It has been discussed how workforce participation has been achieved through anti-discrimination laws and some forms of affirmative action. In developing specific measures, the advantageous contribution that unions and collective bargaining may bring, shall not be disregarded. As Dickens (2000) notices, while legislative measures need to apply uniformly to all organizations, because collective bargaining is industrial or even at plant level, it can develop more targeted, tailored approaches to meet the sectorial needs. Additionally, because equality measures as an outcome of bargaining wold be the result of joint determination, the measures may be perceived as more legitimate and encounter less resistance. To have a meaningful contribution to gender equality, trade unions should not simply aim at introducing women-friendly policies, they need to adopt longer agendas and challenge current organizational structures, norms, cultures and practices (Dickens 2000). For instance, unions may be useful partners in the definition of the best suited form of legally mandated gender quotas. Communication between institutions and organizations is important to define legal provisions that are able to generate social change but are still considered manageable by organizations. For instance, the percentage of the gender quota might be progressive until the final desired quota is achieved. This would allow organizations to make sure that there are enough women in the organizational pipeline who have gained enough experience to be promoted to senior managerial positions. In addition to the quotas in executive boards discussed before, quotas for senior management positions in listed companies should be introduced, too. As argued before, legislative binding quotas are temporarily necessary measures. Once a "critical mass" of women in managerial positions has been reached, this equal representation will be able to perpetuate itself. In addition to the arguments in favour of quotas already presented in the chapter discussing them, it is necessary to realize that low representation of women in managerial positions is both a consequence of disadvantages in employment and a cause of it. As illustrated before, one of the reasons why women struggle in networking and mentoring is that there are no women in power positions with whom to network or with whom to establish a mentoring relationship. Because homophily disadvantages women in all HR sectors discussed before, women in decision-making roles are needed to allow homophily mechanisms to work in favour of other women, too. Therefore, to a certain extent, yes, it is a trite matter of numbers. As Slaughter (2012) argues, to create a society that works for women as well as for men, it is necessary to get women in power positions, they need to be equally represented in the highest ranks of public and corporate institutions. Only like this it is possible to shape society in a way that takes women's necessities duly into consideration (Slaughter 2012). As long as women are not represented equally in institutions, legislative interventions will be "men's rules for women's rights" (Dickens 2000).

This is also true for organizations if there are no women in decision-making roles. Changing some of the organizational practices which disadvantage women takes only small adjustments. However, being there a lack of women in power positions able to raise the issue, these simple adjustments do not take place, as they hardly affect men who do not feel it as a problem to solve.

These required adjustments concern mainly work-life-balance, an area with which diversity management shares many issues. Also in this regard, the intervention of institutions is necessary, as relying on voluntarism may not be enough. However, again, institutions and organizations need to establish cooperative communication. The main provisions gender equality requires are: on-site childcare for offices with over a certain number of employees, overall subsidized quality day care for those who do not have on-site childcare, flexible working hours and working methods, and compulsory paid parental leave. Flexible working hours and practices shall be introduced by organizations independently. Giving employees the possibility to flexibly arrange their working time allows them to combine work and care duties. It is necessary, as already argued, to change the organizational culture of long hours in the office. The possibility of tele-working from home, as well as tele-conferences to reduce the amount of business trips which require time away from home, need to become accepted common practice. On-site day-care for big offices and day-cares in general, need to be subsidized by institutions as part of social policy programs. To determine the level of contribution private organizations are legally mandated to provide for the establishment and operating of the on-site childcare, requires collaboration between institutions and organizations. It is important that the organizational culture supports the usage of work-life-balance accommodations. Employers shall not subtly discourage the usage of such arrangements implying that it may have repercussions on one's career. This is especially true concerning parental leave. One of the reasons why women are considered high-cost workers is their paid-maternity leave (if legal provisions impose it). To redress this bias in favour of men and to facilitate them to become fully-capable in managing a new-born child, mandatory father leave of appropriate length should be introduced, too. I highlight the fact that it needs to be mandatory to avoid that employers pressure male employees not to take it by insinuating that it may have repercussions on their career, as well as to avoid colleagues questioning the father's commitment to work. Dickens (2000) and Kimmel (2005) highlight that these measures such as flexible work-hours or parental leave are often thought as policies for women. They are indeed double-edged, as they may reinforce the assumption that women have the primal responsibility for childcare (Dickens 2000, Kimmel 2005). Therefore, it necessary to signal that they are policies for all employees and for both parents. The acceptance of the father role in the workplace, may lead to greater acceptance of men taking over childrearing responsibilities in the wider society, too. This

allows men to escape from the bread-winner stereotype that is too restrictive and to shape a new flexible concept of what it means to be a man.

The discussion so far might suggest that the solution is simply reaching the social practice that men and women equally share household and care activities to allow women to balance career and family. This is however only partly true. For sure having responsibilities equally shared among men and women would resolve many of the discussed issues. For instance, employers would stop preferring men over women due to higher absenteeism and turnover rates and due to being late more frequently due care responsibilities, because child-care responsibilities, thus such behaviours, would be equalized across the sexes. Similarly, employers would stop investing less in on-the-job-training for women due to lower expected return, because men would be as likely to reduce their engagement in paid employment after becoming a parent. Nevertheless, the issue is more complex for two substantial reasons. First, even with equally shared care burdens, women compete for male-defined roles. Second, the argument that an equal share of unpaid work is fundamental because it is the only way to allow women to balance career and family starts from the strong assumption that women *want* a balance in the first place. Kymlicka (2002) states that equality requires not only the equal opportunity to pursue male-determined positions, but also the power to create worthy female-defined roles or truly non-gendered roles which both men and women can competitively aim to cover (Kymlicka 2002). But in addition to organizational roles, women need to be in the position to shape social, political, economic and cultural institutions. Radcliffe-Richards (1980) expresses this in the most compelling way: *"if a group is kept out of something for long enough, it is overwhelmingly likely that activities of that sort will develop in a way unsuited to the excluded group (…). The most obvious example of this is the incompatibility of most work with the bearing and raising of children; I am firmly convinced that if women had been fully involved in the running of society from the start they would have found a way of arranging work and children to fit each other"* (Radcliffe-Richards 1980:113-14 in Kymlicka 2002:381). A fundamental reason why motherhood is considered incompatible with paid employment are the cultural assumptions about motherhood per se. Motherhood should be valued in society to the degree that women do not need to choose between career and family, they are put in the condition to "have it all". In the previous chapter, motherhood has been identified as the source of women's reduced human capital which is a reason for their occupational segregation and for the gender pay gap. In a society which truly values motherhood, such a consideration would not be formulated in the first place. Organizations embedded in cultures where motherhood is valued and not seen as incompatible with paid employment, would recognized the growth potential that becoming a parent has on the individual. Parenting may not improve skills

strictly related to job tasks but may increase a variety of general skills. In light of what I have suggested before, of organizations creating gender equal cultures which then spill-over to the wider society, organizations need to develop a culture where parenthood is valued to challenge the common beliefs society holds about it.

However, these considerations, and today's feminism, assume that women want to "have it all" and juggle between a career and a fulfilling family live, if they have the means to do it. This is probably often true, but it cannot be given for granted. In the words of Slaughter (2012), it is assumed *"that most women will feel as comfortable as men do about being away from their children, as long as their partner is home with them. In my experience, that is simply not the case"*. This leads us back to the issue of equality versus difference. It can be argued that women feel like this because of the way they are socialized, because they still see their role as main caregiver and therefore feel guilty and unease if they do not fulfil what they perceive as their main duty. Only with a society shaped by women and men equally, which therefore socializes girls accordingly, we can understand if this feeling is indeed part of the differences between men and women or if it is only a socialized difference. It is necessary to recognize differences between men and women in order to create social, cultural, political and economic institutions which impede that differences represent a condemnation to specific gender roles, but on the contrary, allow for a truly free individual choice of roles. Because, as widely discussed, choices are influenced by external forces, it is necessary to take concrete action to bring women in the position where they can participate in the definition of institutions. Only once institutions mirror the "particular situation" of women too, institutional influence on choice can be considered neutral, thus choices can be considered entirely free. Only with women's participation in the formation of society, culture, economy and public institutions, it is possible to avoid that differences are used as reasons to discriminate. Only in this circumstance, choices are indeed free choices and aiming for balance, for only career or for only family are reflections of what the single individual *is*.

In this picture, men are fully included among the beneficiaries of social change. It has been argued before that the dominant group, men, has no interest in changing the status quo, because the current setting benefits them. Feminists are therefore often relegated to areas of extremism, depicted as anti-men, harsh, aggressive and uptight women lacking a sense of humour (Webb 1997). There are anti-feminist beliefs among some men arguing that women are unfairly advantaged in today' society (Digby 2003), for instance though gender quotas, as explained before. According to Rhode (1997) two-third of men and three-quarters of male business leaders do not believe that women face

significant discrimination in top positions (Rhode 1997 in Digby 2003). This clash between the sexes and the idea that feminists hate men need to be overcome. Anti-male sentiment expressed by women is actually resentment towards sexism and misogyny, not hate towards men (Digby 2003). Feminism aims at a just society for all genders, it is beneficial for both men and women. Kimmel (2005) explains that even though gender equality has not been achieved yet, many changes have occurred over the last decades. Women have made gender issues relevant in the social discourse, they have started to transform the workplace, to require work-life balance policies and practices, and they have changed the sexual landscape. While the life of men has changed drastically due to these social changes, the idea about what it means to be a man remains the one set decades ago by a patriarchal society (Kimmel 2005). The idea of masculinity is still based on principles such as the repudiation of what is considered typically feminine. Boys showing fear or concern for others are admonished that "boys don't cry", that they should "stop be a sissy". Boys are taught not to show emotional vulnerability, fear or empathy. This socialization puts a heavy weight on boys and men as they are expected to comply with these stereotypes. Wealth, power and status are all traits of masculinity; a man needs to be always strong and reliable both in terms of physical fitness and of emotional readiness. (Kimmel 2005, Digby 2003). Men would greatly benefit from a society where they have the freedom to define their subjectivity individually. The emotional burden on men who measure their self-worth by their salary, because society puts emphasise on it, would be greatly lessened in a society as described above. As Digby (2003) notes, the problem is that the majority of men does not recognize how damaging the concept of masculinity is (Digby 2003). Again, the final aim is the shared creation of cultural, economic, social and political institutions, which, due to their ability to represent women and men equally, have, through socialization, a neutral impact on individuals, in order to allow each person to negotiate its own identity without it being "gendered".

Conclusions

This thesis aims at illustrating aspects of diversity management which may foster a different theoretical framing and understanding of it. In comparison to other studies it integrates feminist political philosophy's concerns in the HR academic debate about gender diversity management. This interdisciplinary approach may be able to give gender diversity management a renewed strength by demonstrating how it is a necessary and powerful tool for social change.

In the first chapter, it has been shown how the management of people at work has changed over time due to external contextual forces. "Human Resource Management" developed probably in the 1970s among American and British multinationals which were suddenly faced with increased product lines and labour force diversity. Today, the emergence of new identities in terms of age, sexual orientation, and disability, as well as ethnic minorities and women being increasingly present in the workforce, are leading to the rise of HRM "diversity management". In that light, diversity management can be considered as the new paradigm to manage people at work given by today's contextual factors. On the other side, diversity management is also innately part of HRM, as HRM itself developed out of the necessity to deal with increased diversity. Because diversity management is clearly an integral part of HRM, organizations shall consider it as a necessary part of effective HRM bundles. To be effective, HRM bundles need to be internally coherent and interrelated to convey a uniform signal. Feminist political philosophy considerations can contribute to this by shedding light on the principles (equality, difference, inclusion) at the basis of the different approaches and practices, such as anti-discrimination law, EEO, affirmative action, and diversity management. However, the effectiveness of diversity management needs to be backed by further empirical evidence both in the framework of the macro/strategic and of the micro/functional approach to HRM. The first, by exploring the impact of diversity management on the organization (business case) needs to provide increasing evidence to organizations that they cannot ignore diversity management, even from a business-economic perspective. The latter needs to empirically validate the impact that specific diversity management practices can have on single social groups and individuals, to guide HR practitioners. This stream of research is particularly relevant considering the importance of the behavioural variable in the explanation of the link between HRM/diversity management and performance (black box dilemma). If effort, motivation, and commitment explain how HRM impacts performance, diversity management may be the right way to motivate the increasingly diversified workforce.

The second chapter, providing a comprehensive representation of diversity management, suggests specific interpretations of it. First, diversity management should only focus on those diversities which may cause discrimination. Some authors have suggested that because every individual is unique, the

one similarity, that we are all human beings should be highlighted and diversity management's aim should be to extract the full potential out of every employee. In that light however, diversity management would become superfluous and not innovative in comparison to general HRM. This is not helpful for organizations on an operational level, because being part of a minority group clearly affects employees' experience in the workplace. Even though direct discrimination is not the main issue today, unconscious or ambiguous microaggressions, subtle indirect discrimination becoming systematic discrimination entrenched in organizational processes and culture, and involuntary biases, are experienced by every analysed diversity category. Awareness training, through its strong educational potential for both employers and for employees, is the most effective diversity managing practice to overcome this. Decision-makers need to be aware about how biases and stereotypes may influence their decisions, for instance in hiring and promotions, and how to avoid it. Employees need to be made aware about the barriers diverse co-workers may face and to be trained how not to involuntarily discriminate due to biases. This may change employees' beliefs and behaviours also outside of the office and spur social change. To make sure that this is the case, organizations should aim at developing strong, super-national, non-discriminatory organizational cultures. Second, affirmative action shall be considered as diversity management's first step, aiming at guaranteeing representation, in contrast with some authors suggesting a clear-cut differentiation between affirmative action and diversity management. Only with this interpretation, diversity management can encompass all three principles of antidiscrimination. First, it aims at fighting discrimination by applying anti-discrimination law and increasing the representation of historically excluded groups at all levels of the organization (equality). Second, it introduces managerial policies and practices, including affirmative action, taking differences into account (difference) to promote an organizational culture of mutual understanding and appreciation to guarantee everyone's true inclusion (inclusion). To truly accomplish this aim, affirmative action needs to be reconceptualized as based on the principle of difference rather than as the operating arm of anti-discrimination legislation, thus based on the principle of equality. While anti-discrimination legislation is based on the principle of equality of opportunity, affirmative action is based on equality of outcomes. In fact, when affirmative action takes the form of quotas, it is hard to reconcile it with the liberal neutrality and gender-blindness of anti-discrimination legislation. It is possible to ask for equal rights, but still recognize that there are concrete differences. In that light, affirmative action is needed not because we are equal, but because we are different, thus differential treatment may be more appropriate and effective to reach substantial equality outcomes.

The third chapter shows how women are still disadvantaged in almost every aspect of employment. In recruitment and selection women experience occupational segregation in low-paying jobs and

fields, their career development is hindered due to disadvantages in on-the-job-training, networking and mentoring, in relation to performance and appraisal the glass ceiling still keeps them away from executive and board positions, concerning Pay and Benefits there is still a gender and a motherhood pay gap and even in matters of employee voice and industrial relations they struggle in comparison to men. The five overarching reasons explaining all these difficulties are motherhood, socialization, national and organizational culture and homophily. Simply put, culture constructs gendered social roles - which are mirrored in organizational culture and perpetuated through homophily - determines how girls are socialized, and defines motherhood, making it incompatible with paid employment. Motherhood is so problematic for employers for mainly two reason. First, it makes women high-cost workers, and second, it leads them to accumulate lower human capital than men over time. Socially, this is worrisome because motherhood makes women economically dependent from men, thus vulnerable, but effective diversity management can avoid it. Additional recurring themes explaining the disadvantages of women in employment are women's different preferences and psychological attributes, stereotypes, and the power of expectations. It is commonly argued that women prefer jobs granting high degrees of flexibility and possibly low levels of responsibility, and that they choose not to pursue education in certain fields, especially in STEM. Arguing on this line, as the criticism to third-wave feminism highlights, ignores how desires and choices are constructed by external circumstances such as culture, social roles, and especially, career possibility expectations. Women "freely" choose what society, defined by men, has taught the to "prefer". For instance, because it is still harder for women to make a career, it may be economically rational for a couple to prioritize the man's career and for the women to choose to take the primary responsibility of care activities, thus, to commit less to paid employment. Moreover, because women expect employment interruptions and career barriers due to motherhood, they subconsciously decide to invest less in education and career. Also employers' expectations become self-fulfilling. Because they expect interruptions due to motherhood, they tend to assign less-demanding jobs to women and to invest less in their training. But the dead-end jobs do not incentivize and foster new mothers' commitment, thus, they reduce their career effort and employers' expectations become true. Related to choices and preferences there are women's assumed different psychological attributes, such as their lower self-confidence or competitiveness. These are for instance used to justify the gender wage gap and the glass ceiling, oversimplifying complex causes such as socialization and systematic discrimination. Lastly, stereotypes represent an issue on many levels, for instance, stereotypes about women and the male characteristics supposedly needed to be a successful leader exclude women form managerial positions.

With HR diversity management as a CSR strategy, organizations can help fight these causes of gender inequality, thus contributing to a good and just society in the light of feminist political philosophy. Cooperation between organizations and institutions is necessary to reach social change as the reasons behind women's disadvantage in employment are fundamentally cultural and social. In this context, unions can contribute by tailoring policies and practices to specific sectorial needs, by facilitating communication between institutions and organizations, and by legitimizing policies and practices. As of today, institutions need, in the first place, to make organizations accountable for the achievement of diversity objectives. Second, quotas in executive boards, which have been introduced by some countries, and quotas for managerial positions shall be introduced. Third, institutions, in tandem with organizations, need to provide policies which allow work-life balance such as on-site childcare or subsidized quality day care, flexible working hours and working methods, and compulsory paid parental leave. These practices all contribute to reshape gendered family roles, and therefore to eliminate some of the reasons why employers prefer men over women. To be effective, these policies and practices need to acknowledge difference, as suggested by second-wave feminism, regardless of the many controversies it presents and that have been discussed. Only recognizing difference, it is possible to see that women are asked to fit in male-gendered roles and evaluation criteria and to have the meritocratic system that liberalism strives for but fails to achieve. Meritocracy is not granted without an eye on gender, because, for all the explained reasons, employers tend to prefer men over equally qualified women. The differences between men and women perceived today, however, are no "natural" ones determined by biology or psychology. Women are strongly defined by socialization and society's pressures which they have not contributed to construct. In fact, the final aim is the shared creation of cultural, economic, social and political institutions, which, mirroring the "particular situation" of women, too, have a neutral impact on individuals, making identities and choices, such as those related to family and employment, truly free. In that light, future research, eventually pursuing this interdisciplinarity between organizational studies and political philosophy, shall start to investigate the contribution that certain HRM and diversity management practices can give towards this aim, helping organizations, the economic units of society, to become the agents of social change that they can aspire to be.

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Summary

The aim of this thesis is to illustrate aspects of diversity management (DM) which may foster a different theoretical framing and understanding of it. More specifically, it aims at integrating feminist political philosophy concerns in the HR academic debate about gender DM. This interdisciplinary approach hopes to give gender DM a renewed strength arguing for the social role it may have contributing to women empowerment. The historical evolution of the management of people at work shows how DM is naturally embedded in HRM and how it represents its contemporary natural evolution due to contextual factors. Therefore, organizations should consider it as an integral part of effective HRM, not as an optional one. Moreover, DM studies can be traced back to both the micro/functional and the macro/strategic approach to HRM.

The biggest contributions that feminist political philosophy can make to the gender DM debate are:

- first, it is able to shed light on the principles behind policies and practices, facilitating coherence and a deeper understanding.

- Second, it can enlarge with deeper analyses the debate on some of the mechanisms that organizational studies identify as the causes of women's disadvantage in employment, which are mainly motherhood, socialization, national and organizational culture, and homophily, but also women's different preferences and psychological attributes, stereotypes, and the power of expectations.

- Third, it suggests that gender DM may not only have an impact on individuals and on the organization, but on society too, eventually spurring social change.

Feminist political philosophy aims at identifying what a good and just society is, towards which DM, interpreted as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy, can contribute. To be that effective, DM shall be understood as only concerned with those diversities that may lead to discrimination, not as the mean to extract the full potential of every employee, because everyone is diverse, as this would impoverishes its meaning and effectiveness. Second, affirmative action (AA) - reconceptualized as based on the principle of difference rather than equality - shall not be considered as different from gender DM, but as a first, integral step of it which aims at granting representation. Moreover, the issues DM needs to fight today – some of which affect all diversity categories creating common experiences of being a minority - are ambiguous microaggressions and subtle systematic discrimination, therefore, awareness training and changes to organizational culture are needed. Ultimately DM must be understood as incorporating all three principles of anti-discrimination: equality, difference and inclusion. In line with feminist political philosophy, gender DM's final aim is to bring women in positions where they can participate in the definition of cultural, economic, and

socio-political institutions. Only once they mirror the peculiarities of women too, their influence on individuals and on choices can be considered neutral, making individual identities and choices truly free.

An analytical framework: HRM and diversity management

Among scholars, there is lack of consensus about a definition of "Human Resource Managemet (HRM)". The issue of managing people at work arose with the emergence of contemporary economy in the late-eighteenth century. Some scholars argue that HRM developed in the 1970s, among U.S. and UK multinationals facing increasingly diversified product lines and labour force. Accordingly, HRM's distinguishing features are its decentralization, flexibility, non-unionization and strategic relevance for the organization. HRM developed with individuals becoming a central asset for organizations. "Flexible production", the rise of the service sector and of "high-tech" industries, put human capital instead of industrial capital at the centre of production. History shows how work practices are a result of a specific legal, political and social contexts and of external contextual forces. Today, the emergence of new identities in terms of age, sexual orientation, and disability, and ethnic minorities and women being increasingly present in the workforce, are leading to the rise of HRM "diversity management" (DM). HRM academic studies have evolved into two approaches. The micro/functional approach is focused on the impact of single elements on individuals' performance (e.g. personality, work-life benefits), while the macro/strategic approach investigates the impact of HR practices on the organization. It is rooted in the Resource-based view arguing that employees represent the resources leading to competitive advantage that HRM puts into action contributing to business strategies and goals and ultimately to profitability. Not single HR practices but HRM systems of coherent and interrelated HR practices - possibly fitting organizational strategy and external factors - are strategically relevant. Opposers argue that there is a set of universally suitable, superior HRM practices (best practice vs. best fit). Still, the "black box dilemma" remains: *how* does HRM influence performance? Regardless of the specific divergences, all models recognize the importance of the behavioural variable: employees' effort and motivation

DM is related to both approaches and can be understood as the response to the increasing internal and external diversity that organizations face. "Diversity" pertains to various dimensions comprehensively classified by Gardenswartz and Rowe (2008). DM can be defined as those HRM practices aimed at (1) increasing the representation of historically excluded groups at all levels of the organization (2) promoting an organizational culture of mutual understanding and appreciation to guarantee everyone's inclusion in informal social networks and formal organizational programs, and

at (3) drawing from each employee's full potential to maximize the performance. In practice this can take various forms and scholars have suggested disparate classifications (e.g. Dass and Parker 1996, Kossek and Lobel 1996). DM needs to develop targeted practices considering the differences *between* and *within* social groups. Diversity and group belonging are part of individuals' personal identity and lead to in-group bias. Homophily is particularly problematic because it leads the majority group to reproduce itself keeping minorities marginalized. Minorities face a variety of disadvantages: direct, indirect, systematic, and multiple (or intersectionality) discrimination, as well as harassment. Discrimination often stems from prejudice and stereotypes, in turn deriving from mental biases. There are additional reasons why organisations should invest in DM. According to the social justice case, there is a moral obligation to do so. According to the business case, it is a matter of efficiency, as DM positively impacts competitive advantage and performance.

Among the several diversity dimensions, there are cultural and ethnic diversity. These are overlapping on many issues, such as on the business case, but are not equivalent, for instance in the challenges they set to DM, with the first being more problematic in terms of communication and the latter of discrimination. Additionally, cultural diversity issues may arise from differences between employees' and organizational culture, about which the paramount study is Hofstede's *Theory of Cultural Dimensions*. Discrimination based on ethnic origin is outlawed in almost every legislation and has become socially less acceptable; the problem today are unconscious, ambiguous microaggressions based on colour-blind attitudes.. Some organizations deal with cultural and ethnic diversity by developing a strong, non-discriminatory organizational culture. Organizational culture can be a solution but becomes a problem when employees do not internalize it, and when it is systematically discriminating, like some male-dominated ones. Therefore, DM often requires changes to organizational culture which are however difficult to achieve because it is tacit and not easily manipulatable, it is perpetuated by homosocial reproduction and the dominant group has no incentive to change it.

Age is a crucial diversity dimension as demographic change raises concerns about future skill shortage and economic and social sustainability. Additionally, with several generations sharing the workplace there are issues of communication and knowledge sharing. Age DM mainly focuses on older workers, but not only in terms of chronological age.. Another approach focuses on the generation of belonging of the employee, believed to shape individuals' core (work-related) values and attitudes. Even though there is anti-discrimination legislation in Western countries, age discrimination is so subtle that it is often difficult to identify and prove. It is based on pervasive

stereotypes about older workers' lower performance measures, even though empirical research contests this. Age DM entails shaping HRM practices and job design according to the different needs and preferences of the various age groups. Effective knowledge sharing mechanisms between older and younger employees shall be introduced, as well as awareness training for managers and recruiters to avoid biased decisions.

"Ability diversity" entails a heterogeneous group of individuals with very different conditions of physical and intellectual disability, and of mental health. Anti-discrimination law in many legislations bans employment discrimination against individuals with disabilities and mandates that employers make "reasonable adjustments" to accommodate their impairment. Many countries also have some type of quotas, of financial subsidies, and of specialist disability employment support services. The discrimination faced by individuals with disabilities is often based on misconceptions and stereotypes and is felt especially in pay determination. Diversity training for managers and co-workers on how to support and interact with workers with disabilities, may be helpful, especially if it provides an occasion of communication about the uneasy topic. Ability DM needs high degrees of flexibility to meet the diversified and evolving needs of employees with disabilities and comply with the "reasonable accommodation".

Sexual orientation is so far the diversity dimension which has received less attention. Unlike other diversity dimensions, sexual orientation can be hidden. Few nations have sexual orientation anti-discrimination laws, as many cultures still tolerate discrimination. It may take the form of harassment and of subtle microaggressions, perpetuated by single co-workers or by HRM and the organizational culture which are prevalently cis- and heteronormative. The business case underlines the improvement in terms of wider talent pool, creativity, innovation, and employer branding, as well as the performance loss that sexual orientation discrimination seems to cause. Because laws may be lacking, DM should in the first place establish written anti-discrimination policies. Diversity training can represent an occasion of communication to fight homophobia and, again, of training recruiters and mangers to avoid biases.

Gender-related HR critical issues

Worldwide, the most salient diversity dimension is gender. In matters of recruitment and selection the core issue is women's occupational segregation in low-paying jobs and fields. Labour supply explanations argue that women *prefer* certain types of occupation, characterized by high degrees of

flexibility, due to their caregiving duties. The labour demand explanation on the other side is based on why employers prefer men over women suggesting *employers' taste for discrimination*, *statistical discrimination theory*, and unconscious stereotypes about what kind of jobs are best suited to the different genders. But mainly, female workers are believed to have lower human capital because of less education and experience due to motherhood-related employment interruptions (*human capital theory*), and to be higher-cost workers. Furthermore, women are less present in certain jobs because they do not pursue education in determined (high-paying) fields, especially in STEM. This has been mainly attributed to their lower skills and interest in mathematics and science, but parental socialization, conformity to social expectations and stereotypes, few role models and little encouragement from teachers and parents and no equal employment opportunity in STEM professions play a key role, too. Also homophily and gendered networks contribute to occupational segregation. To attract women, organizations in STEM may invest in employer branding related to diversity.

The disadvantages women experience in on-the-job training, networking, and mentoring hinder their career advancement. Concerning the first, employers expect greater future returns from investing in men, as they expect women's employment interruptions due to motherhood. These expectations may become self-fulfilling if employers do not provide incentives to remain in the job. On the other side, women may seek out jobs requiring less on-the-job training expecting such breaks, too. Networking is positively linked with career outcomes because it provides access to valuable resources. Men have more developed networks and benefit more from them. The main explanation is homophily. Moreover, because men are more powerful within organizations, they are more desirable network contacts. The low representation of professional women explains women's little presence in networks, too. Plus, this gendered disparity may depend on women's tendencies and behaviours. They are believed to engage less in networking behaviours and to use their networks less effectively, which, again, may be due to socialization discouraging instrumental attitudes. All this may represent a difficulty in establishing a mentoring relationship, too. The lack of female mentors due to few women with high organizational status forces women to cross-gender mentoring relationships. In such cases there can be issues of little perceived similarity, of male mentors preferring male protégés due to homophily, of biases and stereotypes about women in the workforce, of potential discrediting gossip of sexual nature and of potential sexual advances. Moreover, male mentors seem to be able to provide more career development to their protégés, while female mentors provide more psychological support. Because women's disadvantage in on-the-job training is deeply embedded in the social and cultural context, HRM practices have little impact. Concerning networking, organizations may

establish formal networks, provide training for women to develop their networking capabilities in line with their communication style and reframe networking as reciprocal helping. Despite their little effectiveness, formal mentoring programs shall be introduced. Training shall discuss sexual concerns in cross-gender relations, how stereotypes may harm women seeking a mentor, and how to communicate effectively for both sexes.

The above-mentioned difficulties are only part of the explanation for the *glass ceiling* which keeps women away from executive and board positions. The most common argument is that women become less committed to work once they become mothers and *prefer* to dedicate more time to childrearing. Homosocial reproduction negatively affects women's performance appraisals and probability of promotions, and discrimination in development activities leads to women having gained less qualified experience (lower human capital). Furthermore, there are stereotypes and gendered leadership ideals and organizational cultures. Leadership positions are believed to require the stereotypically male characteristics. Therefore, women may want to acquire more typically male traits, but breaking prescriptive stereotypes provokes negative reactions. Among the most necessary practices to fight the glass ceiling there are work-family balance and awareness training about gender issues at work. However, because the impediments to women's advancement are structural, affirmative action in the form of quotas, even though very controversial, is necessary, too. Opposers usually argue in terms of quotas being against meritocracy. However, due to the above-mentioned reasons, without quotas, meritocracy is not granted to women. Others argue that the beneficiaries of quotas are devalued because there may be the suspicion that one has been appointed not for merit, but to fill a quota. However, without state-intervention in the form of legislative binding quotas, change is not produced fast enough due to the explained mechanism. Governance codes enforcing "comply or explain" are not enough, same for the "tie-break" system which ignores that, as explained, women are unlikely to have the exact same qualifications as men, while the "threshold" system does take this into account. Once women are in half of the managerial roles, quotas can be abolished as equality will perpetuate itself.

Even though pay equality is sanctioned by law in many Western countries, there is still a gender pay gap. The strongest contributor to it is motherhood. The rationalist economics approach argues that the motherhood pay gap is a consequence of the lower human capital that women accumulate because of employment breaks and fewer working hours due to motherhood. Even the sole expectation of this is enough because they invest less in training and do not seek jobs with high responsibility. Women *prefer* jobs granting flexibility, thus paying less, due to childrearing. The sociological approach

suggests that women earn less because employers make decisions based on the expectations about the family burden on women. Furthermore, employers tend to value and reward women's skills and experience less. The institutionalist comparative approach argues that a market failure causes the motherhood pay gap: national institutions do not provide enough family-friendly policies. Other explanations for the gender wage gap, regardless of parental status, are lower education level, which does not hold anymore since the education gap has been closed in Western countries, employment in lower paying fields (occupational segregation) and roles (glass-ceiling), and different psychological attributes (e.g. less self-confident, more risk averse). Nevertheless, part of the motherhood and gender pay gap remains unexplained and is associated to employers' bias and unconscious discrimination. Time-based pay discriminates against women performing as well as men but spending less time in the office, while performance related pay is problematic due to gendered evaluation criteria, homophily and bias in performance evaluation. DM can introduce transparent and measurable criteria and foster a family-friendly organizational culture.

Concerning employees' voice, minority employees may fear to speak up out of fear of expressing unpopular standpoints, especially women in male-dominated organizations. Diversity councils and focus groups may be useful, but collective voice in the form of unions may be helpful in addressing wider diversity issues, even though core principles at the basis of collective bargaining and diversity management seem conflicting. Collective bargaining seems to have a positive impact on issues dear to gender DM, such as the gender wage gap. Unions and collective bargaining need to overcome the gender equality issues they have internally, especially women's little representation in decision-making roles which is caused by mechanisms very similar to those in organizations. Uniform contracts are potentially based on male-gendered standards and diversity concerns are perceived as separated from the general bargaining agenda. Unions are trying to overcome these problems through many practices, especially women's self-organizations. They may also facilitate cooperation between institutions and organizations and contemporarily benefit from a stronger engagement in diversity issues as a mean to revert the declining unionization.

A feminist interpretation of HR gender diversity management

It is evident that women face five overarching barriers in employment: motherhood, socialization, homophily, national and organizational culture. Culture constructs social roles, which are mirrored in organizational culture and perpetuated through homophily, determines how girls are socialized, and defines motherhood, making it incompatible with paid employment. Feminist political

philosophy aims at identifying what a good and just society, including also organizations, the economic unit of society. Today, the belief that organizations have legal and ethical responsibilities of fairness and justice is consolidated and embodied by CSR. HR diversity management, interpreted as part of the CSR strategy, thanks to its ability to implement change and influence organizational culture, can be the tool to reach the ideal society identified by feminism. Anti-discrimination laws aim at establishing formalized procedures to access jobs and promotions based on merit, regardless of any other characteristic. The principles at the root of anti-discrimination law and liberal feminism are the same: because women are human beings, they are equal to men (equality); and need to be treated with the same universal, neutral procedures (neutrality) to make sure that irrelevant characteristics such as sex, do not count (meritocracy).

With second-wave feminism, the equality vs difference debate becomes central, starting from the question "to what are women equal?" Liberal feminism argues that women, just like men, are "equal" to human beings. However, the universal concept of human being is based on male characteristics. Therefore, equality means aspiring to the homologation of women to the male paradigm. Similarly, in employment, women are expected to fit into roles, believed to be neutral, but actually designed on a male archetype. Difference also raises the question about *how* women differ from men, which is often answered recurring to problematic stereotypes, especially those depicting women as strongly determined by their role as mothers. Furthermore, introducing the concept of difference, opens to the possibility of discrimination based on such difference. The concern that the differences perceived between the sexes are not natural, but a social construct, was raised too. If women *are* what culture and socialization make them, then these are making women less suited to paid employment. Affirmative Actions (AA) originated to implement anti-discrimination law and often takes the form of quotas. While usually legally mandated, some companies introduce AA voluntarily (e.g. BCG, Generali). Even though equality is the common principle, the core ideals of anti-discrimination law are neutrality and gender-blindness, while AA requires employers to look at group-based characteristics and quotas seem incompatible because they contrast the idea of neutrality. Therefore, AA should be anchored to difference feminism's ideals rather than to liberal ones. AA is not needed because we are equal, but because we are different, and therefore differential treatment may be more appropriate. The concept of diversity is naturally rooted in the one of difference, but it fits better with a third conceptual variable: inclusion. The concepts of equality, diversity and inclusion, all incorporated in DM, are different, but they do not exclude each other as anti-discrimination approaches: individuals are different but because they are all human beings, the ultimate aim is everyone's true inclusion.

Women's choices and preferences, often cited as one of the reasons for women's disadvantages in employment, are the basis of 1990s choice-feminism, whose core idea is to accept non-judgmentally every choice (family or career) women make as long as it is done with "feminist consciousness". Due to this laissez-faire approach and to the belief that gender equality has been achieved, many today talk about post-feminism. However, in the last years, a feminism based on the value of "balance", between childrearing and career, has emerged. The most relevant fault of choice-feminism is that it does not investigate how preferences and choices are influenced by external circumstances such as culture, social roles and pressures, and career possibility expectations. Women believe to *freely* choose something that socialization has led them to prefer. Because it is still harder for women to make a career, it may be economically rational for a couple to prioritize the man's career. Therefore, women *choose* to take the primary responsibility of care activities. This sole expectation influences women's education and work decisions. The choice of some women to exit the workforce should not be accepted a-critically, as it implies that they become economically dependent from their male partner, thus vulnerable and subordinated. Therefore, the ability of organizations to retain female workers after childbirth has a crucial social value.

Research has so far focused on the impact of DM (and of HRM) on individuals and on the organization, but not on the potential impact on society. To overcome discriminatory HR mechanisms, cooperation between organizations and institutions is necessary. The latter need to make organizations accountable for the achievement of diversity objectives and to require regular public reports on them. Quotas for executive and managerial positions shall be temporarily introduced until a critical mass of women is present in power positions and is able to perpetuate itself. Work-life balance facilitators such as compulsory paid parental leave or child-care need to be introduced, while organizations should implement flexible working hours and tele-working. All this can contribute to men and women equally sharing household and childrearing responsibilities, thus reducing the preference that employers have for men. Unions can be helpful in terms of tailoring policies to sectorial needs, favouring communication between institutions and organizations, and legitimating intervention. Organizations need to introduce awareness training which may have positive spill-overs into employees' private-life. Both employer and employees need to be aware about biases and stereotypes influencing their behaviour and the barriers women face in employment. With many organizations developing super-national cultures based on gender equality they may become agents of social change. The final aim is to bring women in positions where they can participate in the definition of institutions so that they mirror women's peculiarities too and their influence on identities and choices is neutral, making them truly free.