Exploring the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas through the concept of embedded gender images

Women in the German Automotive Industry

On Career Paths toward Top Positions

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Acknowledgments and Appreciations

This PhD research project is dedicated to our wonderful children **Gabriel and Jessica** whom we are proud of**: DARE TO SOAR!**

I love my life by Robbie Williams (excerpt)

I might not be there for all your battles,
But you'll win them eventually.
I pray that I'm giving you all that matters,
And one day you'll say to me,

'I love my life
I am powerful, I am beautiful, I am free
I love my life,
I am wonderful, I am magical, I am me,
I love my life'.

I am not my mistakes,
But God knows, I've made a few.
I started to question the angels,
And the answer they gave was you.

I cannot promise there won't be sadness,
I wish I could take it from you.
But you'll find the courage to face the madness,
And sing it because it's true.

Find the others with hearts like yours
Run far; run free, I'm with you.

I love my life.
I am powerful, I am beautiful, I am free
I love my life,
I am wonderful, I am magical, I am me,
I love my life,
And finally, I'm where I want to be.

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THIS IS AN INVITATION TO ALL THOSE WOMEN WHO

DARE TO EMBARK ON

THEIR OWN PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNEYS –

BE BRAVE, COURAGEOUS AND DARE TO SOAR!

My framework for success:

1. Never, never, never, never, never give up!
2. Believe in yourself.
3. Hang in there.

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND KEEP ON FIGHTING!

ABSTRACT

Exploring the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas through the concept of embedded gender images

This study aims to explain the continued relative absence of female managers in top positions, within the context of the current legally binding gender-quota debate in Germany. It enables a situated, empirically based understanding of eight female managers and eight male managers who participated in this PhD research project, investigating the similarities and differences between them, the relationship between tokenism and quotas, and the extent to which embedded gender images contribute to 'doing gender'. This study focuses mainly on two topics: the experiences and perceptions of women whose careers are moving toward top positions, and the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas, examined using the concept of embedded gender images. Embedded gender images emerge from a wide range of different backgrounds and can be disguised as 'legitimate justification' (Walby, 2005) in the German automotive industry. The concept of embedded gender images is crucial for understanding this topic, contributing to an unconscious process of evaluating people, conscious or unconscious biases about the few women in senior positions (Fan *et al.*, 2018), or implicit biases that are firmly anchored in our minds (Tetlock and Mitchell, 2009). Over recent decades, many published studies have investigated gender diversity, gender equality, and gender gap, addressing the causes of these phenomena and offering solutions (Fine *et al.*, 2020; Johns, 2013; King *et al.*, 2010). Many such ideas have been adopted by practitioners and adopted into diversity and bias training (Ely *et al.*, 2011), despite questions about their effectiveness (Bohnet, 2016). They have been incorporated by political actors into law proposals and vantage points (Jahn, 2014; Chaney, 2012; Celis and Childs, 2008), by interested parties into suggestions and ideas (Gebert, 2020; Bullion, 2017), and by researchers

into detailed discussions of how to create a better path for women toward top positions (Fine *et al.*, 2020; Fan *et al.*, 2019; Heilmann and Caleo, 2018). Positioning this research within the field of women-in-management theory (Durbin, 2015; Marshall, 2000; Kanter, 1977) allows me to draw on well-established research about the phenomena discussed in this study, while also conceptualising them from a different angle. Methods including biographical narratives and semi-structured interviews have been used to achieve this goal. The key findings demonstrate that catalysts, including male and female mentors, stakeholders, coaches, and influential networks, are significant for both genders. However, when these supporters were no longer present (having changed to another division or left the company, the protection they had previously offered to the female managers working toward top positions, disappeared. This dynamic was different for male managers and their mentors. In relation to the question of legally binding-gender quotas in Germany, all but one of the women (who considered herself a quota-woman), but only some of the men involved in this PhD research project favoured the creation of a power shift or redistribution of power to achieve gender diversity.

This study uses the concept of embedded gender images, rooted in a historical, cultural, and societal context, to explore the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas. To support this investigation, insights from research on stereotypes, barriers, and bias are incorporated into a discussion of the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas through the concept of embedded gender images.

Table of contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The PhD topic from the researcher's point of view

This topic is important to me for several reasons. The first is clearly outlined by Grosvold *et al.* (2015) in their comparative institutional analysis of women on corporate boards. That study draws on a sample that encompasses 23 countries. Advanced educational attainment seems to be a significant driver of female professional success for two main reasons. First, women who hold a university degree are more likely to be respected and accepted as equals by men, and thus to become more successful. Second, the authors argue that powerful network ties, associated with alumni connections, give women who belong to such groups access to board positions. According to Grosvold *et al.* (2015) several prerequisites enhance a woman's chance of acquiring a board directorship. First, she must be part of a powerful network based on university attendance. Second, she must have comprehensive executive work experience, often acquired while raising a family (Singh and Vinnicombe, 2004). Third, she must be in a pool of credible female candidates entitled to board positions. To fulfil the last criterion, the first two must be met first. Grosvold *et al.* (2015) cite many arguments for applying a strategic approach to women's career paths; these will be explored in the Literature chapter.

This PhD research project resembles parts of my life. I come from a family business situated in the German automotive industry. The values I grew up with were high performance and commitment by family members, trust relationships within the family, endless working hours and a patriarchal leadership style. With regard to holding a university degree, the first criterion, my own career path and education began quite differently, although they have now changed.

I was born in 1967 as one of five girls. My role was made clear from the outset by my father: marry a decent man, raise children, earn some money in a part-time job, and be a good wife. 'For many women the key life events have included courtship, marriage, child birth, child care, marriage of children, death' (Walby, 2005 p. 8). In the past, I never felt that I had much of a choice.

> Women today will decide on the balance of commitment to education and employment on the one hand and caring and dependence on the other under quite different patterns of gendered opportunities than women of previous age cohorts. Older women will have made these life decisions under a gender regime more private, more domestic, than the more public system of today. Yet once these decisions are made they are hard to undo, a woman's life trajectory is set accordingly, with only very limited room for manoeuvre later (Walby, 2003; p. 10).

In other words, my own biographical narrative resembles, in many ways, the embedded gendered images this PhD research project draws on. For instance, my husband and I met when I was 26 years old. His father was the sole breadwinner and his mother stopped working at an early age; she spent many years of her life raising children and serving her family. My husband comes from a family background where people are not used to the concept of career-integrated women (Bailyn, 1970), but only to the male-breadwinner model (Cooke, 2006). As a woman, I ultimately succeeded in pursuing an academic and business career. However, I have paid a high price for this success, being considered selfish, accused of neglecting my duties as a mother and wife, and misunderstood. In discussing acceptance by one's own social circle, Bailyn (1970) notes: 'The proportion of happy, conventional marriages decreases when a dominant value of the couple's social circle is the suburban one with emphasis on home, garden, kids, community, etc.' (p. 105). The term 'Rabenmutter', which only exists in the German language, has been coined to describe a mother who is uncaring. I have been

addressed several times in different phases of my life as 'Rabenmutter', due to my professional life. The term actually stems from biology and describes young ravens leaving their nests without having mastered the art of flying (Heidenfelder and Aufmkolk, 2013). The rationale for choosing this topic, prior to entering the field, mirrors my personal values and what I am fighting for as a woman living in the 21st century. This doctorate has ultimately become my road toward personal freedom and self-confidence, as best described in the poem by Marianne Williamson (1992) below. Ironically, this poem has been erroneously attributed to both Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King:

> Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure**.** It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates other (Williamson, 1992).

The contribution made by this PhD research project and its relevance to the existing literature reflect its focus on exploring the relationship between tokenism and legally binding gender quotas. In exploring this topic, it aims to trigger a power shift in decision-making positions. A gender quota may be required to counteract the impact of embedded gender images, which are rooted in German culture, and especially in the German automotive industry.

1.2 Background of this PhD research project

Chapter 1 outlines the significance of this research, both in general and to the researcher. It briefly introduces the PhD research project and its central theme. This project is conceptualised in three dimensions: The first is a recommendation to explore the relationship between tokenism and legally binding gender-quotas, through the concept of embedded gender images (acting as proxy for stereotypes, bias, and barriers), which are rooted in German culture and the work environment, and especially in the German automotive industry. The second is raising awareness of embedded gender images, which act as barriers to women in general. The third involves the role of strategic career coaching and mentoring, as catalysts for women on career paths toward top positions. The concept of embedded gender images is significant for this study because it has a strong foothold in history, culture, and society; it involves deeply ingrained perceptions that are relevant to gender diversity and race (although not central to this PhD project). The findings and conclusions are relevant to women-in-management theory, tokenism theory, and gender debates. The PhD research objective and questions explore reasons for the continued relative absence of female managers in top positions. The call for legally binding quotas has gained importance in Germany; current numbers of women, discussed in this thesis, underpin that call. To date, however, a few female managers hold top positions. I am interested in whether a relationship exists between the relative absence of female managers in top positions, the impact of embedded gender images as a cultural imprint (explained in detail below), and the call for legally binding gender quotas to achieve gender diversity. For this reason, the first research question guiding this PhD research project is as follows: a) What is the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas, as explored through the concept of embedded gender images? I am also interested in exploring what perceived catalysts and barriers female managers experience on

the path toward top positions. In addition, what do male managers consider to be barriers to female managers climbing the career ladder? Research question b) is thus: What catalysts and barriers affect female managers?

The academic terms that the participants and I (as a German researcher) use in the German setting must be set out and defined for concise understanding, given their possible implications. As this PhD research project is situated within a German context, the interviews were conducted in German. The analysis of the translated transcripts will be submitted to an English audience. In hindsight, discussions with my PhD research-project supervisors made me aware that nuances in a language and the challenges and implications they pose matter and must be acknowledged. Several issues have arisen during this PhD research project, and words such as leader, leadership, and manager must be examined more closely:

- The word ‘leader’ would have to be translated in the German language as ‘Führer’, a word that is no longer used in the German work environment, due to negative connotations with the leadership of the German ‘Führer Adolf Hitler’.
- The word ‘manager’ was not translated into a German context by anyone participating in the interviews, even if their business cards read ‘senior manager’, for example. One male participant referred to himself as ‘Geschäfts**führer**’ (leader of the business) which is equivalent to the English word ‘director’; he also mentioned ‘Geschäfts**führung**’ (leading a business), which is equivalent to ‘management’. The use of these words demonstrates how interchangeably English and German words are used within the German language.
- This PhD research project has been conducted by a researcher who sees herself, within her own business world, as a change agent or sparring partner with ‘Abteilungs**leiter’** (department leaders) and ‘Projekt**leiter**’ (project managers). I asked the participants

what a ‘gute Führungskraft’ was like; this term can be translated as a ‘good leader’, but not a ‘manager’.

Academic reports reveal a lack of transparent boundaries (Piterman, 2008). I will therefore draw on Susan Durbin’s (2015) book, *Women who succeed: Strangers in Paradise?* in which she discusses women in senior management and decision-making positions. Collinson’s early articles (1994, 1992) speak of women as managers, while his later work draws more on the language of leadership, illustrating how interchangeably (with some critical notice) the language of management and leadership theory is used (Learmonth, 2016; Ford and Harding, 2018). Whether we talk about women as managers, leaders, or female leaders in management positions, they still face plenty of challenges as women in top positions, as this PhD research project will outline.

Between 2010 and 2014, there was a slight (5.1 percent) increase in the number of professional business women at top-executive level on German supervisory boards, reaching a total of 17.2 percent (FidAR, 2014). Guidelines for legislative proposals in Germany, introduced to the public in March 2014, mirror the agendas of various countries around the world, which have had various outcomes, including regulative and non-regulative measurements (Deloitte, 2011). However, Germany’s political landscape has changed. In 2016, the leading government parties, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), agreed to introduce a 30 percent legally binding gender quota for top positions in large companies and the civil service. As a consequence, the executive and supervisory boards of 3000 listed companies have been affected, since 2016, by the corporate introduction of gender quotas (Schwarz, 2014), leading to headlines such as, ‘the horror of gender quotas’ (Jahn, 2014, p. 19), as a national German newspaper put it. This article captured some critical voices, warning against a legally binding 30 percent gender quota for Germany’s mid-sized companies. In 2019, in the 200 companies with the highest

turnover, the number of professional business women at top executive level on German supervisory boards increased by 2 percent, reaching a total of 27 percent (Holst and Wrohlich, 2019). However, as Holst and Wrohlich point out, in the 30 leading DAX companies, the proportion of women stagnated once the 30-percent legally binding gender quota was met. In regard to gender diversity in the UK, Durbin (2015) wonders whether introducing legally binding gender quotas to get more women onto business boards is a pre-mandatory step to create a shift towards gender diversity.

This study is important because Germany's legally binding gender quota is creating a power shift. It presents an extreme case, relevant to exploring the influence of power on gender diversity for women as female leaders in management positions. Walby (2005, p. 326) wonders whether it is 'never really possible to be different but equal because the differences are too entwined with power and resources?' This thesis contributes to a detailed understanding of the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas, through the concept of embedded gender images. It accomplishes this by adopting an enquiring mind within empirically based research to explore in-depth biographical narratives and responses to semi-structured interviews. I originally started with 17 participants from the German automotive industry, and ultimately used 16 interviews for in-depth analyses. How I arrived at these will be explained in the Methodology chapter.

The applied methods were selected by looking at the world from a subjective and personal point of view as female researcher. Choosing biographical narratives to investigate the richness of individual people's lives allowed me to compare and contrast the empirical material via a systematic analysis (Rosenthal, 2004). The participants were business leaders of different ages (spanning 30 years), genders, and levels of seniority. In fact, the time span encompassed 50 years in total, since one participant's partner, with whom she had founded a

German automotive company, was born in 1915. These differences in age, gender and level of seniority produced various insights. I was curious to find out what, if anything, has changed for women as individuals, as there appears to have been little change in gender diversity in the German automotive industry in recent decades (Holst and Wrohlich, 2019; Buldoc, 2015; Kurylko, 1997). If the interviews indicated that women nowadays were still grappling with the same basic issues that women experienced 30 years ago, this in itself might suggest the need for a legally binding gender quota. This PhD research project focuses on the catalysts and barriers to success that women experience on their career paths toward top positions in the German automotive industry, within the context of the current gender-quota debate. At the end of their biographical narratives, the participants were asked to reflect on their personal life stories and to share their thoughts about the current debate over introducing a legally binding gender quota to create a power shift towards gender diversity.

1.2.1 Germany's political landscape**, as** shaped by **Chancellor Angela Merkel's** introduction of gender quotas

For more than a decade, Germany's first female Chancellor, Angela Merkel, relied on voluntary measurements recommended by the Davies' report; although these were taken up by the German economy (dpa, 2011), they did not result in significant changes. For Germany, the voluntary agreement of 2001 has brought no significant changes for more than thirteen years (Weckes, 2011), and has led now to regulatory measurements. Arguing in support of the business case, which will be explained in depth later in this PhD research project, the minister of Justice, Mr Maas, countered the 'horror of gender quotas' (Jahn, 2014:19) by highlighting the fact that, in times of skilled-worker shortages, the 'enormous potential of highly qualified women should not be left unexploited'. He claimed that, within a short period of time, the gender quota would not be necessary (Jahn, 2014). For this reason, one research question

addresses the reasons for the continued lack of female managers in top positions within the German automotive industry. This study answers that question by investigating the barriers and catalysts to success that women experience on career paths toward top positions. To explore the political situation and understand how political parties (FidAR, 2014, Holst and Wrohlich, 2019) have put pressure on the first female German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, it is essential to consider her unique power position as an influential decision-maker over the last decade (Eagly, 2018). She is a woman in a top position, and, as such, of interest to this PhD research project. Her actions have had a significant impact on German politics and industry, and especially on the debate over legally binding gender quotas to increase gender diversity. The next section examines her career path and the policy changes she was able to make, as a woman in a top position. Her career path highlights the impact that one woman can have on gender diversity; it also informs this PhD research project, which is positioned within the male-dominated German automotive industry.

Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel, was born in Hamburg, West Germany on 17 July 1957. She was raised in East Germany and trained as a physicist. She entered the political arena in 1989 and became the first female Chancellor of Germany in 2005. Williarty (2008; p. 488) positions 'Merkel's rise to power as a sign of hope'. She has been described as the most powerful woman in the world and is the longest-serving elected EU head of state (*Forbes*, 2015). She has been referred to as 'the de-facto leader of Europe or "the decider"' (*The Guardian*, 2015). According to Wiliarty (2008), women leaders often come to power in times of instability, crisis situations, or times that call for special action. German politics, when Angela Merkel rose to political power, was just such an unstable situation. Williarty notes that German unification and a financial campaign scandal within Merkel's political party were factors that contributed to an unusual election period. In addition, the gender-equity context in

Germany played in her favour. Wiliarty (2008) argues (drawing on Dahlerup, 2008) that the gender quotas for German political parties have proved to be one of the best mechanisms for supporting the election of women. Despite ongoing global changes, Pande and Ford (2011) point out that:

> While some women have risen to the pinnacle of political power – such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Dilma Rousseff, newly elected as president of Brazil, Latin America's largest and most populous country – less than 19% of legislators in the world today are women (p. 2).

In fact, Chancellor Merkel considered it vital to introduce a 30 percent legally binding gender quota in 2016. In 2018, at a ceremony held to remember the introduction of voting rights for women 100 years before, in 1918, the Chancellor promoted parity (Presse und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, 2018) to create a shift towards gender diversity. Starting in 2019, Women's Day is now celebrated on 8 March; it has been declared a public holiday for the Federal State of Berlin. Although I personally believe that this is another step in the right direction, Germany still ranks below the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average, as measured by the *Economist* (2016), which investigated the best countries for working women. Due to factors cited in that report, the Nordic countries are unsurprisingly ranked highest; Germany is in 15th place, out of 28 countries. The *Economist* has created a glass-ceiling index that accounts for performance across the following indicators:

> …higher-education gap, labour-force participation, wage gap, share of senior managers who are women, women on company boards, childcare costs, paid maternity leave, share of GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test) candidate, and women in parliament. Countries that fall below the OECD average in the overall rankings include Germany, Australia, the US, UK, and Switzerland, the last of which appears

just above Turkey, due to its higher-education gender gap and expensive childcare costs (Luxton, 2016).

Acknowledging my personal subjectivity towards the research topic under investigation, this study is concerned that, over the past decade, gender equality has not been achieved in one of the countries mentioned.

1.2.2 The controversial gender-quota debate

Despite the call for more women on supervisory boards (Holst and Wrohlich, 2019) there is disunity over the desirability of gender quotas, not just in politics, but also within organisations and among researchers. Some researchers, for example, cite the lack of qualified female candidates as an argument against legally binding gender quotas, concluding that quotas cannot influence this situation. However, researchers such as Betrand *et al.* (2018) have adopted a very different stance; their challenging study found that in 2003, 45,000 women in Norway were just as qualified as their male board counterparts. Enough qualified Norwegian women were present at that time to constitute a significant pool of eligible candidates to draw on. I argue therefore, that the relationship between tokenism (a minority of women in top decision-making positions) and gender quotas needs further attention, especially through the concept of embedded gender images, outlined in detail in the Chapters 2 and 3. Following this line of reasoning, necessary actions to achieve gender diversity, such as gender quotas, must be considered in light of power dynamics and gendered leadership, topics that will be further outlined in Chapter 3.

When it comes to measures already taken, the Europe Profile (Deloitte, 2011) lists gender quotas introduced worldwide, noting that regulatory strategies are one way of mitigating gender disparities. Taking current statistics about female CEOs in different industries into the

equation outlined in this chapter, it seems clear that more radical strategies must be applied. The Norway experience relates to the Scandinavian country's introduction of just such a regulatory strategy in December 2003, in response to long-existing gender disparities. Norway enacted a law demanding 40% representation of each gender on the boards of directors of public limited-liability companies (Wang and Kelan, 2012; Pande and Ford, 2011). The rationale was that executive boards are key decision-making bodies in Norwegian local politics, with board members holding political power (Geys and Sørensen, 2019). The Norwegian law did not have the desired effect and was amended in 2006. Firms that failed to adhere to the requirements by 2008 were dissolved (Betrand *et al.*, 2018). Although the idea of a gender quota was not welcomed by many at first, the law is now an established part of Norway (Seierstad *et al.*, 2017). Again, it took power pressure in the form of negative consequences for companies to make the law succeed. Others countries followed the Norwegian idea of mandating gender quotas and the regulatory strategy gained further acceptance in various ways, from countries including Germany, Belgium, Iceland, Italy, France, India, Israel, the Netherlands, and Spain (Betrand *et al.*, 2018; Matsa and Miller, 2013). In fact, the idea of implementing a gender quota was, for Norway, a promise of equality and social representation. Referring to gender quotas, Packel (2015), in a review of Dhir's book, stresses the slow pace at which corporate boards became more diverse. Only in countries with gender quotas did the situation improve. For this reason, Dhir recommends emphasising the business case to support arguments about equity. In alignment with many others, Dhir stresses the importance of corporate boards as central power locations in a global world. Whoever belongs to these corporate power boards is shaping the lives of millions, he argues. Following this line of reasoning in relation to decision-making positions, Torchia *et al.* (2015) point out that boards of directors are influential and powerful decision-making groups in the corporate-governance literature. Their research emphasises diversity at a deep

level, encompassing different backgrounds and personalities, as well as gender, age, and race. The authors argue that, as interactions between board members account for team composition and effectiveness, gender diversity is important (Kearney *et al.*, 2009).

However, if we investigate who belongs to these decision-making corporate boards, the numbers are rather alarming. Towards the end of 2008, the Norwegian law had achieved the result that 40% of board members in Norwegian public limited companies were women (Seierstad *et al.*, 2017). In comparison, Holst and Kirsch (2016, 2015) who have analysed data on executive and supervisory boards for almost ten years, stress that, in 2015, Germany still had a long way to go to fulfil the legal requirements of its 30% quota. Analysing the 100 largest companies in Germany, the authors found that none had a female CEO in 2015, while several other European countries performed much better. Ranked by female supervisory board members in major corporations, Iceland came first with 44%, followed by Norway with 36%, and then France with 33%. Germany was in the middle, while the country at the bottom was Malta, with a mere 3%. The authors predicted that it would take 86 years to achieve parity on the executive boards of the top 200 companies in Germany. Following this line of reasoning, Holst and Wrohlich (2018) analysed financial-sector data for the executive and supervisory boards of the 100 largest bank and insurance companies in Germany at the end of 2017. Their report is alarming, as it demonstrates that once the 30% quota was achieved, the appointment of women came to a standstill. Vital decision-making positions were still in the hands of male supervisory board members. Interestingly, the trend to integrate female supervisory board members did not continue in 2017. Their study found only one private bank with a female CEO and noted that woman were very unlikely to gain access to power positions in this particular industry. Taking past developments as basis for their forecast, Holst and Wrohlich (2018a) estimated that it would probably take another 70 years to achieve parity in banks and insurance companies. In another study, Holst and Wrohlich (2018b) compared Germany to

other European countries and reached the conclusion that gender quotas were an efficient way to increase the representation of women on boards (Koch, 2015), especially when sanctions were looming. As examples, they pointed to Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and France, which introduced quotas in 2011; the countries had different percentage requirements and different sanctions for failing to fulfil those requirements. Whereas, in 2006, these countries were below the European average in 2010 (apart from the Netherlands), by 2014, they had surpassed many countries and were above average. This European comparison shows the impact that regulatory gender quotas can have. Moreover, Holst and Wrohlich (2018a) compared the data for female managers on the supervisory boards of the top 100–200 German companies in various industries. Although the gender quota for executive boards was working efficiently, with female representation at 30%, progress was at a standstill on supervisory boards that did not have to observe gender quotas. Data for the top three major companies in the German automotive industry suggest that the future for women in top positions is rather dire. In fact, Volkswagen has one female supervisory board member, Daimler two, and BMW one. In 2017, the 200 major companies analysed in their research had 8 percent female supervisory board members, showing no upward trend from the year before. Six of the 177 supervisory board positions were held by female managers: equivalent to 3 percent. Of the 100 top companies (by turnover) in Germany, not one has a woman as CEO. These findings reveal a gloomy picture, in which women cannot achieve top positions without legally binding gender quotas or threatening sanctions. Overall, comparisons with other European Countries paint the same picture. Wherever gender quotas were implemented, the number of women holding decision-making positions increased. For this reason, Holst and Wrohlich (2018) have concluded that political framework conditions are essential for increasing the number of women in decision-making positions. This finding holds true for Germany, as well as countries such as Norway, as this section has outlined.

Especially in the political arena, Dahlerup (2008) argues for gender quotas to counterbalance the exclusion of women from political representation. Similarly, Davies' (2011) report for the UK recommends breaking down barriers by introducing transparency processes instead of gender quotas. Worldwide gender-quota discussions have led to controversial debates in various countries (for an extensive review of gender quotas on legislative and corporate boards over 30 years see Hughes *et al.*, 2017). Burnet (2011) has identified the introduction of gender-quota policies in more than a hundred countries. The author explores the impact of increased representation of women in Rwanda, due to gender quotas. Rwanda was the forerunner, as the first and only country in the world to have a majority-female legislative body in 2008. However, Burnet (2011) also found that gender quotas caused: 'some unexpected negative consequences, such as increased friction with male siblings, male withdrawal from politics, increased marital discord and a perception that marriage as an institution has been disrupted by the so-called upheaval of gender roles' (p. 303). For this reason, although gender quotas have not improved the democratic political terrain, they have had a significant impact at a much broader level, affecting career and economic opportunities and social mobility, while overturning patriarchal gender paradigms (Burnet, 2011). For this reason, many people in Germany have called for changes that go far beyond legislative representation (FidAR, 2014; Holst and Wrohlich, 2019). For instance, gender diversity and power shifts can occur swiftly once parity is introduced, as the case of Ethiopia demonstrates. The 41-year-old premier of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed (Staude, 2018), elected in 2018 from a minor ethnic group, appointed a cabinet that was 50 percent women (20 individuals), including the president Sahle-Work Zwede, who now occupies an influential representative public office. It thus took one influential (male) person in a decision-making position to swiftly create parity in Ethiopia. I personally believe that a pro-parity stance toward

influential decision-making positions in the German automotive industry could create parity just as quickly, although this is unlikely to happen.

Dorner (2013) has argued that introducing a gender-quota system as an affirmative-action scheme to achieve gender diversity, seen by some as positive discrimination, fuels controversy due to opposing viewpoints. For instance, gender-quota opponents claim that being a 'gender-quota woman' undermines legitimacy. If gender is the crucial factor in attaining a leadership position, they argue, such decisions cannot be based on professionalism (Ahrendts, 2012). Summarising, Pande and Ford (2011) list pro- and anti-gender-quota arguments, taking into consideration the equity and efficiency of gender quotas for political positions and corporate board membership. Viewing the issue from an economic point of view, Belle (2002) demands a change in perceptions throughout the whole of corporate culture. Although the increase in legally binding gender quotas is intended to overcome the lack of women in board positions, it may also have a very significant impact on the dynamics of family-business ownership in Germany (Haug *et al.*, 2013). Around 91 percent of German businesses are family-owned (Krenek, 2015). Krook (2004) notes that gender quotas are an international phenomenon, the demand for which has mainly emerged during the last decade. Krook discusses four reasons for supporting and adopting gender quotas: women support gender quotas to enhance their critical mass; political elites support gender quotas in order to be represented in a favourable light; gender quotas are used to demonstrate notions of equality and representation; and gender quotas are implemented via international norms and disseminated through transnational sharing (Krook, 2004, p. 307). Two of Krook's reasons are especially relevant to this PhD research project. The argument for introducing gender quotas to achieve a critical mass and notions of equality and representation will be outlined in the Findings and Conclusion chapter. Pande and Ford (2011) note, in their World Development Report on Gender review, that despite major advances in education and political

representation, the numbers of women in leadership positions do not seem to have changed significantly. For this reason, they argue, the design and selection systems implemented as a consequence of gender quotas may help to increase the number of women in top positions.

Pande and Ford (2011) have investigated the introduction and impact of gender quotas in several countries. They outline three assumptions: first, gender quotas seem to increase female leadership in politics and business settings. Second, the authors and other researchers (Fine *et al.*, 2020) use evidence from India to argue that quotas can increase female leadership and influence policy outcomes. Third, Pande and Ford (2011) have suggested that voters are beginning to change their traditional assumptions, viewing women as working women, but not as leaders. Society is not used to women in top-ranking positions, and leadership is still associated with men. However, as more working women move into leadership positions, perceptions within society will change.

Pande and Ford (2011) also identify several barriers to women, including career interruptions and fewer working hours; aspirations (lack of female role models and predecessors); and aversion to competition (women are less successful in a competitive environment, especially when competing mainly against men). Additional barriers include the fact that leadership is associated with masculinity and a lack of transparency around female abilities; these lead people to choose male leaders, based on familiarity and biased systems of selection (existing systems may differ in creating demand for female representatives).

1.3 Introduction to the situation in Germany's automotive industry and politics

> Only when we reach the situation when we do not feel the need to comment on the appointment of a woman **because she is a woman** will we have reached the point where women are routinely both accepted and established within business and public

> services as senior decision-makers. This feels a long way off and is unlikely to happen in my own lifetime (Durbin, 2015).

Susan Durbin (2015) has argued that the UK should consider mandatory gender quotas, notwithstanding the outcome of the second Lord Davies' report (2014). Both Professor Durbin and Lord Davies of Aberdoch argue in favour of gender diversity from a business perspective and aim to increase the number of women in decision-making positions. The Davies review of 2014 promotes a voluntary target-based approach to achieve gender diversity and refrains from recommending mandatory quotas. The 2011 annual review reports about 12.5% women at FTSE 100 companies and 7.8% women at FTSE 250 companies in 2010. Comparing these numbers with those in the 2015 annual review (Davies *et al.,* 2015) suggests that the voluntary framework is working for Britain: the numbers have almost doubled. However, Durbin (2015) argues that change is slow and the numbers (in absolute terms) are no reason to celebrate. Among more than 1,119 current FTSE board positions, only 24 executive directorships are held by women (Symington-Mills, 2015). To Durbin, these numbers justify considering legally binding gender quotas.

The numbers of women in top positions in the German automotive industry are low; one reason for this may be embedded gender images. This study uses the concept of embedded gender images to better understand the narratives of participating women. Their perspectives and views on their own experiences while building management careers in the German automotive industry contribute to the literature on gendered leadership and gender theory by raising awareness of the impact of embedded gender images. I am especially intrigued by Collinson's work (2011; 2003; 1992), Collinson and Collinson (1996); Collinson and Hearn (1994); Swartz (2016), Ely and Meyerson (2010, 2000) and the notion of embedded gender

images that frame our perspectives. These authors emphasise the need to be aware of the underlying tacit assumptions that we live by – and how they inevitably influence our decision-making. The concept of embedded gender images and their representations will be further explored in the Literature Review section. One example of embedded gender images is the Howard/Heidi case study (Bohnet, 2016; Muir, 2012), conducted by the Columbia Business School. When students were asked to evaluate Howard's résumé, they considered it impressive and said that Howard was a leader they would like to work for. A peer group was given the same résumé with a slight change in name – the non-existent Howard became Heidi. Students evaluated Heidi as equally effective, but also rather selfish – someone they would be less eager to work for (Muir, 2012). The study was repeated at a later point in time with the same outcomes (Bohnet, 2016). The umbrella term 'embedded gender images' covers a wide range of concepts and several metaphors rooted in trade-union practices (male breadwinner), feminist theory (glass ceiling, glass cliff), organisational research (glass slipper), and gendered power and leadership (heroic images), within a historical, societal, and cultural context. Embedded gender images are perceived characteristics, competences, and associations that we align with male and female leaders (Collinson, 2011), regardless of their effectiveness. The focus is often on the images that men or society associate with women. As Mark comments, 'It is the role expectations of our society in relation to the upbringing of children. Women are expected to raise children and put them first and their career second.' One female participant explained:

> Because I am a woman, men would think that I was not competent. They approached me and asked for someone who was a professional expert. When you give them an answer they reply: Oh, you actually know all about it. Or, you are in a circle to discuss a topic and you are the last one they shake hands with and ask you whether you belong here too. And then one of your colleagues informs them that I'm the most important person here because I do the research within the department. Or when I have answered

> a call and realised that the male caller talked to another person soon afterwards to address the same question. And my colleague said: but you have just asked my colleague the same question and I can only tell you the same thing (Martina).

In defining gender mainstream theory, Walby *(*2005, p. 321) has emphasised the need to develop 'key concepts to grasp more adequately a world that is gendered'. In this PhD research project, the concept of embedded gender images provides an important way of understanding the barriers perceived by female participants and their call for a legally binding gender quota.

1.3.1 Women's eligibility in the German automotive industry

In 2006, Daimler was the first DAX-listed company in Germany to adopt voluntary measures towards increasing gender diversity (Pande and Ford, 2011). Thirteen years later, Holst and Wrohlich (2019) found that companies seemed disinclined to do more than their minimum legal obligation of providing a 30 percent share. Currently, in the German DAX-automotive industry there are very few women in top positions (Mayer, 2014; Holst and Wrohlich, 2019). The German automotive industry came into existence during the 19th century. From the beginning, when Gottlieb Daimler and Carl Benz invented the automobile in 1886, the German automotive industry has been led and shaped by male leaders (Daimler AG, n.d.). As this study relates, the gender-quota discussion within the automotive industry in Germany follows Grosvold *et al.*'s (2015) arguments. To be recruited for boardroom positions, women must enter a pool of candidates, who are eligible because of their work experience. Either the German automotive industry has too few eligible women in the pipeline or the situation is similar to the Norwegian quota-debate controversy (Betrand *et al.*, 2018) discussed in Chapter 3.

For more than fifteen years, the German automotive industry has had male leaders in positions of dominance, displaying masculine leadership. A declaration in a Reichstag session in 1891 forbade women from enrolling in universities. In 1900, the German Civil Codes were enacted, laying the groundwork for a historical change – in 1901, Baden became the first state to allow women to enrol in universities (Chronik – Geschichte der Frauen, 2009). Friederike 'Frieda' Nadig and Elizabeth Selbert were both members of the Social Democratic Party who fought for the rights of women (Dörr and Schmidt, 2009). Frieda, who was involved in drafting amendments to this fundamental law, succeeded with her party in implementing significant changes. One change was the concept of gender equity, which was anchored in the German Civil Code, even though the right to equal pay could not be enforced. In Germany, men had sole ownership of their wives and children until 1 July 1958. Although wives were allowed to work, their husbands controlled their salaries. In one southern federal state, Bavaria, female teachers had to live celibate lives to practice their profession. Only after 1969 were women considered legally competent. Before 1977, wives still needed the permission from their husbands to work (Riedl, 2012). Before the law changed, it was impossible for women to hold positions of dominance. This study aims to investigate and enhance our understanding of the catalysts and barriers to success that women experience, as they pursue careers toward top positions in the German automotive industry. This PhD research project focuses on the German automotive industry, which is acknowledged to be male-dominated (Mayer, 2014). Differences in gender have formed the basis for comparison. The specific meaning of terms such as 'power' and 'career paths toward top leadership positions' will be further explained in the Definition of Terms section. As its research objective, this study explores reasons for the continued relative absence of female managers in top positions.

1.3.2 Definition of terms

The present study investigates the continued relative absence of female managers in top positions. The female and male study participants, who had held leading positions for several years, shared their experiences of barriers and catalysts. Overall, the notion of embedded gender images serves as a proxy for what women experience in historical, cultural, or societal contexts. These are cultural imprints, often defined in work environments as unconscious bias, stereotypes, second-generation gender bias, and metaphors such as 'male breadwinner' and 'glass ceiling/cliff/slipper, which are further outlined in Chapter 2.1. The metaphors reflect deeply rooted beliefs and their impact in many different areas. For instance, Ely and Meyerson (2010, p. 142) refer to organisational behaviour as 'deeply embedded in organisations, so deeply embedded as to appear to be gender-neutral, simply the norm.' Hummelsheim and Hirschle (2010) describe a cultural imprint as follows: '…the effectiveness of gender roles and gendered socialisation is to a strong degree unconscious to those who hold them' (p. 349). This thesis uses the theories, concepts, and research outcomes mentioned above to form a framework of embedded gender images, various aspects of which will be discussed in more detail in relevant sections of the thesis.

As Krenek (2015) has shown, 91 percent of German businesses are family-owned. A family business is here defined as a company that meets the following four criteria (Stiftung Familienunternehmen, 2011, p. 5):

- One or several families own the majority of the voting rights and/or the capital.
- One or several families exercise an immense influence on the company. This influence is expressed through the leadership activities of family members within the company, their right to make decisions, and/or their right to control advisory-board, supervisory-board, and company meetings.

- The company philosophy entails company-specific values, produced by the family or families.
- Family members want the company to continue to exist; this means that the company will be passed on to the next generation or family.

Secondly, the research questions focus on barriers and catalysts. These terms are used to understand and reflect on the vantage point of participants. In relating their biographical narratives and personal, retrospective views, the participants distinguished between factors that contributed to or hindered their personal development or professional careers. The Findings and Discussion chapter considers the work environment in which the participants experienced catalysts or barriers. The Introduction notes that it is difficult to make a clear distinction between the terms, 'manager' and 'leader'. They are used somewhat interchangeably by the researcher and participants. For consistency, female participants are defined as 'female managers in top positions'. When I speak about women's career paths toward top leadership positions, I refer to the professional development and individual experiences that women encounter in their work lives, while climbing the career ladder.

1.4 Outline of the remaining chapters

Chapters 2 and 3 review the literature used for this research, including several associated sections (East-West German aspects; family-owned businesses in Germany and their relevance to the German automotive industry; embedded gender images).

Chapter 4 provides an in-depth description of the methodological and research approaches adopted in this thesis, explaining why they were chosen.

Chapters 5 and 6 outline the biographical narrative findings and discussion.

Chapter 7 presents the conclusion and explores the limitations of this PhD research; it also discusses future research avenues.

The References and Appendices follow, with a closing personal reflection on the researcher's PhD journey.

CHAPTER 2: Review of the literature on stereotypes and bias

This literature review outlines my own perspective on the theoretical framework of this research project, based on women-in-management theory and diversity studies, which have examined stereotypes and bias. In addition, gendered leadership and related power aspects, work, and social identity are relevant to the research questions discussed in the first chapter. The analysis explores metaphors, such as 'male breadwinner' (Hummelsheim and Hirschle, 2010; Ostner, 2010; Cooke, 2006), which indicates full-time paid employment, in contrast to the dual-earner model, glass ceiling (Faragher, 2018; Ibarra, 2013; Johns, 2013; Weyer, 2007), glass cliff (Ryan *et al*., 2011; Ryan and Haslam, 2007) and glass slipper (Ashcraft, 2013). These illustrate vividly the subtle power dynamics and impact of embeded gender images from a historical, cultural, and societal perspective. The process of identifying relevant research is further outlined in paragraph 2.1. In particular, central theories, discussions, and concepts, such as tokenism, gender-quota discussions, power dynamics, mentoring, sponsorship, and coaching guide this research. As previously mentioned, the concept of embedded gender images is significant because it reflects the strong historical, cultural, and societal roots of deeply ingrained perceptions. It illustrates how gendered work practices are sustained, deepened, and even reinforced throughout history, culture, and society (see Fine *et al*., 2020 for a review of the literature on workplace gender diversity). These concepts address the topic of the barriers and catalysts that women encounter on their career paths toward top positions. The literature review also discusses what has been accomplished so far and what still needs to be done (Randolph, 2009). It places the relevant theories and themes within a theoretical, historical, and societal context over the last 40 years. As half the participants come from East Germany, the impact of culturally rooted embedded gender images in German culture will be considered in relation to gender bias from World War II onwards.

2.1 The process of identifying relevant research

In hindsight, the process of identifying relevant research for this review was a journey in itself. In 2013, my supervisors invited me to carry out a literature review by reading as broadly as possible, and then focusing on the review and reading in depth. I searched for relevant research, classified articles, summarised them, and identified themes that were significant enough for a PhD thesis. From then on, I read selective literature and theory, followed citations and references, and attended conferences that discussed themes, as part of a systematic process (Randolph, 2009). Reading Judi Marshall's book and meeting her in person at a leadership conference in 2016 directed my reading toward gender and feminist theory. I also met John Burgoyne at the same leadership conference, exchanged views on relevant articles, and followed his references for a while. In 2017, I attended a US conference on gender bias, at which approximately 100 female researchers from the US and Europe reviewed current articles in small groups. As a result, this literature review reflects an iterative learning process that was subjective and partly representative of my development as researcher. It has been especially important to distinguish relevant from irrelevant research; this has made it possible to contribute to established theory and empirical research. The topic that I chose to take to the next level was Professor Durbin's (2015) question of whether to introduce legally binding gender quotas. The author draws on forty-six life-stories of women managers, who successfully climbed the senior-management ladder. The research focuses on their strategies, the support they received, and their essential relationships. As the situation for female managers has not improved much in the UK, Durbin, wonders whether it is time to introduce statutory requirements to achieve gender diversity. I totally agree with her on that point, especially when the time span is taken into account. Chancellor Angela Merkel introduced legally binding gender quotas for the same reason. I remember how delighted I

was to discover that an international researcher as well-established as Professor Sue Durbin shared my view of the current situation facing women in senior management positions. To complete this study, it was important to identify relevant research on the overarching concept of embedded gender images. I have done so via several metaphors rooted in different research streams, including trade-union and feminist theory, which reflect its impact on various research arenas.

2.2 A brief history of East and West Germany and family businesses in the German automotive industry

The concept of embedded gender images is explored via long-lasting and far-reaching structural business and organisational barriers that disadvantage women in the labour market and organisations (Johns, 2013). At the end of World War II, Germany was divided into two countries. A total of 15 Länder were separated into 5 Länder that formed East Germany (GDR) and 10 that formed West Germany (FRG).

> Between 1949 and 1989, East Germany ('the GDR') had a state socialist system, a centrally planned economy and socialist employment and family policies. West Germany ('the FRG'), in contrast, had a multiparty parliament, a market economy and a conservative-corporatist welfare state (Rosenfeld *et al.*, 2004).

While East Germany belonged to the Communist Economic System and the Warsaw Pact, West Germany was part of the Western economic system and NATO military alliance (Szabo *et al.*, 2002). Inevitably, the different political systems had a significant impact on women's professional careers, as this section will discuss. The East German economy was regulated by a state socialist system; due to public-property regulations, family-owned companies did not

exist. Undeniably, family-business research is a vast field, which this PhD research project can draw on only partially. Similarities and differences between East and West entrepreneurs and family businesses are examined in Pistrui *et al.* (2000); the significance and structure of German family businesses in Klein (2000); industrial family businesses and their situation and future in Kayser and Wallau (2002); and the dynamic of succession in Neubauer (2003). Given the setting of this research, I focus on Germany's family work environment in the context of the German automotive industry. In a global dimension, of the 500 family businesses that are listed international companies, Volkswagen is No. 2; it belongs to one of the largest family-owned German companies in the world, Porsche. BMW, a major automotive company belonging to the Quandt family has almost 130,000 employees worldwide and is ranked No. 8. Continental, another automotive company, has approximately 235,000 employees, is owned by the Schaeffler family, and is ranked 24 (Global Family Business Index, 2016). The global-ranking numbers and figures confirm the significance of the German family-business perspective. To better understand the work environment in Germany, it is essential to remember the significance of family businesses, which constitute 91% of all businesses in Germany (Krenek, 2015). Germany's business culture is reflected in family-owned companies and long-term relationships between employers and employees. The likelihood that employees will initially join and retire from the same company is high, as are loyalty, consensus-seeking, and adhering to rules and regulations (Mayer, 2000).

Major aspects of the German automotive industry are regulated by family-controlled businesses and, not surprisingly, by male patriarchs (for data on UK family-owned businesses, which account for two-thirds of all companies in the UK, see the Institute for Family Business, 2017). In 1997, the five largest companies in Germany, the Fiat Group, BMW AG, the VW Group, Porsche AG, and AB Saab (Kurylko, 1997) did not have a single woman in a

top managerial position. As Buldoc (2015) notes, there is little reason to celebrate a situation that has not changed for 20 years. Embedded gender images, reflected in the metaphor of the male breadwinner, appear to dominate the German automotive industry. For this reason, it is important to investigate the automotive industry's cultural background using the concept of embedded gender images, which captures the strong historical, cultural, and societal roots of deeply ingrained perceptions. Given the continued relative absence of women in top positions in the German automotive industry, the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas must be closely examined.

2.3. Culture, gender, and family policies – East and West

The following is based on a study by Rosenfeld *et al.* (2004). The authors compared East and West gender inequalities before and after reunification. In West Germany, they argued, one person's gain could be another person's loss; more specifically, men benefited from women working part-time, staying at home, and having children. Men thus had little desire to change a situation that was favourable to them. Likewise, the 'child-bonus effect' (p. 116) means that having a child is advantageous for men but disadvantageous for women, who experience the motherhood penalty (Miller, 2014; Benard and Correll, 2010; Corell *et al.*, 2007). The motherhood penalty means that mothers are assumed to be 'less competent and committed than other type of workers' (Bernard and Correll, 2010, p. 616). Referring to Ostner (2010), the author confirms that the dual-earner/dual-carer model was supported in East Germany by policy packages such as childcare, one paid housework day per month, and one year of paid leave for mothers. There was more gender equality in East Germany. Women's full-time employment was nearly as high as men's and part-time employment was seen as a transition into retirement. Nevertheless, although East German gender policies favoured women's employment and economic independence from their husbands, women in East Germany spent

about twice as much time on unpaid work in the domestic sphere as their husbands – just as women from West Germany did. Overall, East German policies helped women gain qualifications, employment, economic independence, and family planning. In both East and West Germany, however, occupational segregation remained substantial and wage gaps continued to exist (Rosenfeld *et al.*, 2004). In GDR family trajectories, gender differences were vast among people with low and moderate levels of education and low among people with higher levels of education (Struffolino *et al.*, 2016). The authors emphasise the sustainable impact of institutions and the macro-structural context, which shaped affiliations and interactions between gender, higher learning, and family life courses. Embedded gender images were evident in East and West Germany, as the literature demonstrates. However, Struffolino *et al.* (2016) note that associations shaped by institutions, e.g. the motherhood penalty, had a greater negative impact in West Germany than in East Germany. Both Struffolino *et al.* (2016) and the findings of this thesis support the consideration of legally binding gender quotas for political institutions with a far-reaching impact on the private and public sector. As a logical line of reasoning, although the framework conditions for women pursuing careers toward top positions were better in East Germany, the political system resembled that of the West in being run by a paternalistic and male-dominated culture. For this reason, the concept of embedded gender images, rooted in a German culture and work environment, holds true for both cultures.

2.4 Summary

The conclusion of Chapter 2 focuses on the German context, rather than theory. This thesis examines the barriers and catalysts that account for the lack of female managers in top positions at a micro-level, within the context of the current German legally binding gender-quota debate. As the literature review clearly demonstrates, barriers that hindered women on

their career paths forty years ago are still in place (Fine *et al.*, 2020). The fact that men held decision-making positions for many decades in Germany creates disadvantageous embedded gender images for women on career paths toward top positions. Such embedded gender images suggest that getting women into male-dominated areas to achieve gender diversity may require more than discussing critical mass or critical actors (Childs and Krook, 2009; Dahlerup, 1988), as further outlined in the quota debate (3.1.5). Although Germany has seen more female managers in top positions since Chancellor Angela Merkel rose to power, the numbers are alarming. It may take a concerted effort to adopt gender quotas to reach a turning point (Grey, 2006). Indeed, a power shift leading to equilibrium will require more than just women developing additional skills and competences to advance their careers, even if this is a reasonable approach. Given the current numbers of women in top positions (see 3.1.5), achieving gender diversity in Germany within the next decade will require a more radical approach. This thesis argues that embedded gender images constitute an overarching concept, encompassing barriers to women on career paths toward top positions. This is particularly true in a patriarchal male-breadwinner system such as Germany. I further argue that deeply rooted perceptions of women and tokenism in this context make gender quotas the best first step toward achieving gender diversity.

CHAPTER 3: Review of the literature on embedded gender

Embedded gender images derive from an unconscious process of evaluating people, conscious or unconscious bias (especially against the few women in senior positions) (Fan *et al.*, 2018), and implicit bias firmly anchored in our minds (Tetlock and Mitchell, 2009). Legally binding quotas would change the number of female managers in leading positions (Fine *et al.*, 2020; Heilman and Caleo, 2018; Kanter, 1977), which in turn could change the heroic male images

that exist in the business world. In the case of India, increasing the number of women in top positions changed the perception of women's capacity as leaders (Nanivadekar, 2006). In Norway, a higher percentage of women on executive boards has affected policies and male leadership behaviour (Matsa and Miller, 2013). According to Hummelsheim and Hirschle (2010), embedded gender images can be considered a cultural imprint because we are unconsciously shaped by our culture and socialisation. I will therefore briefly introduce the overarching psychological concept of embedded gender images via four metaphors: first, the male-breadwinner, rooted in trade-union practices and legislation, followed by the glass ceiling, glass cliff, and glass slipper, with their roots in feminist theory. These metaphors clearly relate to the historical, cultural, and societal context. The next section will focus on the male-breadwinner model (Hummelsheim and Hirschle, 2010; Ostner, 2010; Cooke, 2006), which has deeply influenced German culture, business philosophy, and society. The male-breadwinner model calls for full-time employment for men, while female carers are responsible for running the household and raising children (Cooke, 2006). According to Hummelsheim and Hirschle (2010), West Germany has the 'strongest male-breadwinner-oriented institutional system' of the three systmes investigated, namely Belgium, East Germany and West Germany (p. 345). The authors claim that the West German system supports three-year parental leave, on the one hand, but not public childcare for children under three because this is assumed to be the parents' responsibility. This cultural imprint impacts women in discernible areas such as employment and career opportunities; it also reduces women's wages, in comparison to men's. Hummelsheim and Hirschle (2010) and Cooke (2006) have argued that the labour market contributes as much as the state to specific family policies through models such as the male-breadwinner (full-time employment) and female-carer (running the household and being responsible for raising children) models. Brodbeck *et al.* (2002) reflect on the statements of male German business leaders about the

desired and current state of gender egalitarianism in Germany. By contrast, Cooke (2006) rejects the assumption that a gendered division of labour is an excellent allocation of family time, justified by women's lower labour-market returns and preference for household chores. She counterargues that policy has an impact on the private sphere by comparing the policy context in East and West Germany and the United States. This study focuses on East and West Germany, as regions with a common cultural past but different policies; due to space limitations, I will focus mainly on those two. In East Germany, both parents were expected to work full-time and working mothers were supported in many ways. Support ranged from publicly funded childcare from infancy onwards, and grants for pupils and students, to support for young academic mothers via a special programme. These state-supported benefits allowed women to achieve economic independence from their husbands (Ostner, 2010). In stark contrast, West Germany favoured a male-breadwinner model characterised by correlating wages and women's economic dependence on their husbands. This was done by encouraging women to stay at home so that families could profit from marriage-related benefits and tax allowances (Ostner, 2010).

In women-in-management and gendered-leadership theory, the metaphors of the glass ceiling (Faragher, 2018; Ibarra, 2013; Johns, 2013; Weyer, 2007) and glass cliff (Ryan *et al.*, 2011; Ryan and Haslam, 2007) have been firmly established (Smith, 2012; Hoobler *et al.*, 2009; Cotter *et al.*, 2001). The glass ceiling describes an invisible barrier that prevents high-achieving women from reaching the top during their careers. Extending this metaphor, the glass cliff describes the tendency to promote women to powerful decision-making positions during critical situations when there is a high chance of failure. Instead of defining barriers, Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) focused their research on women in top management positions who successfully 'razed' the glass ceiling. Overall, their resource-based approach

offers the perceptions and strategies of successful female managers to prospective female managers who want to break the glass ceiling. The third metaphor used to emphasise the overarching concept of embedded gender images is the glass slipper. The glass slipper reveals systematic catalysts and barriers to women (and men of colour) rooted in the alignment between occupations and social identities related to power and difference (Ashcraft, 2013). For example, Ashcraft (2013) argues that collective occupational identity must be considered in relation to other social identities because diversity issues are interdependent with the nature of work itself. The author cites the example of the Belizean physicist, Arlie Petters, who was mistaken for a server at a reception; medical students of colour have been viewed as janitors or maids, reflecting deeply engrained stereotypes towards tokens. According to Ashcraft (2013), glass has become a well-known metaphor in management studies for revealing subtle power dynamics and consequences; these are closely examined in relation to social identities, such as race and gender. Using four different metaphors (male-breadwinner, glass ceiling, glass cliff, and glass slipper), I argue that embedded gender images are far-reaching and found in many different areas of the literature, revealing systematic disadvantages for women. Although this study focuses mainly on women in the management literature and other literature streams that examine stereotypes, barriers, and biases as obstacles for women, Kaufmann-Buhler (2018) investigates gendered aspects of furniture manufacturing, revealing the overarching influence of embedded gender images. Following this line of reasoning, my contribution to the existing literature is the recommendation to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between tokenism, gender quotas, and their relations with embedded gender images. This insight strengthens the argument for legally binding quotas to achieve gender diversity. Again, there are many explanations for the low number of women in top management positions; however, the concept of embedded gender images shows how metaphors, such as the male breadwinner, glass ceiling, glass cliff, and glass slipper, derive

from the historical, cultural, and societal context. In recent decades, many researchers have shown that women in managerial roles face numerous challenges (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013) and that gender diversity in the workplace matters (Fine *et al.*, 2020). For instance, the historical table on gender/management and organisation presented by Metcalfe and Woodhams (2012) highlights the well-researched history of reasons for women's underrepresentation in decision-making positions. Given the well-established research on barriers to women in management and other related literature, conceptualised in 3.1.2., there is surprisingly little research on the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas, using the concept of embedded gender images.

3.1 Theories that explore the role of embedded gender images

Situated in the women-in-management literature, Akpinar-Sposito (2013) summarises various theoretical approaches to female leadership on a global scale and highlights various models, including biological, socialisation, structural, and cultural models in organisations (see her review for an overview of theoretical approaches and assumptions). She points out that, depending on which model you apply, you will find different answers to the question of low numbers of women in top positions. For this PhD research project, the culture and policy model is relevant since the participants come from different cultures (East and West Germany, as outlined above). Furthermore, different policies regulate the two states, even though embedded gender images impact them both. In discussing cultures, Akpinar-Sposito (2013) argues that, in paternalistic cultures (where a dominant authority makes decisions for others) new managers are recruited on the golf course, rather than at work or on merit. In the case of structural-cultural models, where power and status inconsistencies cause gender differences, the powerful are likely to stay in control and withhold power from others; this pattern resembles Fletcher's (2004) 'doing gender', 'doing power', and 'doing leadership'.

However, Akpinar-Sposito's (2013) review indicates that cultures can change, in alignment with Bohnet (2016), who emphasises the power of behavioural change via design. The author concludes that cultural beliefs about gender are closely linked with the fact that women do not break through the glass ceiling. In her review, Akpinar-Sposito (2013) draws on Lyness and Thompson's (2000) comparison of the careers of 69 female and 69 male executives. As these authors have investigated perceived barriers and facilitators, their vital research provides a foundation for this PhD research project. Lyness and Thompson's (2000) research is closely linked to Kanter's tokenism theory, in which female managers experience barriers, such as being excluded from informal networks or relationships that promote career advancement, due to their minority status. It also supports Higgins and Kram's (2011) mentoring research (women's mentoring may be less focused on career advancement than men's) and Ibarra's research on powerful and influential networking. Generally, Lyness and Thompson (2000) confirm established barriers to female managers, via mentoring and networking. This thesis draws on their research in manifold ways. Throughout the Literature and Findings sections, I refer to the arguments, assumptions, and perceptions with which they explain the barriers and catalysts that women encounter on their career paths toward top positions. I then take the argument one step further by recommending necessary steps to initialise a change of power. Yukongdi and Benson (2005) assumed that higher social acceptance of gender equality and better qualified women in Asia would make it easier for women to gain access to top management positions; this assumption was not supported, which I do not find surprising.

In regard to research question b (What catalysts and barriers affect female managers?), this investigation also relies on another research area, team theory. As I view the participants' teams as part of their success, it is essential to address the importance of teamwork. Managers become visible because of their project and team results (Fine *et al.*, 2020; Kearney *et al.*,

2009). The literature on team theory and the concept of embedded gender images related to power are relevant to this thesis, especially in relation to the different barriers that women and men encounter on their career paths. For instance, co-operation, regarded as a communal trait, is associated with women, whereas competition, an agentic trait, is associated with men (Sümer, 2006). Co-operation is a pre-requisite for successful teamwork (Scholl, 2005) and companies need effective teams (Clutterbuck, 2011, 2010 (see a review of the last ten years by Mathieu *et al.,* 2008; Guzzo and Dickson, 1996; Katzenbach and Smith, 2015; Hackman, 1987) to meet their objectives (Gladstein, 1984). Furthermore, teams display social cohesion (Jordan *et al.,* 2002) and are open to sharing significant information and providing feedback (Tse and Dasborough, 2008) when psychological safety at work is provided (Ragins, 2016; Edmondson, 2002). A manager can influence this via his or her actions. In this context, the term 'team' does not relate to leadership theory; instead, it refers to embedded gender images, catalysts, and barriers that women encounter on their career paths toward top positions.

This thesis draws on team aspects to address research question a) What is the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas, explored through the concept of embedded gender images? Drawing on the metaphor of the glass cliff, embedded gender images are relevant to individual and team performance. According to Ryan *et al.* (2011), in times of poor company performance, women tend to be put in charge of teams and projects because of their perceived skill at people management, regarded as another communal trait. However, the association 'think crisis – think female' (Ryan *et al.,* 2012, p. 480) has a negative connotation for female managers. Many researchers agree that women who are chosen to manage crisis situations are likely to make damaging career moves (Akpinar-Spositio, 2013; Ryan and Haslam, 2007; Lyness and Thompson, 2000). These negative connotations for female managers must be explored via embedded gender images and power aspects. Likewise, 'think male – think

manager' (Bass, 2015; Schein *et al.*, 1996) is a global phenomenon, according to the Schein-92 descriptive-item index applied in the UK, US, and Germany and repeated in Japan and China (Sümer, 2006; Schein, 1973). Again, drawing on well-established research, as outlined in this section, it is necessary to relate the concept of embedded gender images to more than one research area.

3.2 Barriers that impede women in management, based on the concept of embedded gender images

To date, a huge number of barriers have been researched in different literature streams. Barriers that affect women pursuing careers toward top positions have been discussed by many well-established researchers. These barriers include the existing wage gap (Kunze, 2008), the limited pipeline of qualified women versus hierarchical responsibility 'at a macro-contextual layer' (Graham *et al.*, 2017, p. 251), domestic responsibilities (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Cooke, 2006), and issues related to glass ceilings and glass cliffs (Kirsch, 2018; Smith, 2012; Hoobler *et al.*, 2009; Ryan and Haslam, 2007; Weyer, 2007; Cotter *et al.*, 2001), still a prominent research area. Other researchers have identified additional barriers and issues that prevent female managers from being successful. For example, many researchers have argued that female managers need to excel at networking (Vinnicombe, 2011; Ibarra and Deshpande, 2007; Sheridan, 2002). While Zelechowski and Bilimoria (2003) discuss the importance of gaining access to male networks, Perriton (2006) encourages a critical examination of women's networks and whether they really help women gain access to top positions. In common with existing research, Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) investigated six issues in the literature in depth. The first issue was the Old Boys/New Boys network and men who

consider women a threat. They acted to sabotage women, preventing them from breaking successfully through the glass ceiling. This was followed by family-career issues, the role of the mentor, an update on the complex topic of 'queen bee' syndrome, effective leadership style, and finally, why some women fail to pursue upper-management positions. A similar concept, often underestimated by women, is the 'double bind' (Kolb, 2012; Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Gerdes, 2010; Eagly and Karau, 2002). Women also face stereotypes (Rudman *et al.*, 2012; Heilman, 2012; Koenig *et al.*, 2010; Fiske *et al.*, 2007), as noted in the gendered leadership and women's literature, which examines such issues. Researchers know that, although women encounter manifold barriers on their career paths toward top positions, these are only part of the overall situation. Studies paint a complex picture of the tremendous challenges that women have faced over several decades, in contrast to their mostly white and male peers. The low numbers place female managers at a disadvantage as token women (solo individuals) within male-dominated groups. Their higher visibility triggers performance pressure. It can polarise groups and emphasise differences, leading to group-boundary heightening, being the odd one out, and assimilation. Women may struggle with stereotypes and generalisations that lead to role entrapment (Kanter, 1977). Like many earlier studies, Lyness and Thompson's research (2000) builds on the work of Kanter, which is still prominent after 30 years and pivotal to the research questions in this PhD research project.

In considering the barriers that women encounter, Metcalfe and Woodhams (2012) cite Marshall (1984) and Kanter (1977), among early women-in-management theorists. Fletcher (2004) argues that concepts of gender, power, and sex are not neutral, but rooted in social actions. They become barriers as people 'do gender', 'do power' and 'do leadership'. Expanding on this argument, Ashcraft (2013) uses the metaphor of the glass slipper to discuss these dynamics, revealing the way in which women and people of colour are disadvantaged.

For this reason, I argue, based on the concept of embedded gender images in the management literature, that women should consider these dynamics, traditional role assumptions, and implications when introducing new organisational efforts. In other words, these terms, which still seem to echo through time, can become barriers to women's advancement toward top positions if not taken into consideration (Weyer, 2007; French, 2001). Durbin (2015) has outlined reasons for being concerned about the fact that senior management continues to be male-dominated (Holst and Wiemer, 2010). In this case, hierarchical responsibility and related power aspects are considered crucial in strengthening gender diversity (Graham, 2017). As a reminder, Kanter's tokenism theory was informed by her organisation-level research in a US company. Instead of studying individual woman, she focused on understanding how women, as token members of a minority group, were treated in a male-dominated area. She concluded that individual women were perceived as representatives of other women's general behaviour. They also had diminished career-advancement perspectives because they held less highly valued jobs. Ashcraft (2013) terms this a collective occupational identity; its closeness to other social identities is represented by the metaphor of the glass slipper. Graham (2017) builds on Kanter's tokenism theory (1977), emphasising that the sheer number of minorities and the proportion of women in male-dominated work environments matter when counteracting responses to the minority status of women. Gender, power, and managerial issues are closely intertwined (Kanter, 1977), creating barriers to career advancement for women working toward top positions. Strangely, 30 years have passed between these two studies without any intervening discussion about the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas.

3.3 Embedded gender images in the gendered and critical leadership literature and issues of culture

The concept of embedded gender images can be used to explain the slow movement of women into top positions, as Fletcher's article, 'the paradox of post-heroic leadership' (2004) explains:

> Cognitive attempts to change behaviour without a recognition of these [gender- and power-linked] deeply embedded, emotional issues are unlikely to succeed because gender- and power-linked images may exert potent – albeit unrecognised – influence on leader and follower behaviour, experience and expectations (p. 653).

As outlined above, it is important to discuss the concept of embedded gender images from various perspectives, while considering various approaches and potential solutions (Bohnet, 2016). Research on one key theme, described as a barrier to women (Akpinar-Spositio, 2013; Collinson and Hearn, 1994), shows that male middle managers ascribe successful management characteristics to gender. Agentic traits (a decisive and assertive attitude) are associated with men rather than women, whereas communal traits (a nurturing and caring attitude) are associated with women (Heilman and Caleo, 2018; Heilman, 2012). As a result, successful management is not ascribed to both genders (Rudman *et al.*, 2012; Brenner *et al.*, 1981; Schein 1973); this adds a dimension to 'doing gender' and 'doing leadership' (Fletcher, 2004). Likewise, recruiting processes (Doldor *et al.*, 2012) make it more challenging for women to attain decision-making positions (Wippermann, 2010); here again, embedded gender images appear to guide the recruiting process (Tienari *et al.*, 2013). These research areas must be considered in relation to embedded gender images and their consequences for women's promotion perspectives.

This study argues that aspects of gendered leadership can be identified within leadership research, as female leaders attempt to overcome the impact of stereotypes, disadvantages, and

embedded gender images, reflected in metaphors such as the male breadwinner and glass ceiling, cliff, and slipper (Hoobler *et al.*, 2009; Ridgeway, 2009; Short, 2014). Women spend up to 40 percent more time on household chores and childcare than their male partners do. They are affected by structural barriers in business, receiving lower wages than men and encountering resistance to female leadership (Johns, 2013; Eagly and Carli, 2007). These barriers persist even though women have the right to gender diversity in the workplace (Fine *et al.*, 2020). Eagly and Carli (2007), Heilman and Caleo (2018), and Heilman (2012) have argued that women face issues of role incongruity, as stereotypes and images of masculine leaders do not correlate well with observed female role behaviour. A female leader may receive positive feedback on her leadership role when she provides clear and goal-oriented objectives that are set out strategically. However, she may receive negative feedback on her leadership if she is perceived as too dominant or aggressive (Heilman and Caleo, 2018: Eagly and Karau, 2002). While men are considered more assertive, logical, and able to think strategically (agentic traits), women are described as loyal, caring, nurturing (communal traits), and with less self-confidence (Ciolac and Vlaicu, 2013; Marshall, 1999). The authors argue that women, who are viewed through a stereotyped lens that incorporates embedded gender images, face many obstacles. Female executives in top positions often suppress their female attitudes and display male ones instead. However, women should be made aware of the ambiguity in their leadership and gender roles (Eagly and Karau, 2002). If they fulfil their leadership roles, they will come off badly in their gender roles, and vice versa. If a women displays the same behaviour as a man (Eagly and Carli, 2007) she will face a double-bind and be evaluated differently. Women often adopt components of a transformational leadership style (Eagly and Carli 2007; Young, 2011), which relates more to effectiveness than the transactional leadership style frequently adopted by men (Eagly and Carli, 2003; Eagly *et al.*, 2003). Likewise high values, authenticity, and transparency play an important role in

women's leadership (Short, 2014). However, leadership is associated with masculinity and thus contributes to role incongruity or 'lack of fit', as described by Heilman and Caleo (2018), expanding on Heilman's model (1983). The lack-of-fit model states that there is incongruity between the attributes that women are expected to have and the attributes associated with success in male-typed areas. The mismatch presents obstacles to women's career development (Rudman *et al.*, 2012; Heilman, 2012; Koenig *et al.*, 2011), thereby sustaining gendered work practices. Male networks are substantially larger and more powerful than women's networks because more men hold dominant positions (Carli and Eagly, 2011). The leadership-context stereotypes and disadvantages that women face in leadership roles reflect the embedded images that men and women unknowingly abide by (Muir, 2012; Collinson, 2011; Jepson, 2009). This is significant if change is to take place. The need to examine the relationship between tokenism and legally binding quotas via the concept of embedded gender images at a deep structural level may be the next logical step forward in enhancing gender diversity.

The significance of the power aspect has been established by examining the generic and gendered leadership and power literature, which discussed embedded gendered images (Bolden *et al.*, 2003; Gordon, 2011; Huse and Solberg, 2006). Critical studies of embedded images by Ford and Harding (2018) and Collinson (2011) question the assumptions of mainstream leadership research. Gordon's (2011) power perspective expands on Collinson's concept of embedded images. From a leadership perspective, Riad (2014) investigates the concepts of leadership, ethics, and power. Power may be located in information control, e.g. excluding certain people from the information flow, a key tactic used to outsmart opponents (Machiavelli, 1514/2013), as well as social closure (Ashcraft, 2013). The military strategist, Sun Tsu (500BC/2008), claimed that astute leaders could achieve victory without participating in battles by preparing in advance. The warrior model of leadership (Nice, 1998;

Riad, 2011) is seen as a strategic approach; it achieves its objectives by influencing, coercing, manipulating, or silencing opponents. Personal power is a key to establishing an egalitarian relationship (Ciccocioppo, 2009). The author states that personal power is influenced by gendered stereotypes and inequalities, partly embedded in the social and cultural context. In line with Collinson's (2011) argument about leader–follower relationships, Ciccocioppo conducts a critical examination of the bonding of power and gender to comprehend relationship processes. If power shifts fail to occur due to differential power bases (Gordon, 2011) or the cultural leadership context (Jepson, 2009), it could be important to explore the relationship between tokenism and legally binding quotas, in order to overcome the lack of women in top positions. In the German automotive industry, male leaders are in positions of dominance with different power bases.

Through my reading of studies of gendered leadership and gender theory – and especially the concept of power – I realised that my thinking was broadly aligned with academic arguments that drew on metaphors, including the male-breadwinner, glass ceiling, glass cliff, and glass slipper metaphors. In particular, embedded gender images must be considered in the context of gender-organisation-system theory, as well as encompassing aspects of (paternalistic) culture, history, and power dynamics, as outlined in the previous and following sections. For this reason, this section integrates insights from two main research streams, the first involving second-generation bias (Swartz *et al.*, 2016; Ely *et al.*, 2011) and underlying gendered assumptions (Mavin, 2008; Ely and Meyerson, 2000; Kolb, 2002; Kolb and Merrill-Sands, 1999) and the second involving heroic masculine leadership images (Hoyt and Murphy, 2015; Bass, 2015, Collinson, 2011). Both of these research streams convey the overarching concept of embedded gender images. It is therefore essential to relate insights from research on stereotypes, barriers, and bias to the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas through the concept of embedded gender images, which I expand on in sections 5.3 and 5.4. These

research streams are partly interconnected, as they are situated in different research areas, such as the gender, sports, and leadership literature. However, terms such as 'second-generation bias' (Ibarra *et al.*, 2010), which underlie gendered assumptions and masculine images, are closely interconnected in their consequences for women. They express the concept of embedded gender images. The common denominator is the fact that they point out discrepancies in the perception of women and men's performance and potential and highlight the challenges that women encounter on career paths toward top positions.

Furthermore, embedded gender images, in this thesis and more generally, involve the perception of certain characteristics, competences, and associations that are typically aligned with male and female leaders (Collinson, 2011; Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Collison and Hearn, 1994) regardless of their effectiveness or sense-making. The literature identifies first- and second-generation bias; this PhD research project concentrates on the latter type of generation bias. First-generation bias refers to distinct acts of bias that are seldom witnessed or prevented by law (Bass, 2015), making them difficult to identify or discuss. Although Ely and Meyerson do not use the term 'second-generation bias', they refer to indirect forms of cultural and organisational gender bias as unseen barriers (Ibarra *et al.*, 2013). In drawing on Ely and Meyerson's (2010) research, Ely *et al.* (2011) use the term 'second-generation bias', which will be further explored in the next section. This form of bias creates barriers to women on their career paths toward top leadership positions.

To illustrate the encompassing aspects of embedded gender images, I would like to draw attention to Kaufmann-Buhler's research (2018). After attending a gender-bias conference in the US in 2018, I came across research that investigated a clear example of an embedded gender image. According to Kaufmann-Buhler (2018; p. 2) second-generation gender bias can lead to 'furniture embedded with gender assumptions', making women feel that they do not belong, when sitting in office chairs designed with male managers in mind. Kaufmann-Buhler

claims that, due to a tradition of designing chairs for businessmen, much office furniture is still made to fit the body measurements of certain types of men, thus amplifying underlying gendered assumptions. Again, these barriers are rooted in assumptions about gender, workplace structures, and behaviour (Ely and Meyerson, 2000), which put women at a disadvantage and often strengthen men's position. Ely *et al.* (2011) provide a conceptual framework for educators by drawing on research on second-generation gender bias to counter these underlying gendered assumptions and stereotyped images of women and men (Walby, 2005). Correspondingly, a gendered world is examined more closely by doing and undoing gender in Ely and Meyerson's (2010) research on an offshore oil platform, in which they investigate cultural images of the ideal man that reinforce organisational practices. Their findings suggest that company efforts to improve safety and performance can help to 'undo gender' by recognising second-generation bias, underlying gendered assumptions, and heroic masculine images. Companies can do this by creating environments that focus on learning, rather than performing. For example, the workplace can be a context in which masculinity is celebrated and employees demonstrate competence in professions that allow for prototypical masculine traits. This can be undone by shifting the focus to learning and reflection via an organisational safety initiative. Expanding on this example via the metaphor of the glass slipper, Ashcraft (2013) points to this initiative as reconfiguring gender in unusual ways. Ely and Meyerson's (2010) research contributes to the literature on gender theory and high-reliability organisations by offering insights into how to 'reconstruct the gender system' (p. 28). Applying a gender lens allows researchers to critique, experiment, and use narratives to question gendered organisations (Meyerson and Kolb, 2010). For instance, Gill *et al.* (2008) cite the example of female engineers encountering frequent outbursts when others hear about their professional choices. The common reaction is that female engineers are 'clever', a stereotype that male engineers do not encounter, which can also be an indicator of role

incongruity (Eagly and Carli, 2007). This section therefore began with second-generation bias, underlying assumptions, and heroic masculine images, which are closely connected because they share a common denominator. As discussed above, embedded gender images take various forms, which are analysed in the research areas outlined in this section.

Drawing on critical leadership studies, Collinson (2011) questions embedded gender images of heroic masculine leadership, pointing out the enormous impact they have on others. Collinson (2011) argues that embedded gender images guide both men and women in their decision-making processes. According to Fletcher (2004), women experience a double-bind in relation to post-heroic leadership, which is considered a 'vehicle for transforming' (p. 655) and creating learning organisations. For example, when a women's leadership style, e.g. securing resources for her team, is associated with mothering or giving selflessly, it does not attract reciprocity and therefore puts her in a bind. Her leadership actions will go unnoticed; she will not be visible within the organisation. In securing resources for their teams, female managers rarely gain visibility for project assignments that are well carried out (Ely *et al.*, 2011). By contrast, men become visible by empowering others because they are not automatically associated with nurturing traits. Their behaviour is therefore interpreted as heroic leadership action. Ely *et al.* (2011) have highlighted many aspects of gender disparity, such as business leaders gravitating toward people like themselves and organisational hierarchies in which men predominate in numbers or certain positions and are therefore seen as demonstrating competence (Ely and Meyerson, 2010). As a result, managers' gendered perceptions adversely affect women during the promotion process (Ely *et al.,* 2013; Hoobler *et al.,* 2009). In the same vein, Ibarra (1993) points out that personal-network structures, which often mirror larger social systems in organisations and networks, are a significant part of strategic career movement (Ibarra, 2015). The opportunity context in such systems is

closely related to personal networks. This places women at a disadvantage, suggesting that more men are likely to be recruited.

For this reason, it seems fair to say that second-generation bias, underlying assumptions, and heroic masculine images have been deeply ingrained in cultural perceptions of the actions and behaviour of women and men for decades. It is noteworthy that Bass (2015) wonders whether the law can reach far enough into social and economic reality to offset the impact of the second-generation bias that women encounter in the business and sports worlds, as well as other professional fields. In line with her inquiry, Durbin (2015) concludes that the law must introduce mandatory gender quotas for the public and private sectors to ensure an accelerated process.

3.4 Power, the ‘queen bee’ syndrome, and the business case

A note before I begin to examine power dynamics: Fletcher (2004) emphasises the connection between the concepts of power, gender, and leadership, which is my reason for drawing on the leadership literature on power. I do not intend to reinforce the intellectual status quo by separating the discussion of power, gender, and leadership into merely traditional aspects of female and male behaviour, in alignment with Kruse and Prettyman (2008). Especially since the female participants in this study, as women in top positions, have displayed traditional masculine (not male) behaviour, while the male participants have displayed traditional feminine (not female) behaviour. As the interview transcripts reveal, power dynamics are conceptualised in three dimensions, as barriers experienced in the form of gender discrimination, paternalistic leadership, and influential decision-making positions. These three dimensions offer a framework for considering power dynamics as individual puzzle pieces, which must be put together to make sense of the whole picture. For example, gender discrimination (Fine *et al.*, 2020; Heilmann and Caleo, 2018) can be experienced in various

forms, incorporating networking, bullying, accusations, and physical threats (Sturm, 2001). Paternalistic leadership may be led by traditions and unwritten rules, which determine who holds a position of power and who does not. In the same vein, influential decision-making positions can influence strategies and change the rules of the game (Yukl, 2008). Power is a useful concept if it is enacted through behavioural actions, in this case applying strategies to influence others (Lines, 2007). Being in a power position can contribute to mitigating the negative aspects of 'doing power', 'doing gender', and 'doing leadership' (Fletcher, 2004).

For this reason, it is relevant to consider the power of people in decision-making positions (Gordon, 2011; Huse and Solberg, 2006; Bolden *et al.,* 2003; (Melé and Rosanas, 2003), given the impact they can have through influential strategies and actions. In the same vein, a person in a decision-making position can influence strategies deliberately and change outcomes (Grint, 2011; Machiavelli, 1514/2013; Nice, 1998; Sun Tsu, 500BC/2008). A good example is Chancellor Angela Merkel, a female leader in a decision-making position, who introduced a 30 percent legally binding gender quota to improve opportunities for women. Again, power dynamics may be encountered in various forms. The concept of 'power-over' vs. 'power-with' in relation to authority reminds us of Mary Follett Parker (1868–1933), who is considered a management pioneer (Melé and Rosanas, 2003). If a person in a decision-making position exerts power over someone else, he or she vies for power over the other person. If the same person applies a 'power-with' approach, he or she aims to achieve a mutual agreement with the other person, who is actively involved in the process. This pattern can be seen in management and also in social contexts (Eylon, 1998). In this PhD research project, the 'power-over' and 'power-with' concepts are essential for understanding the three dimensions outlined above, related to the experiences and perceptions that female and male managers share. The 'power-over' concept involves paternalistic leadership and its close

affiliation with embedded gender images and information control, which are seen as central to victory (Machiavelli, 1514/2013). Adopting a strategic mindset (Nice, 1998; Riad, 2011) to influence others is a strategic approach to achieving objectives; this approach must become second nature to every woman on her career path toward a top leadership position (Huse and Solberg, 2006). However, it is short-sighted to think that a token female manager (Kanter, 1977) can freely oppose the dominant group or violate existing hierarchies. Considering collisions of incongruence (Eagly and Karau, 2002) and power relationships, a token women in a male-dominated area should be wary of counterblows or being perceived 'as less legitimate than male power holders', according to Vial *et al.* (2016). This can be seen in Brescoll's (2011) case study, which investigated the concept of power and gender within a political setting to understand volubility in organisations. According to the author, women in top positions took up less speaking time, due to an expected backlash. The study concludes that volubility, seen as communication to establish dominance, results in gender-specific outcomes. A better strategic orientation is therefore needed to navigate through power hierarchies. In fact, power, for example, budgetary decision-making power (Lines, 2007), and aspects of gender are interwoven in multiple ways and must be considered when organisations attempt to achieve equilibrium via a power shift (Ciccocioppo, 2009). Huse and Solberg's (2006) recommendation to women in the boardroom therefore resembles Sun Tzu's military advice, given almost 2500 years ago: be familiar with power games and use them to your advantage, be prepared for and form strategic alliances with significant decision-makers. This determines the magnitude of influential power and victory. Lines (2007), in discussing people in power positions, emphasises that closeness to powerful peers is related to outcomes, as it enhances the ability to mobilise resources efficiently.

These thoughts are not new. It is clear from early philosophical writing that they have intrigued thinkers for many centuries.

Other early writing on management included Sun Tzu's 'The Art of War', a military strategy book written in 6th century BC which recommends being aware of and acting on the strengths and weaknesses of the manager's as well as an enemy's and in Niccolo Machiavelli's 'The Prince', leaders are recommended to use fear – but not hatred – to maintain control. (Kwok, 2014; p. 29).

Huse and Solberg (2006) make a strong case that women must be more aware of the impact of, and need to participate in, power games, as part of an overall effort to skilfully influence the dynamics of board work. In fact, becoming aware of both strong (male) leadership characteristics and their own female traits may be a masterstroke. Huse and Solberg's findings (2006) suggest that women can strengthen their position of dominance by acknowledging the boardroom as an arena of power games. To make this happen, however, women must be aware that their gender, tokenism, and embedded gender images place them at a disadvantage. According to Huse and Solberg (2006), creating alliances with other decision-makers through networking is essential to increasing one's own influence. This is a well-established fact emphasised by many researchers. However, it is also evident that women struggle to gain access to influential networks and are seen as a threat to dominants (Carli and Eagly, 2011; Baumgartner and Schneider, 2010). As Durbin (2015) rightly points out, the situation has changed only slightly for women attempting to climb the ladder to top positions. For this reason, seeking and maintaining affiliations to enforce change from within an organisation, underpins a collective approach that aims to bring about change from an inside, outside, or marginal position (Meyerson and Scully, 1995). The 'queen bee' phenomenon, outlined in the next section, (Ely *et al.*, 2001; Mavin, 2008) may explain the non-existence of a collective

approach to top positions. The author reiterates that female leaders in influential decision-making positions often refrain from openly supporting other potential female managers to protect their own reputations.

The current situation paints a bleak picture of reality, while the low numbers of women in top positions lead some to speculate that women themselves could be responsible. Some researchers consider 'queen bee' syndrome' when discussing the low numbers of women on executive boards (Vinnicombe, 2011; Singh and Vinnicombe, 2004; Ely *et al.,* 2011; Mavin, 2008). The queen bee phenomenon (Derks *et al.,* 2016) is the theory that women in senior positions distance themselves from junior women, thus reinforcing gender inequality. Mavin (2006) considers the term 'queen bee' an outdated label that needs to be reconsidered, since it saddles senior women in management with unrealistic expectations (Mavin, 2008). Derks *et al.* (2016) have encouraged researchers to investigate gendered context and organisational levels. They argue that women working in male-dominated environments display behaviour that is commonly found in various minority groups; it should not be exclusively associated with women not wanting to support other women. One of their main arguments is that the 'queen bee phenomenon is not as much a source of gender bias as it is a response to the gender discrimination and identity threat that women leaders experience in some work settings' (Derks *et al.,* 2016; p. 457). It seems logical to assume that the queen bee phenomenon will cease to exist once gender parity is established. This will require regulative monitoring of people in decision-making positions, who must be convinced of the business case outlined in this PhD research project.

3.5 The pros and cons of the quota debate and its impact on current challenges

As previously mentioned, embedded gender images are barriers related to women's career development and underrepresentation in decision-making positions. It therefore makes sense to include research theory and research outcomes on women's career advancement as board members. This approach will identify significant gaps in the literature, for example, by adopting a different perspective to evaluate the continued relative absence of female managers in top positions. A vast body of literature has investigated the concepts of gender diversity, gender parity, gender equity, women's rights in general, and ways of getting more women onto boards. Some studies focus on these ideas as key concepts related to legally binding gender quotas. However, many researchers disagree on whether, for example, a critical mass or critical actors are more likely to change the dire situation facing women aiming for top positions, e.g. by appointing more women to key decision-making positions. One key responsibility of a board of directors is to act as a control mechanism, monitoring and influencing managers to impact significant decisions (CIPD, 2012). Notably, women's values are less well represented on German boards than on Norwegian boards (Inhetween, 1999). The author argues that differences in boardroom approaches to gender-friendly policies in these two countries could be linked to the underrepresentation of women decision-makers in Germany, as outlined in the first chapter. Including the viewpoints of both women and men could enrich the quality of board decision-making (Zenger and Folkman, 2012). For this reason, Eahab and Ursel (2011) advise female candidates to look at the percentage of women on prospective boards, as the likelihood of being appointed is higher if the board has more female members. This is where the argument comes full circle because Durbin (2015) recommends introducing a legally binding gender quota to increase numbers. In fact, Ward (2006) concludes, given the outcomes of their gender-quota policies, that Tanzania, Eritrea,

and Uganda have acted as role models for radical change, even if this is just one of many ways to achieve greater gender equality. Equally, Wang and Kelan's (2012) historical overview of the Norwegian gender-quota process argues that gender quotas have been effective in achieving a large number of female leaders. Such quotas are a good place to start in efforts to involve more women in top decision-making (Fine *et al.*, 2020). Again, whether we consider the number of women on supervisory boards or women executives, we are discussing women in decision-making positions and ways of strengthening their claim.

Durbin (2015) concludes in her book, *Women who succeed*, that it may be necessary to initiate change. This would include a mandatory gender quota across the public and private sectors to give women access to senior roles at the right time. Taking the timeframe into account, and given the current number of women in top positions in the German automotive industry, this study confirms the slow pace of change. Similarly, Brodbeck *et al.* (2002) reflect on male business leaders' views of the current and desired state of egalitarianism. They conclude that the desire for egalitarianism is more highly valued than implemented in practice. The statistics reveal an enormous gap between Norway and Germany, attributable to specific values, norms, and beliefs anchored in German masculine cultural preferences. These existing and deeply ingrained cultural preferences contribute to the slow pace of change (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013) towards gender diversity. Alimo-Metcalfe (2010) argues that just one-third of companies consider it vital to achieve an equitable gender balance. It seems logical to conclude that gender diversity may not take place in the near future.

If a legally binding gender quota aims to change the number of women in top positions, then it is essential to investigate the value of gender diversity and build a business case, according to Durbin (2015). Some researchers deny that there is a positive connection between gender diversity and firm performance (Chapple and Humphrey, 2013; Ahern and Dittmar, 2012; He and Huang, 2011; Adams and Ferreira, 2009). Miller and Triana (2009) alone find a positive

connection. By contrast, however, numerous studies have confirmed that women significantly enhance organisational and financial performance. These findings are based on various international industries, including the pharmaceutical, media, automotive and banking industries (Lindstaedt *et al.,* 2011; Mahadeo *et al.,* 2012; Lueckerath-Rovers, 2011; Torchia *et al.,* 2011; Smith *et al.,* 2006). Whenever we talk about gender quotas, there is a debate over whether critical mass, descriptive or substantive representation, critical actors, or critical acts matter, to what extent, and in which contexts they should be considered. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) and Drude Dahlerup (1988) are associated by many with the concept of tokenism and critical mass and by some with the notion of critical actors and acts. Academic camps seem divided over the notion of a critical mass in corporate business worlds and political institutions. Whereas Kanter's research focuses on the experience of tokens in the corporate business world (Childs and Krook, 2008), Dahlerup's research concentrates on minorities in the political arena (1988). The concept of tokenism, which Kanter introduced and Dahlerup drew on in her later work, encompasses three minority-group categories: the skewed group with a maximum of 15% of minority members; the tilted group with 15–40% minority members, and the balanced group with around 40%. Once the minority group shifts from a skewed group to a tilted group, the power dynamics change in favour of the tilted group (Lovenduski, 2001). According to Crowley, (2004) tokens matter. In the same vein, Dahlerup argues that the size of the minority is crucial (1988). The concept of critical mass states that, when a crucial number of women is present, substantial power changes are likely to happen, given their effect on political situations (Grey, 2006). Unlike Dahlerup, Kanter's (1977) research was situated in the corporate business world. Several researchers have argued that Dahlerup (1988) agreed on the importance of critical actors and acts – and that these two authors have been somewhat misinterpreted over time. According to Childs and Krook (2009), critical actors are significant driving forces, which bring about change in the area of

women-friendly policies. Both Kanter and Dahlerup point to individual actions by women on behalf of a group, noting that the critical actors can be women as well as men. The acts of such individuals promote women's concerns (substantive representation). Furthermore, Grey (2006) notes that there is no magical cure-all, pointing to Dahlerup (1988), who argues that critical acts have a significant impact on the substantive representation of women in politics. Authors such as Celis *et al.* (2008) address the question raised by other researchers: whether increasing the number of women (descriptive representation) results in policy gains for women (substantive representation). They conclude that different research questions should be raised. Instead of asking whether women represent each other and act on each other's behalf, researchers should ask by whom, where, why, and how is substantive representation experienced? Indeed, the presence of critical actors is vital (Childs and Krook, 2006) when we speak about women's interests. A clear understanding of what these interests actually are should not be *a priori* assumed (Celis and Childs, 2018). The concept of descriptive and substantive representation must be viewed in relation to the concepts of tokenism, critical mass theory, and critical acts and actors. According to Tremblay (2006), a critical mass of female actors can strengthen the substantive representation of women, even though this cannot be taken for granted. It may mitigate the tension between representation and responsiveness to certain women's policy concerns. A critical mass does not mean that substantive representation of women will happen automatically, as this will depend on several factors, including gender identity, legislative roles for women, and party affiliation.

The present study focuses on the German automotive-business world, drawing close links to women in political decision-making positions, such as Chancellor Angela Merkel. It examines power aspects (Seierstad *et al.*, 2017) and the impact of critical actors in decision-making positions on women's concerns. In alignment with Tremblay (2006), Chaney (2012) highlights the importance of a contextual approach when studying the relationship between

critical mass and critical actors. The political affiliation of critical actors, their party allegiance, institutional mechanisms, and other factors must be considered. For this reason, Chapter 1 of this thesis covers Chancellor Angela Merkel's party affiliation, party allegiance, and rise to a power position via a political-crisis situation. The literature review situates this thesis within the framework of embedded gender images; this framework encompasses concepts of gender, power, and stereotypes. It recommends further exploration of the relationship between tokenism and legally binding quotas, via embedded gender images, to accelerate gender diversity. In fact, Lovenduski (2001) argues that the acceptance of quotas by political parties would smooth the path for women, who would no longer have to struggle for political representation. According to Sue Thomas (1991), numbers matter in politics. More women are likely to increase legislation on women's concerns. First, women are often encouraged to support legislation traditionally of interest to women. Second, a higher percentage of female representatives creates more support for issues that involve women. Her research shows that women in office make a difference in politics, especially when their numbers increase. Torchia *et al.* (2011) emphasise the importance of number, strengthening critical-mass theory ('three women directors'). They argue that going from one or two women, considered tokens, to at least three women, considered a critical mass, makes a difference in outcomes. Their findings demonstrate that at least three women directors, equivalent to the size that a minority group must reach to make an impact on firm innovation, can operationalise the critical-mass construct. It is logical to conclude that, in order to achieve gender diversity, we need a critical mass of critical actors. Nevertheless, De Paola *et al.* (2010) state that if women do not perform as well as their male counterparts, gender quotas can increase negative backlash effects (Dorner, 2013; Rudman *et al.*, 2012; Pande and Ford, 2011; Eagly and Carli, 2007). The study, conducted in a political environment, reasons that female politicians may be evaluated less favourably than male politicians if their performance

is poor. This embedded gender image is a barrier to women's career advancement (see 2.3.3). Given the coherent and sense-making reasoning of the studies discussed above, the reader might conclude that, once gender parity is achieved, the backlash against women in top positions could cease over time. Furthermore, taking firm performance and organisation innovation into account, gender diversity seems economically viable and the business case is established. However, a crucial aspect is missing: the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas, based on the concept of embedded gender images. It is important to raise awareness of the subtle power dynamics that prevent female managers from obtaining top positions, even in the 21th century. If 40 years have changed so little in relation to gender diversity that we are still discussing tokenism and the lack of female managers in top positions, it may be time to introduce different actions. As research on bias and stereotypes in recruiting processes have revealed (Tienari *et al.,* 2013; Akpinar-Sposito, 2013; Doldor *et al.*, 2012; Wippermann, 2010), deeply engrained perceptions of female managers, which prevent them from achieving top positions, may require a more radical approach to get more female managers on boards within this decade.

3.2 Using coaching, mentoring, and sponsorship to counteract the impact of embedded gender images

Despite this being the 21st century, gender diversity and parity, taking the current political situation into account, seem a long way off in the German automotive industry. This PhD research project concentrates on catalysts that boost women's career development while they wait for gender diversity to become more than a fantasy. Empirical research in other settings, outlined in the following sections, has established relationships between coaching, mentoring, and sponsorship, which are often interconnected in a work environment, and performance

outcomes and career advancement. Mentoring ‘is highly regarded as a career-enhancing phenomenon necessary for any aspiring executive’ *(*Friday *et al.* 2004, p. 628). Building on Friday, Helms *et al.* (2016) emphasise the importance of mentoring for women’s career development. This thesis defines a mentor as a person with a high degree of expertise, placed higher in the hierarchy than the mentee. Typically, a mentor supports a protégé with professional expertise, which often leads to promotion, a higher income, and other beneficial outcomes (Ragins and Cotton, 1999).

For this reason, the following sections explore how coaching, mentoring, and sponsorship strengthen women on career paths toward top positions. They also change embedded gender images by developing women’s strategic skills or providing mentoring relationships that benefit from the mentor’s decision-making position within a work environment. Expanding on the different concepts of mentoring by encompassing sponsorship, Helms *et al.* (2016) see mentoring as a long-lasting, supporting relationship with a focus on strategic approaches to career advancement. Blake-Beard *et al.* (2011) argue that mentoring can contribute to positive effects; they encourage researchers to draw on a larger selection of gender, race, and role functions. Ragin (2016) offers concrete pragmatic and strategic actions that protégés can use to transform their relationships with mentors into extraordinary bonds. They do so by focusing on stigmatised individuals, groups, and their organisations. Three key aspects are relevant: first, a safe haven for developing authentic identities at work; second, strategies for thriving and surviving, and third, helping participants learn about diversity. Ragin (2016) closes by pointing again to the three benefits of extraordinary mentoring relationships. ‘They give us the courage to do the things we think we cannot do and the strength to overcome our limitations’ (Ragin, 2016; p. 242). In Helms *et al.* (2016), female managers share their

personal experiences of mentoring and highlight the concept of giving back to others by mentoring young professional women.

Graßmann and Schermuly (2016) highlight coaching as a helping relationship that optimises the coachee's work performance and satisfaction. Coaching is an iterative learning process (Haug, 2011), which enhances deeper learning and reflection, equipping clients with the tools, methods, and approaches they need to tackle the many existing challenges in their (professional) lives, which Ely *et al.* (2011) and Bachkirova and Kauffman (2009a) have identified. According to existing definitions, coaching is a solution-focused and results-driven approach characterised by a short-term (sometimes becoming long-term) intervention that helps people achieve sustainable results in their lives, businesses, and careers (Rogers, 2012). The relevant literature focuses on professional coaches who deliver professional services to clients as two experts in close collaboration (Cox *et al.,* 2014). Blackman *et al.* (2016) critically reviewed 111 empirical papers on coaching effectiveness, contributing to a stronger theoretical foundation for coaching.

Coaching for career advancement (Haug, 2014) covers both sport and performance environments (Bass, 2015; Gordon, 2007). As a result, Gordon (2007) a sports psychologist, compares and discusses theories and models within sports and business, identifying which coaching approaches from both performance environments can complement or be transferred to the other field. For instance, Gordon highlights mental toughness in sport as an exemplary skill to transfer to the business arena. Further, she draws lessons for business leaders from sports leaders, emphasising the different perspectives of business and sport leaders (Gordon 2007, Table 3, p. 278). In addition, she presents a cricket-association vision model (Gordon 2007, Figure 1, p. 279) to demonstrate the powerful use of imagery, e.g. a national anthem that bonds and links individual players to their team and core national values. Transferring

lessons from sport to business players and teams is a way of influencing others and initiating change, as part of a learning process. It requires expertise to act as change agent (Lines 2007), a term that is frequently used in coaching. Although coaching is a powerful way of accelerating outcomes (Haug, 2011), it can also be misused (Berglas, 2002) to influence person 'A' in such a way that person 'B' does what 'A' wants (Lines, 2007). The coaching literature refers to teams and individuals (Haug, 2011; Clutterbuck, 2011; Hackman and Wageman, 2005; Rogers, 2004; Starr, 2003), as well as executive coaching (Turner and Hawkins, 2016; Kralj, 2001; 2000; Kiel *et al.*, 1996; Saporito, 1996). In the same vein, coaching is individual and adapted to the client's business environment (Thompson and Cox, 2017; Haug, 2011). It can also involve coaching with emotion (Cox and Bachkirova, 2007). Needless to say, although coaching and mentoring provide support to women on career paths toward top positions, they cannot eradicate the impact of embedded gender images. Instead, they raise awareness and equip women to overcome obstacles.

3.2.1 The theoretical foundations of mentoring and sponsoring

Like coaching, mentoring is still in its infancy in some fields of research. According to Blake-Beard *et al.* (2011), scholars disagree about the benefits of same-race and same-gender mentoring relationships, particularly when it comes to correlating outcomes. There is limited research on female mentor – male protégé mentoring relationships (O'Neill and Blake, 2002) although women often mentor male protégés. Higgins and Kram (2001) have provided a theoretical framework for mentoring, as a multiple developmental relationship. Simultaneous multiple dyadic relationships with peers, senior colleagues, family members, and others serve as mentoring functions and support the protégé at different times and different career stages. Contributing to the discussion of theoretical foundations, Higgings and Kram's (2001) study investigated a range of mentoring descriptions and relationship definitions among scholars. It

is noteworthy that mentoring and sponsoring do not have to been seen as a linear process (Helms *et al.,* 2016). Someone can act as a sponsor without having mentored beforehand. Sponsoring is defined as 'bringing that person to the table as a candidate for a job or promoting them in some way' (Helms *et al.,* 2016; p. 12). The authors conclude that the actual activity of advocacy makes sponsoring different from mentoring. According to many of her fellow researchers, Kathy Kram has made a significant contribution to the field of mentoring.

Kram (1983) distinguishes between four different mentoring phases: initiation (trust relationship develops between mentor and protégé; cultivation (the protégé's phase of growth and learning via mentoring); separation (may end in relationship conflicts because the protégé has become stronger and more independent); and redefinition (the newly defined and emerged relationship between mentor and protégé after the separation). Kram investigated 18 developmental relationships that featured career advancement via mentoring. She found that the mentoring process strengthened career development, as well as psychosocial development, including personal and professional development. In alignment with Kram's career development finding (1983), Ragins and Cotton (1999) distinguished between formal and informal mentoring relationships, crediting the latter with higher impact. As the authors point out, protégés are often allocated a mentor within a formal mentoring programme, which usually lasts for a relatively short period of time. By contrast, informal mentoring relationships develop spontaneously when an experienced manager higher in rank than the protégé perceives his or her high potential. Typically these mentoring relationships are characterised by long-term collaboration.

3.2.2 Perceived embedded gendered images in sports and business environments

The lack of research on female mentor – male protégé mentoring (O'Neill and Blake, 2002) may be partly due to the scarcity of these particular mentoring relationships and aspects such as organisational gender stereotypes and behaviour and power issues (see O'Neill and Blake, 2002). Helms *et al.* (2016) wonder whether women are aware that they need a sponsor or active promoter to climb the career ladder. The sponsor supports the protégé through challenging assignments for growth and learning, while using his or her influence with important stakeholders to promote the protégé. In their conclusion, the authors emphasise the significance of mentoring and sponsorship for individuals and organisations alike. Helms *et al.* (2016) and other researchers include findings that are crucial for women on career paths toward top positions, due to personal and professional development.

To achieve effective performance outcomes in a work environment, managers must often coach their subordinates to contribute to a positive atmosphere and foster their development. These actions can achieve better work results (Ye *et al.*, 2016). In a cross-cultural study, Ye *et al.* (2016) set out to identify positive outcomes of gender and managerial coaching by fostering employee development. They defined managerial coaching as receiving coaching from a direct supervisor, which can turn into a long-term collaborative intervention. In fact, Ye *et al.* (2016) were particularly interested in the relationship between gender, societal culture, and managerial coaching: 'globally, female managers may overcome the gender disadvantage by displaying more coaching behaviour towards their subordinates' (p. 1792). Managerial coaching behaviour (favouring communal traits, such as nurturing and listening) appears to correlate well for female managers with societal and cultural expectations of their leadership and gender roles. Readers might assume, from Ye *et al.*, that women on career

paths toward top positions should adopt managerial coaching behaviour to mitigate the impact of embedded gender images.

Despite effective performance outcomes, coaching in sports must be viewed through a gendered lens, according to Bass (2015), who says: 'Think coaching – think male' (p. 710). According to Bass, the DNA of the sports world is heavily influenced by its male history and second-generation bias, captured in the concept of embedded gender images. The author believes that, although coaching is based on merit, merit is subjective and dependent on personal relationships, networks, and a logical choice based on best fit. Male leaders have an advantage because their numbers make them more visible as role models; this makes it seem natural for men to hold major top positions. For female leaders to become visible, they need to make an impact through sheer numbers. Many more women are needed. This key concern lies at the heart of this PhD research project, and further research is needed explore the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas through the concept of embedded gender images. Such research can help to accelerate gender diversity.

3.3 Summary

Building on a framework of four metaphors to theorise embedded gender images, this paper discusses the concept of embedded gender images, which is relevant to several research streams. The phenomenon of embedded gender images has significant implications for tokenism, capturing its subtle power dynamics and relationship to gender quotas. At the same time, embedded gender images reflect second-generation gender bias, which underpins the gendered assumptions and heroic masculine images encountered in personal and professional relationships, organisations, and systems. The concept is used to caution women-in-

management theory, coaching, and mentoring practices that support women who hold or aspire to hold decision-making positions. Crucially, strategic career coaching and mentoring can help women managers develop a strategic mindset, become familiar with the power and leadership literature, and learn to anticipate and counteract power plays. Unless gender parity is achieved, embedded gender images will continue to have a significant impact on women. Additional measures, such as survival boot camps for women managers, can provide support. For generations, white male leaders have shaped German history, culture, and society, promoting specific values, norms and beliefs, anchored in German masculine cultural preferences (Brodbeck *et al.*, 2002). This is certainly true of the German automotive industry. In fact, the stereotypes 'think male – think manager' (Ryan *et al.* 2011; Schein *et al.*, 1996) and 'think coaching – think male' (Bass, 2015) influence recruiting processes (Tienari *et al.*, 2013; Akpinar-Sposito, 2013; Doldor *et al.*, 2012; Wippermann, 2010). The fact that women's advancement plateaued once the required 30% quota for supervisory boards in Germany was achieved (Holst and Wrohlich, 2018) reveals the importance of gender quotas. They place more female managers in top positions, changing the perception of female leaders over time (Nanivadekar, 2006) and the cultural imprint (Hummelsheim and Hirschle, 2010). These will change male leadership behaviour (Matsa and Miller, 2013), diminishing the impact of embedded gender images. The Analysis and Discussion sections draw on this theory and literature and relate these ideas to the perceptions and experiences of the 16 managers who participated in this study. The participants' stories reveal the barriers explored in women-in-management studies published over the last 40 years.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology of this PhD research, explaining what I learned throughout the project. It outlines my own biases, among other embedded gender images, and discusses how I addressed and continue to address them. I was first drawn to this field through a professional role as a business coach for an extensive organisational development and leadership programme (De Vries, 2008; De Hoog and Den Hartog, 2008), in which I coached men (for the most part) in top international positions (Haug, 2011; Rosinski, 2003). I started to wonder about the lack of women leaders in senior management positions. This qualitative PhD research attempts to make sense of the experiences and perceptions of 10 female and 6 male managers from the German automotive industry. I have used biographical narratives and semi-structured interviews of managers in leading positions in the German automotive industry to gain a better understanding of their career experiences and views on the current gender-quota discussion in Germany. I have used a thematic analysis to engage with the qualitative empirical material and to address the research questions.

4.1. Reflection on the PhD research project and its impact on my life

Women in top positions worldwide are still outnumbered by men (Studie einer UN-Agentur, 2020; Neubauer, 2019). There are many explanations for the continued relative absence of female managers in top positions, as Chapters 2 and 3 discuss. However, I was curious about aspects of the problem that numbers could not easily explain. I somehow felt that a puzzle piece was missing. In addition, I wanted to make sure that the voices of female managers were heard. Evidently, the debate about legally binding gender quotas and arguments about why women are outnumbered in top positions have generated controversial political (Holst and Friedrich, 2017; Davies, 2014; Jahn, 2014, FidAR, 2014; Holst and Wiemer, 2010),

media (Bullion, 2017; Short, 2014; Schwarz, 2014, Wippermann, 2010) and corporate (Tietz, 2013; Joecks, 2012: Pesonen *et al.*, 2009) discussions. Inevitably, the connections to my own life story and developmental growth (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2014), as a novice investigator, are evident (Haynes, 2014; Turner, 2010; Cox, 1999). The following sections discuss this further. This chapter does not attempt a declaration of objectivity (Cox, 2015; Alvesson *et al.*, 2008; Seale *et al.*, 2004). Instead, it emphasises my awareness that I was raised in West Germany and influenced by parents with roots in East Germany; for this reason, I feel that I belong to two cultures. In 2016, I asked my 81-year-old father (my mother passed away in 2009) whether he would like to take me back in time by visiting significant places from his childhood and professional career in East Germany. It felt important to gain more insight into the differences between our cultural upbringings. Undeniably, this journey taught me a great deal about the cultural influences in my father's life, which partly resembled my own. This PhD thesis inspired me to capture my father's life story on audiotape (Creswell, 2013), not to provide content for this thesis, but to serve as a legacy for my family and myself. My data gathering and analysis were fuelled by an inquiring and reflecting stance, guided by questions such as 'What is this telling me? What is this really all about and what am I missing? I personally view the emergence of stories and 'images of inner strengths' as a response to this reflective approach. Several conclusions follow from this reflective analysis: first, I have become aware of my own underlying gendered assumptions and have partly addressed and changed them in my personal and professional life; second, I have developed a clear stance towards legally binding quotas, as outlined in the Conclusion chapter; and third, I plan to support other women by applying strategic career coaching as part of my professional practice. The applied methods have supported me in a systematic iterative learning process, based on constant reflection and an inquiring mind. First, what is missing? What is it that I am not seeing because of a huge amount of data and emotions resonating within me? Second,

what does this have to do with me? What embedded gender images guide my own decision processes, without my being aware of them? Third, what can I do about them?

4.2 Structure of the chapter

This chapter focuses on the methodology, philosophical assumptions, and corresponding methods used in this PhD research project. It outlines the ontology, epistemology, and paradigm guiding the study, drawing on Gergen's social constructionist orientation (1985) and Guba and Lincoln's constructionism (1994). In doing so, it shows how I embarked on my research journey and how the knowledge I acquired has changed my understanding of the significance of the methodology (Haynes, 2014; Hunter, 2009; Schütze, 1983). The advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methodology will be further addressed in the Limitations section (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008). As for the evaluation framework, the criteria for qualitative research applied in this PhD research project distance it from traditional quantitative evaluation, which Hermanns (1992) and Northcote (2012) argue is not always suitable. I will further outline why the qualitative approach is appropriate for answering the research questions and meeting qualitative criteria (Bryman 2008), drawing on Haynes, 2014; Northcote, 2012; Creswell, 2002; Bromley *et al.*, 2002; and Guba and Lincoln, 1989. The trustworthiness and credibility (Crotty, 2012; Lincoln, 1994) of the data saturation will also be discussed in the following sections.

4.3 Research structure

In its structure, this project was inspired by Marshall (1995), who worked with sixteen stories of women's lives, inviting participants to confirm or alter the interpretative stories. In the

present study, sixteen participants (ten women and six men) from an initial group of seventeen managers[1] in middle or senior management positions were asked to reflect on the individual catalysts and barriers they encountered on their professional journeys. I worked with creative methods and processes (Brouissine, 2008; Page, 2008), including drawings and stories, as an iterative learning process. The participants' written stories and my own 'images of inner strengths' produced images of exploration (Wainer, 2000). When deciding how many participants would be sufficient to ensure rich data, I relied on Guest *et al.* (2006), concluding that 12 interviews would suffice. I also created a space for reflection by delivering three keynote speeches at the company where most of the interviews were conducted and one keynote speech in 2018 at a mentoring programme supported by the Federal Ministry. These have been followed by many other speeches at companies and congresses in recent years. Undeniably, the responses confirmed the importance, timeliness, and themes of this PhD research project. In the same vein, a reflective approach (Creswell, 2013) enabled me to carry out a thorough iterative and non-linear data analysis of the collected data findings and to share the results. I was interested in the interviewees' characteristics and career strategies. I summarised and analysed key themes to make sense of the data (Merriam, 2009), as well as studying the stories and images. I focused on key aspects that reappeared, such as embedded gender images, power issues, and strategies for addressing barriers. The theme analysis emphasised similarities and differences in the participants' experiences, rather than their individual characters. In the Findings section, I used a data-summary table, stories, images, and a theme analysis to address the research questions.

[1] The consent form of the highest-ranked manager was not signed.

In alignment with my chosen reflective approach, I wanted to present an interim report to female and male managers in the German automotive industry. I had to adapt the written consent form (Appendix 2) to deliver keynote speeches in public. Previously, the participants had only given permission for academic use of the empirical material. Participants who signed the altered consent form agreed to public use of their material. I made a written commitment to forward their stories before publishing them. As promised, I forwarded slides with findings and their anonymised stories to them.

4.4 Research philosophy

This chapter discusses the research paradigms I came across from different vantage points. As Herrmann (1992) reminds readers, the heated debate over whether a quantitative or qualitative approach is better should not become a war against research opponents. In the same vein, controversial attitudes among researchers are captured in Booth and Harrington (2006). As Kuhn points out, 'the truth of a scientific statement is only relevant to those who share the belief system upon which such "truths" are based' (p. 238); Feyerabend notes that 'without the courage to accept a messy, chaotic and complex environment, the accidental discovery of DNA and penicillin would not have been made' (p. 249). Hermann (1992) outlines the different perspectives of quantitative and qualitative research, arguing that the main objective of quantitative research is to verify hypotheses. The categories to be examined must be clearly theoretically defined before conducting the research. The hypotheses are then checked using a deductive model, following linear and timely structured phases. To allow for sense-making, I adopted an inquiring stance to understand multiple puzzle pieces and how they fitted together. This study was undertaken to gain a better understanding of complex themes (Creswell, 2013) drawn from the narratives ofsix managers, within the context of the gender-quota debate in

Germany. The narratives highlighted barriers to career success in the German automotive industry.

Obviously, the gender-quota debate fuels controversial points of view (Davies, 2014; Dahlerup, 2008). This study set out to learn about the strategies that female and male participants used to achieve top positions in the German automotive industry, and what other women could learn from them. My research philosophy involved an in-depth inquiry into the participants' own perceptions and experiences. Both sections of the interview were followed by thematic analyses to strengthen their validity. Linking different methods, such as biographical narratives and semi-structured interviews, added to the rich empirical material (Booth and Harrington, 2006; Bryman, 2008; Crotty, 2012). To date, women are underrepresented in this particular industry (Buldoc, 2015) and the participants' responses indicate some reasons for this.

4.4.1 Ontology

Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that the researcher's paradigm, expressed through a personal worldview, basic belief system, and assumptions, guide his or her ontological, epistemological, and methodological approach. As a logical line of reasoning, theoretical-methodological frameworks should therefore be coherent, as they are interdependent with their authors. As there is more than one truth and one way of looking at phenomena, I set out to listen to the participants' realities and to accept them as personal experienced truths. Being part of the process allowed me to engage with and feel touched by the personal stories and realities the participants shared with me (I even cried with one participant). During this PhD research, I experienced interactive exchanges with the participants (Marshall, 2000). My ontological approach as a researcher encompassed sharing my understanding of their

biographical narratives by presenting the interpretative and subjective stories and having the participants confirm what I perceived as sense-making. Although I worried that the participants might understand the essence of their stories differently, asking me to rewrite or completely rejecting them, they identified with the written stories. In addition, my research process relied on subjectively chosen methods for collecting empirical material (see Appendix 3).

4.4.2 Epistemology

Ontology and epistemology are two sides of the same coin and closely intertwined (Crotty, 2012). According to Crotty, it is important to distinguish between conceptions of reality and the nature of truth (an ontological stance) and what constitutes knowledge (an epistemological stance). In the same vein, Caspi's (2015) continuum theory addresses the dichotomy between and interdependence of subjectivity and objectivity. Building on these theories, I decided to use biographical narratives to hear the participants' voices and semi-structured interviews to answer specific research questions. I wondered what kind of knowledge would emerge and whether it would stand the test of reality and validity. Initially, I planned to use only biographical narratives and semi-structured interviews. Reflective methods, such as the researcher's iterative learning process and the participants' stories and 'images of inner strengths' became part of my epistemological stance later; they are interwoven with the emerging data, as part of the analysis process.

4.4.3 Paradigm

During the process of deciding what methodology to adopt (for a detailed outline of social constructionists, see Hunter, 2009 and for counter-arguments, see Hacking, 1999) I aimed for

the best match between data and analysis (Patton, 1999) and met twice with two female executives to listen to their stories. Our informal exchange confirmed my reflective approach: to embrace the participants' stories as 'realities' that they shared with me (Guba and Lincoln 1994). I gave new discoveries space by listening empathically to the biographical narratives of participants and focusing on rich and complex insights. 'If knowledge exists essentially in the form of human constructionists, then a paradigm that recognises and accepts that premise from the start is to be preferred to one that does not' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989 p. 68–76). I decided that it was significant to listen to the participants' points of view and to understand that, while being there, we were sharing a moment of constructed reality (Flick, 2004), 'an artefact of communal interchange' (Gergen, 1985), sense-making (Misra and Prakash, 2012) and a temporary truth (Marshall, 1995).

4.5 Data collection

Initially, I intended to use initial pilot interviews as snowball samples, meeting with 1–2 participants from the German automotive industry to test the responses that my questions would produce. This step was designed to determine whether my research questions would produce rich empirical material. However, this interview sequence was interrupted in a very unsettling way at the beginning of my research journey. I was expecting to interview participants from one company, having received a verbal assurance from a leading CEO at the beginning of the project. Later, the company sent an email refusing to support the study because my research would not provide the company with new knowledge. To find interview candidates, I published my cover letter on social networks, such as XING and LinkedIn, and received immediate responses. Women in leading positions in several industries wrote to support the project. In addition, I used my personal network to contact women in leading positions and asked them to participate. I then met with the first female interviewee, who was

responsible for 25,000 employees in the German automotive industry. Ultimately, this study generated responses by purposive sampling from business leaders' perceptions at a micro level via biographical narratives and semi-structured interviews. At the start of this PhD research project, I intended to work with ten participants, to ensure rich data. As a consequence of snowball sampling, I ultimately interviewed seventeen participants, a sufficient number, according to Guest *et al.* (2006).

One interviewee, with the highest professional ranking in his major company, would not allow audio-recording, and therefore could not be used. The sixteen remaining participants came from seven automotive companies, which cannot be named for reasons of anonymity. All were responsible for managing a team or a project, and they all held equivalent positions. The sixteen participants included heads of departments, CEOs, senior managers reporting directly to the supervisory board, and managers on the path toward top positions. The companies had between 25,000 and almost 300,000 employees. To preserve their anonymity, the exact numbers cannot be listed. The German automotive industry is clearly undergoing a political upheaval, with some companies undergoing police investigations, due to scandals. The participants' interviews were conducted at a time when the impact was slowly unfolding. Although the participants were not affected, I was cautious about sensitive data, such as numbers of employees, that might reveal the identity of these companies.

4.5.1. Recruiting interview participants

This PhD research project began with 17 participants; 10 female and 7 male business leaders in the German automotive industry were chosen for interviews, based on their roles, positions, and the size of their organisations. One interview was excluded from the general analysis and

could not be used. Five women came from West Germany and five from East Germany; four men came from West Germany and two came from East Germany.

Initially, I fully transcribed sixteen interviews, but experienced déjà vu after analysing the first eight, when I realised that themes were repeating themselves. The participants seemed to mention similar barriers, experiences, and perspectives. The feeling stayed with me and was confirmed during the transcribing process. I then decided to focus on the eight participants who had achieved the highest professional ranking (e.g. one level below the supervisory board) or were the most intriguing. I continued working with those eight interviews, which finally turned into eight stories and 'images of inner strengths'. In the end, out of sixteen fully transcribed interviews, I focused on eight transcripts, working with stories and 'images of inner strengths' from participants at different companies, as the next chapters will discuss. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) have argued that the iterative process of data collection is complete when no new themes or categories can be further established. In the same vein, data saturation occurred in this PhD research project when I felt that no additional new categories or themes were emerging from the text (Creswell, 2009) and that sixteen transcripts and eight stories and 'images of inner strengths' constituted a satisfactory representation. Adding to this, Guest *et al.* (2006) discuss the lack of guidelines for data-saturation processes and conclude that twelve interviews are sufficient. Although reaching saturation point felt like a subjective experience, comparing the sixteen interview transcripts with identified themes confirmed the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2009). I was therefore content to focus on eight stories and eight 'images of inner strengths'. A detailed explanation of how I arrived at the themes and coding is outlined in the Data Analysis and Coding section (4.5.5), where I also draw on all sixteen interviews to allow all voices to be heard.

4.5.2 Interview Setting

To start with, the narratives and interviews were conducted in the managers' own offices or with some female managers at their own homes or in hotel rooms. The female managers choose private settings in order to share very personal and sometimes deeply touching biographical narratives. The audio-recording of one female manager took place in a German hotel room because she travelled extensively all over the world. I had met her at a research conference in London a year before and we had stayed in contact. The timeframe for conducting the narratives and interviews ran from July 2015 to December 2016. Again, ten participants were selected and invited to participate in the study based on their positions, while the other participants were acquired via snowball sampling. In other words, the invited participants asked others to participate in the interviews. All taken together, they ranged from 35 to 83 years old – not at the beginning of their careers. All of them worked in the German automotive industry. Notably, 90% of the participants worked at a current or former German automotive family business. Although I did not ask about children, many participants mentioned them during the interviews. Of the eight participants whose stories and 'images of inners strengths' were used (four women and four men) one woman had two children, one had one child, and two were childless. Three of the men had two children and one man had one child. The seniority levels of the female participants ranged from technical assistant to CEO and the sole owner of a company to being responsible for 25.000 employees and belonging to the management board as an HR representative. Three female participants reported directly to a supervisory board. The seniority level of the male participants ranged from second owner in line to executive managers. All of the men reported directly to a supervisory board.

I did not inquire about salaries or numbers of children. First, it is unusual for German employees to reveal their salaries; and second, I did not think of it at the time, probably due to

German culture. When it came to children, one female manager with one child went back to work full-time immediately, while the other female manager worked part-time. Her barriers in relation to being a working mother are outlined in the Findings and Discussion chapter. The two female managers without children did not experience career breaks. However, one of the men experienced a career-break because he chose to stay close to his children and was unwilling to move for career advancement. The three other male managers did not experience career breaks due to having children. In regard to level of education, all eight participants finished their studies with top grades in Germany and degrees comparable to a Master's degree. Only one manager had a PhD. These particular data showed that the women and men, despite individual biographical narratives, shared some similarities, such as striving for excellence and receiving good grades. According to an Asian study by Yukongdi and Benson (2005), even the fact that women are just as qualified as men (Betrand *et al.*, 2018) and often better qualified does not get them onto the board.

Table 1 presents the participants' pseudonyms and relevant facts. Some data in the age-box are missing because I did not enquire about them.

[Table 1]

Overview of Interviewees

Interviewees	16	Fam business	DOB	Position	Sex	Birthplace	Children
Beate		Yes	1935	CEO-Level	Female	BRD	Yes
Martina		Yes	1965	Expert-Level	Female	BRD	Yes
Katharina		No	1970	CEO-Level	Female	BRD	Yes
Ulrike		Yes	1965	First management level	Female	BRD	No
Jennifer		Yes		Manager-Level	Female	BRD	No
Jasmin		Yes	1968	Manager-Level	Female	GDR	No
Susanne		Yes		Manager-Level	Female	GDR	Yes
Stephanie		Yes	1970	Manager-Level	Female	GDR	Yes
Sabine		Yes		Manager-Level	Female	GDR	No
Juliane		Yes		Manager-Level	Female	GDR	Yes
Sven		Yes	1974	Manager-Level	Male	GDR	Yes
Mark		Yes	1971	CEO-Level	Male	BRD	Yes
Stefan		Yes	1957	CEO-Level	Male	BRD	Yes
Tom		Yes	1967	CEO-Level	Male	GDR	Yes
Johannes		Yes	1965	CEO-Level	Male	BRD	Yes
Markus		YES	1965	Manager-Level	Male	BRD	Yes
Martin	n.a.	Yes	1954	CEO-Level	Male	BRD	Yes
Total	**17**						

4.5.3 Methods

'The purpose of the qualitative research interview is to contribute to a body of knowledge that is conceptual and theoretical and is based on the meanings that life experiences hold for the participants' (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, p. 314). To start with, the interviews consisted of two parts (see Appendix 1). The first part encompassed the biographical-narrative theme, while the second part consisted of semi-structured interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Schostak, 2006); these are presented in the interview protocol and researcher guide

(Appendix 1.1.). The biographical narratives were designed to flow without many interruptions from me (see Appendix 4). In the semi-structured interviews, all participants responded to specific questions, which were inspired by my curiosity about the lack of women in top positions in the German automotive industry. I formulated questions specifically to shed light on some of the issues investigated by this PhD research project.

The estimated time for each interview was initially 60–90 minutes, in a semi-structured format. However, the first and second interviews took up to 3 hours each, and I wondered why. In hindsight, I think this was due to the barriers experienced and perceived by two female managers. All of the other interviews were conducted within the timeframe of up to 2 hours. Prior to the interviews, the participants were sent an information package containing a letter describing the research, a short version of the interview guide, a document detailing their rights as research subjects, and a short description of the PhD dissertation in German. The interviews were conducted in German. The questions varied slightly and were adapted to each interviewee's responses to my questions about his or her biographical narrative.

At the beginning of the interviews, I asked participants to describe their current jobs. I began with one opening question (Rosenthal, 2004) to initiate sharing of the interviewee's entire biographical narrative or an excerpt of it (Schütze 1983). I then explained that I hoped to take them on a journey back in time to childhood (Tonnens *et al.*, 2010) and then to move forward along their school and professional career to date. In doing so, I asked the participants to focus on certain aspects, such as mentors, catalysts, vital barriers in childhood, school, and career paths until the day of the interview (Appendix 1).

4.5.4 Transcription and translation procedure

My assistant and I transcribed each interview with the narrative and questions in German; each of us did 50% of the transcriptions. We realised, after she had finished her part, that she had taken a slightly different approach to the transcriptions. She did not include filling words such as '*ähm'* and had put the sentences into a grammatically correct order. By contrast, my transcriptions were word-by-word. I compared the transcriptions and was assured that they were more or less identical in meaning; our different ways of producing them did not alter the stories or their messages, especially since I had translated the categorised themes for the data-summary table (Appendix 3) in English. However, drawing on Steyaert and Jannsens (2013), I am fully aware of the authors' concerns: '…can anyone situate him/herself within the continental tradition without entering the discussion on the myriads of languages and dialects that flow across "the continent"'. The simple fact is that I cannot and have therefore pointed out in the Introduction section that language matters. I discussed a few of the original words, e.g. Rabenmutter' and a detailed explanation of manager vs. leader ('Führer') in the Introduction to show my awareness of the 'paradox of language' (Steyaert and Jannsens, 2012).

4.5.5 Data analysis and coding

McCormack (2000) describes the process of transitioning from the interview transcript to the interpretive story via multiple lenses as a 'daunting task' for researchers. In the same vein, Gergen (1985, p. 273) argues that constructionism does not equal 'anything goes'. In fact, biographical narratives are considered to be the verbally expressed stories of participants, focusing on aspects of their personal and professional lives (Hunter, 2009) in a meaningful way (Hunter, 2010; Miles and Huberman, 1994). As Fereday (2006, p. 4) says, 'thematic

analysis is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon' (Daly, Kellehearand Gliksman, 1997). I decided to use a thematic analysis to engage with the qualitative empirical material, thereby investigating relevant statements for sense-making. The objective was to gain knowledge about 'a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006), a method I was introduced to at a summer camp with the researchers Braun and Clarke in person and others interested in thematic analysis. The biographical narratives and interview questions with female and male participants were intended to generate understanding at a deeper level (Galletta, 2012). In writing about the purpose of narratives, stories, and text, Gabriel (2004) reminds readers that stories can be used to enlighten, but can also be dangerous, as they view and reinterpret facts from different perspectives. Again, the theoretical perspective has clearly informed the methodology and subsequent research methods, which are grounded in my own interpretative stance. Opponents of creative research methods, most often rooted in positivism (Broussine, 2008) may claim that the use of such methods (stories, drawings, art, or film) is not real research and is therefore not legitimate or valid. Although they make an interesting point, I would argue that the concept of embedded gender images might never have surfaced through the use of straightforward methods. For this reason, creative research methods and the reflective approach became an essential part of this dissertation learning process (Page, 2008). The question then remained: how to go about it? How best to combine my professional background and approach as coach and mentor with a structured research approach that would ensure a sound methodological approach? I have studied psychodynamics and am accustomed to discussing psychodynamic situations that arise during my coaching with clinical psychologists, and reflecting upon and analysing conversations and written text with other professionals. This was indeed a daunting task (McCormack, 2000) until the very end, but integrating reflective space into this PhD research project supported a sound process. The

roadmap for Bloomberg and Volpe's (2018) process of qualitative data analysis describes the exciting journey of insights and themes that I experienced.

Step I => Reviewing and exploring the data for key insights

Step II => Rereading and examining/coding data

Step III => Reporting the findings

Step IV => Interpreting the findings by analysing and synthesising them

According to the authors, Step I is used to review and explore the data for key insights. To me, this meant that the first level focused on identifying broad generalisations of thematic areas/key insights through an applied data-driven inductive approach (Fereday, 2006) and reading the transcripts without stopping once. Step II involved rereading, examining, and coding the data. I did this by highlighting certain words and scribbling comments on the transcripts. In this way, I reflected again on specific aspects of the participants' viewpoints (Gordon, 2002) that caught my attention. In short, the printed versions of the interview transcripts were used to first develop suitable codes to capture the reappearing themes in different versions; these gave me an idea of the type of golden thread I wanted to follow. The codes were checked against the research questions for sense-making. I continued to read and compare insights on various gendered opportunities and barriers from leadership and feminist theory, alongside the interviews. At that stage, it was interesting to note the similarities and differences between the genders. This influenced the coding, as I was curious whether my first impression of certain similarities (good grades, high achiever) and differences (networking power, barriers) would be reconfirmed after each new transcript. I followed this process with the second and third transcripts, and consequently with all of the others. I compared them to ensure sense-making, understand relationships, and determine the right

direction. This process constituted a significant second level of interpretative understanding (Fereday, 2006) – what Bloomberg and Volpe refer to as Step II in their roadmap (2018). It resulted in a back-and-forth emergence of the data and a confirmation or readjustment of codes with each new transcript. However, it was also the moment I realised that I needed a data-summary table (see Appendices 3 and 4) to provide an overview of the codes and categories and to identify systematically emerging themes. The data-summary table made it possible to freely explore the empirical material without becoming overwhelmed by the sheer amount of text (Patton, 1999). As outlined in Bloomberg and Volpe's roadmap (2018), I went back to the transcripts and reread them again, adding some codes and eliminating others. To me, this was an iterative learning cycle, which meant that I had started to focus on certain aspects. The same happened to the codes in the data-summary table where I renamed some without eliminating any. Sometimes, I was not certain this work was going anywhere or that the coding schema was correctly applied. However, categories emerged in relation to reappearing topics and terms (Fereday, 2006).

The 16 codes that I finally settled on and outlined in the summary-data table were as follows: 1. catalysts, 2. barriers and hindrances, 3. mentoring, 4. finances, 5. embedded gender images, 6. cultural (and societal) gender stereotypes, 7. organisational (gender) stereotypes, 8. networking, 9. participants' views about legally binding gender quotas and reasons for women not being at or making it to the top, 10. strategies, 11. family business aspects, 12. parents and learning from parents, 13. qualifications and work attitude/characteristics, 14. surrounding circumstances, 15. power and leadership aspects, and 16. researcher comments.

The interview responses provided a generic understanding of the thematic areas, for example the participants' understanding of the attributes of a good leader, their own positions of dominance, and their thoughts about legally binding gender quotas. As the process of

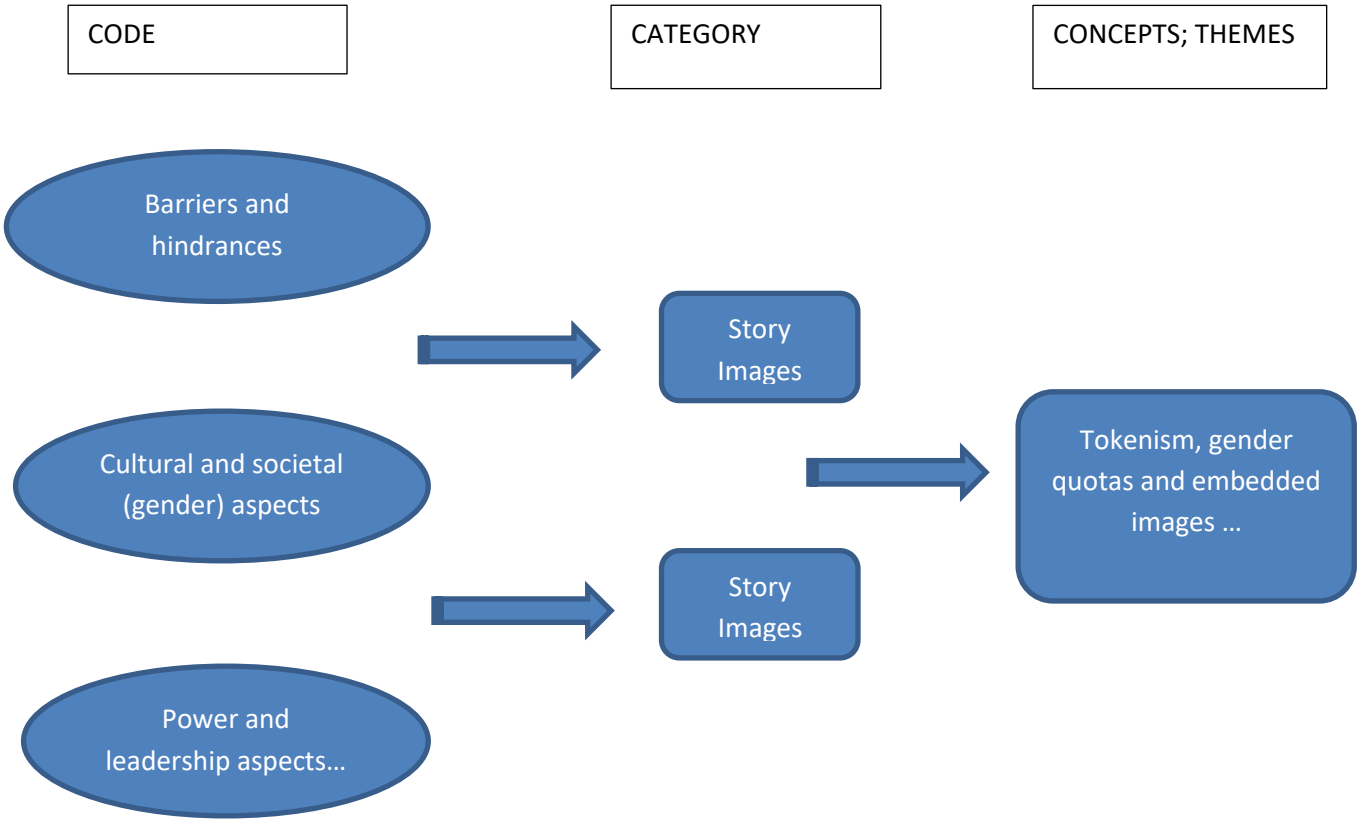
addressing the empirical material was ‘not unlike the detective work of Sherlock Holmes’ (Marshall and Rossmann, 1999, p. 22) I was constantly reading, emerging, thinking, withdrawing and re-entering the empirical material. I asked myself: ‘What is going on here? What is it that I need to see and understand? What are they are telling me? Am I listening properly to their voices? as Carcary (2009) suggests. These questions provided a framework of sense-making for the data.

Referring back to the process by Bloomberg and Volpe (2018), between Step II and Step III (report findings), I started to write the participants’ stories, focusing on key insights, with emerging categories in mind (barriers to women; catalysts to women and men) and related these to the research questions. The reason for writing down the stories was, as previously mentioned, to systematically discern key insights into similarities and differences by applying the same structure to the experiences and perceptions of female and male participants. After I finished the stories, the ‘images of inner strengths’ emerged as another, unexpected part of the process. They displayed the strengths of the male and female interviewees and also the barriers to women (and Sven). I began with Ulrike’s story, which touched me emotionally because of the many negative encounters she reported and the way she dealt with them. In relation to the research question, it indicated the different types of catalysts and barriers she had experienced, in comparison to the male participants. It also seemed as if the catalysts and barriers had allowed her to develop certain inner strengths to deal with them. However, when I came to Step III (formulating findings statements, providing interviewee statements, and summarising key findings), the fog finally lifted. The process helped me stay focused on the task at hand, concentrating on key themes – especially the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas – through embedded gender images. In Step IV, I interpreted the findings by analysing and synthesising them, linking them to my professional experience (related

workshops and keynotes, I had conducted during that period), and relating the findings to insights and relevant research (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2018).

In regard to accuracy, I checked the audiotapes against transcriptions several times. However, language is a limitation in itself and the interviewer's gaze can change the course of a sentence (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001). Although language is identified as critical in qualitative research, it can also be used as vehicle to establish trust and rapport (Welch and Piekkari, 2006). In a nutshell, the applied method enabled me to move from an immense amount of empirical material (16 fully transcribed and translated transcripts) toward discerning emergent themes and patterns and addressing the specific research questions (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2018; Creswell, 2009; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998). The systematically and thematically analysed biographical narratives were added to extracted key themes (Bryman, 2008; Braun and Clarke, 2006), which included the strategies that women in top automotive-industry positions used to overcome barriers and how they took advantage of catalysts.

The graph below shows the process of coding, categories, concepts, and themes that led to theorising (based on Saldana, 2009)



Below is an excerpt from the coding schema for Ulrike's table: Cultural and societal (gender) aspects. The code, which I captured with others in the data-summary table, influenced the emerging categories and the final concept of embedded gender images, as outlined above in the overview based on Saldana (2009).

Cultural and societal (gender) aspects	Gender was an issue in 1995 in one of the companies I worked in and I was suprised to find that 20 yrs later it still was. It is the way men behave, how they talk and who shakes hand with whom (p. 1b). I, except for a female assistant, was the only female manager in the room. They had a hard time to acknowledge the presence of a woman in their discussions: "... gentlemen - oh, and lady of course"(p.2b) I was raised with the expectation that as a woman my role was to marry and have children. My parents were wondering why I'd be so job-oriented. I was not meant to be succesful in a job. It was similar with peers later on (p.2b). My male colleagues would be wondering why I was so dedicated to my job since my position in life would be another one. When those people realised that I was not only good at my job, but also cooked well and liked it, it didn't fit into their worldview at all (p.3b) Angela Merkel is a highly respected person, especially abroad. I often get to hear: Ah, a German. You have a very powerful female chancellor and here's another powerful German woman. Angela Merkel has an incredible powerful reputation. Whether it helps to change decisions in the mind-set of people is not for me to judge (p.9). There's still a lot more that needs to be done when it comes to change management, but women can play an important part in it (p.10)

During the first part of the analytical process, given my curiosity about similarities and differences related to the research questions, I began to list adjectives that the participants used to describe or mention events; these served to produce graphics (Appendix 6), as a means of sense-making. The graphics were presented at keynote speeches in Germany and are therefore in German. The participants were similar in their work ethics and value-driven working lives. In the same vein, certain differences were personal assets, such as being artistic or showing courage. The analysis of words such as ‘courage’ drew on the data from power experiences, which the female managers primarily had to deal with. This does not imply that the male managers were not courageous – simply that these (or associated) words were not mentioned in their accounts. I, as a researcher, did not further elaborate on the theme during their interviews. The applied analysis of the reflective research methods, in this case stories and descriptive ‘images of inner strengths’, revealed unprocessed data that ‘offer[ed] in-depth understanding of experience of social systems that might not surface otherwise’ (Broussine, 2008, p. 4). The analysis added to the existing body of knowledge by contributing a different lens for looking at gender bias and embedded gender images. It did so by including ‘possibilities of accessing tacit, unstated, unacknowledged and unconscious material’ (Broussine, 2008, p. 4). The next section will outline how the core categories and emerging

key themes supported a draft of the different stories and 'images of inner strengths' of female and male managers interviewed for this particular PhD research project. Their voices present their personal journeys to top positions and their challenging experiences along the way. Each story and 'image of inner strength' should be considered a subjective and interpretative snapshot of a specific person's biographical narrative. The findings do not claim to be representative of all managers in the German automotive industry, but simply of the participants. The images represent my vision of their inner strengths, and the associations I made with each interviewee's biography.

To explain how I arrived at the codes, categories, concept, and final contribution to this PhD research project (Saldana, 2009), I will outline the sense-making process, focusing especially on Ulrike's story. After finishing Ulrike's transcript (Appendix 7 'Fighting against the odds'*)* and the summary-data table (Appendix 3), I reread the transcript to grasp key insights. This process could take up to 15–20 hours for one story, depending on the length of the individual interview. When I finished the story, I reflected on the core characteristics of the person I had written about. During the analysis, it became obvious that most of the female and male participants shared a similar 'rebellious spirit'. I therefore asked: What is similar in the personal accounts and what exactly are the differences between female and the male managers? Have the circumstances of their upbringing and professional career paths been similar or different? What are their core strengths? Sometimes the 'images of inner strengths' occurred within minutes and sometimes I had to let a story rest for a few hours or a day before coming up with an image I felt satisfied with. The analysis of 'images of inner strengths' developed into a second Findings chapter. The participants had left their parents' homes early. Some went abroad, while others gave up close proximity to their parents; some clearly rejected their parents' domination. 'Creative forms of research invite active engagement,

where those who engage in the process become co-creators of meaning in a way that blurs distinction between researcher and participant, writer and reader, method and analysis' (Grisoni, 2008, p. 125). After reflecting on the core elements of Ulrike's story, I had a female warrior in mind, fighting her way through darkness into the light. The main reason for working with stories and 'images of inner strengths' was to understand the continued relative absence of female managers in top positions within the context of the current German legally binding gender-quota debate.

At this stage, I decided to work with a young artist who was willing to collaborate closely. My descriptions of the 'images of inner strengths' guided the young artist's drawings. The heroic images used to express courage and victory, as well as the fights and threats they faced, may have been triggered by my interest in female heroines. Dozens of sketches were made and many hours were spent discussing and drawing, revisiting the results, and finally forwarding them, with an explanation, to the participants. In the end, each drawing mirrored key aspects of the interviewee's story, close to the original, but not precisely depicted. The intent was to make the story visible, using colours for better sense-making. The artist worked quickly and delivered two drawings, which I forwarded to the participants. These were well received. To date, however, I have not received all of the drawings in their final forms. Shortly before I submitted this PhD research project, the artist's father asked me to sign a contract awarding copyright to the artist. This was an issue that I should have considered earlier, informing myself about copyright issues. At the beginning of February 2019, I decided that it was too late to include the drawings in this process. Doing so would have meant forwarding the drawings to six more participants and asking whether they identified with the drawings and would give me written permission to use them. In the end, I decided to describe my 'images of inner strengths' instead.

During this time, I also wondered whether I should have approached the data analysis differently, e.g. using applied grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1994) because the distinction between codes and categories might have been more distinct had I used the set of procedures set out in grounded theory. I had deliberately chosen a structured, free-flowing approach, informed by Seldana (2009), to capture emerging categories and themes that did not adhere to the level of detail required by grounded theory. In all the steps mentioned above, I concentrated on the research aim: inquiring, within the context of the current German legally binding gender-quota debate, about the continued relative absence of female managers in top positions in the German automotive industry. The interview transcripts, the data-summary table, stories, and 'images of inner strengths', taken together, focused on a range of different aspects of the research questions. For example, the female participants used words such as 'war arena', 'war', 'bullying', 'opponents', 'resistance', 'battlefield', 'sex object' and other warrior-like and sexism-derived expressions. Again, the reoccurring words formed an additional visual image, a metaphor ('warrior' or 'Phoenix rising from the ashes'), for the women, who told their biographical narratives differently, while I held their inner strengths in my mind (Bailey and Di McAtee, 2003). These metaphors will be further explained in the Findings sections.

The research questions that guided this PhD research project were as follows:

a. What is the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas, as explored through the concept of embedded gender images?
b. What catalysts and barriers affect female managers?

Research question a) was informed by the perceived experiences shared by the female managers; research question b) was informed by the interviews, stories, and 'images of inner strengths' described above.

4.6. A reflective approach within the evaluation criteria (akin to objectivity)

In hindsight, I understood that my experience of an overlap between researcher and business coach (Haynes, 2014; Marshall, 1999) was also part of my research journey (Grunenberg, 2001). Living and inquiring in two worlds and accepting that I was both business coach and researcher, I found that the two roles influenced each other (Grunenberg, 2001). The overlap provided many opportunities to reflect on the process and position my approach (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008). The visual image at a women's retreat in autumn of 2013 (Appendix 6) was undertaken as a personal sense-making process.

4.7 Ethical considerations

This PhD research project successfully passed Ethics Committee requirements. There were no foreseeable physical risks associated with participation in this study. On a psychological level, the research and interviews could have triggered thoughts, feelings, or reflections that caused distress or discomfort. As the interviewer, I was available to assist participants in processing any thoughts or feelings that arose during the research and interviews. I had studied psychodynamics as part of my professional training as a business coach. This proved important, when, during one of the interviews, I had to stop the process completely because the participant's biographical narrative was triggering too many reflections about my own biographical narrative. Like Ulrike, a female participant, I had experienced threatening moments in life which I was reminded of, when listening to her description of being stalked. I

realised that it was important to allow for not-recorded discussion time after the interviews to address any issues that arose.

As this PhD research project is a gender study, it examines 'doing gender' and related power issues. Following Marshall's outline, I considered it ethically vital to involve the participants at every stage of the evaluation. I was sure that the research process was transparent and protected their individual rights. In two cases, I made crucial changes to protect the participants' anonymity following their responses. In this, I followed DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006, p. 317), drawing on a research interview in which the interviewer (both a nurse and an investigator) discussed whether an investigator could truly stay objective. The authors considered it vital for the researcher to adopt a reflective approach. For this reason, I have added a reflection section to discuss my various roles (working mother and researcher) during this PhD research project in Chapter 7.2.

4.8 Evaluation framework

The definitions of terms vary, in accordance with the paradigm of the person defining them. The section below defines how commonly accepted words, such as validity and reliability, are considered in this qualitative doctoral study.

4.8.1 Truth, reliability, and validity

In the scientific approach, 'reliability' means that, when a study is repeated, the results will be the same, independent of the researcher. From a qualitative researcher's point of view, however, 'reliability' must be conceptualised as dependability, meaning that a researcher's interpretation is thorough and rigorous (Carcary, 2009; Creswell, 2009; Mason, 2002). Another researcher would be unlikely to receive the same responses, even if the biographical narratives were generally the same. In fact, the participants might have developed an

increased sensitivity since the original interviews, resulting in a slightly different focus (Carcary, 2009). In addition, the presence of another researcher could trigger different responses from an interviewee, due to varying perceptions.

'Validity' refers to the process of making sense of the data. The reader should be able to follow the researcher's line of reasoning and understand the conclusions and the knowledge emerging from the research process. Validity emphasises transparency in how the data was generated, analysed, interpreted, thus drawing on participants' statements and on direct gender quotations (Fereday, 2006; Patton, 2002). To align to the criteria, I choose a reflective approach and was transparent and honest about my own biases, emotions, and anxieties during this PhD research project. In the Findings and Discussion sections, I have used direct quotations to present the emerging knowledge. In presenting the accompanying explanations and 'images of inner strengths', I have attempted to be transparent about my sense-making. Forwarding my conclusions to the participants was an additional way of being transparent about my sense-making (Patton, 1999). For this reason, the findings cannot be judged as true or false in this interpretative and subjective PhD research project. However, the participants' feedback and the process of meeting qualitative criteria have added to its transparency and credibility (Northcote, 2012; Bryman, 2008; Fereday, 2006).

4.8.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

The interviews have been fully transcribed and anonymised. Any direct identifier, such as the person or company's name or address, was removed and replaced with a pseudonym. Other personal information was aggregated or made less precise. Special attention was paid to indirect identifiers that were essential references in the study. These included data related to geographical space and specific business sectors. Removing such references prevented disclosure but incurred some loss of valuable information that could be used to generalise and

compare career development across different European countries. For this reason, I kept these references intact in the original transcript but replaced them in the case description with larger, non-disclosing terms and meaningful alternative variables. This approach prevented identification, but preserved essential information, such as cultural characteristics linked to career development or specific sectors of industry. The participants were given the transcripts to ensure that they maintained the preferred level of anonymity and made no unintended references to anything that could affect or offend others. The participants provided written comments on sections that they felt could identify them. As a researcher, I considered myself the steward of the participants' trust, a role that required transparency and honesty. I fulfilled this role by staying in contact with all of the participants. All received their transcriptions and stories and were given the opportunity to suggest changes, all of which were included. Most changes were made to preserve their own anonymity or that of their colleagues and organisations. Some participants contributed further details to aid in understanding. In summary, the original audio file, as well as the anonymised transcription, tabulation, and story were stored on an external storage device. Confidentiality was preserved during Internet communications in the following way. Email transmissions are not entirely private, as they can be viewed by unauthorised third parties (for example computer hackers). For this reason, the confidentiality of information transmitted electronically could not be fully guaranteed. The participants were able to discuss their concerns about electronic communications during our interview sessions. One male participant wanted me to forward his story to his business account, which I declined. I explained that I wanted to observe the full anonymity process, as far as was possible. As anonymity could not be guaranteed, I offered to print it out and sent it to his private address.

4.9 Limitations

It is in the nature of doctoral studies that limitations occur (Fereday, 2006) and my dissertation is no exception. I carried out the analysis as a single researcher, discussed it with my supervisors, and received their comments in progression reviews. Learning about limitations was part of an iterative learning process as a researcher.

4.9.1 Limitations of the research design

In regard to limitations of the research design, Carcary (2009, p. 13) comments on four levels of interpretation for qualitative research. The first level involves interaction with empirical material; the second involves underlying meanings; the third requires critical interpretation; and the fourth reflects on text production and the use of language. 'Interpretation suggests that there are no clear rules and that the researcher's judgment, intuition and ability to highlight issues play an important part in the process.' One limitation, which needs to be considered in relation to research design, is the fact that I did not explicitly plan to work with a summary-data table or 'images of inner strengths'. The images emerged and strengthened my approach, helping me make meaning of the participants' perceptions and experiences in relation to power, leadership, and gender. These specific data emerged from a broad generalisation of the research questions, which brought forth a rich and complex set of data. While the summary-data table was designed to make sense of data from the interview transcripts, the visual images emerged as part of the analysis process (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001). I did not put every transcription through the same process because data saturation was achieved after eight stories.

The present study would have benefitted from multiple interviews with each participant to further probe specific areas. Ideally, I could have returned to themes that emerged from the

data. Despite this limitation, however, the 16 fully transcribed interviews and the data analysis provided a strong argument for embedded gender images and other themes.

Another limitation involves the number of participants in this PhD research project. However, the 16 participants represented key German automotive-industry firms; 90% of the participants worked at current or former family businesses; and 10% worked at non-family businesses, thus mirroring the high percentage of family businesses in Germany. I recognise that the snowball effect, which occurred when I was interviewing one key player from a German global company, was unintended. Despite not being planned, the five additional interviews added to the themes and analysis of the key issues under investigation. In relation to the biographical narratives, the first and second interviewees spent much more time than expected responding to the biographical narrative question. After two hours spent recording their narratives, our scheduled time was up and we had to stop. Following the two initial interviews, I wondered whether to expand every interview session to 3–4 hours per person. However, the third and fourth interviews did not require a change to the interview protocol, so I continued as planned.

4.9.2 Limitations of the analytical method and methodology

This PhD research project might have benefitted from member checks, external coders, or third-party analyses by the participants themselves. The aim of the biographical narrative was to give the participants enough space to value their own experiences and knowledge, without experiencing any time pressure. The semi-structured interviews were intended to address certain points of view and aspects of leadership, power, and gender diversity. I am well aware that there were additional issues. First, analytical and personal interpretations of text are interconnected, as outlined in Seale and Silverman (1997). The analysis thus incorporated my own subjectivity as female researcher and my reputation (via my webpage) as a successful

business coach working with CEOs and supervisory-board members. Going back and forth between the audiotaped interviews and interview transcripts was both a process of exploring and capturing the contextual depth of the empirical material and a source of 'interpretative possibilities' and 'wishful idealisation' (Alvesson and Yannis, 2016, p. 472). I tried to avoid the latter by confirming the interview transcripts and coherent stories with the participants. However, the participants were not involved in the interpretative analysis, which might have enhanced sense-making and added new insights. As for methodological limitations, the findings may have been influenced by my own personal interest in barriers to women. This is evident in my focus on the perceptions and perspectives of female managers, as well as male managers. In the interviews, I emphasised the barriers that women encountered on their career paths, as this PhD research project focused on the lack of women in top positions.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION – Barriers and Catalysts

The next two chapters present two Findings and Discussion sections, based on the sixteen themes outlined in the data-analysis and coding section of the methodology chapter, to address the research aims and questions. The first Findings section is divided into two dimensions: barriers and catalysts. It provides a framework that encourages new discussions about the relationship between tokenism and legally binding gender quotas. Direct quotations from the participant transcripts are presented to make sense of the identified themes and to facilitate the interpretation of the empirical research findings. The second section explores ways of addressing and counteracting these barriers. The discussion reviews the existing literature, as well as concepts and methods that can be used to understand the continued relative absence of female managers in top positions, within the context of the current German legally binding gender-quota debate. This chapter also features an integrated discussion of the implications of the empirical research findings and the contribution they make to the theory, policy, and practice of gender diversity, gender-quota discussions, and, in part, the reflective research process. This approach has helped to reveal the importance of the concept of embedded gender images, used in this PhD research project as an umbrella term for a wide range of concepts and metaphors, covering bias, stereotypes, second-generation gender bias (Fine *et al.*, 2020; Heilman and Caleo, 2018; Swartz, 2016; Ely *et al.*, 2011; Ely and Meyerson, 2010, 2000), and power dynamics (Huse and Solberg, 2006; Sun Tsu, 500 BC/2008; Fletcher, 2004), which are rooted in culture, society, and history.

5.1 Emerging themes, based on the participants' work environments

The methodology chapter identifies sixteen themes, outlined in the data analysis and coding sections. These themes were subordinated to two emerging main themes: barriers/hindrances

and catalysts, which most closely matched the research aim of exploring the continued relative absence of female managers in top positions. The following sections support the research aim and questions by integrating direct quotations from the participants to guide and sustain this analysis. Again, the theoretical framework, based on women-in-management theory and diversity studies, which examine stereotypes and bias, has guided the literature review, making sense of the findings. The barriers to women on their career paths are manifold, as this thesis has established. The Findings sections should be viewed through a gendered lens, as highlighted by Kaufmann-Buhler (2018), Bass (2015), Ely and Meyerson (2010) and Kanter (1977); cultural and historical assumptions are outlined in the literature reviews of Hummelsheim and Hirschle (2010), Ostner (2010), Cooke (2006), and Rosenfeld *et al.* (2004). The term 'work environment' was used to explore whatever the participants perceived to be catalysts and barriers on their career paths toward top positions. The themes, based on the stories and 'images of inner strengths', were part of the data analysis and reflected the research questions. The themes concentrated on catalysts and factors perceived as barriers to women. However, the 'images of inner strengths', as part of the concept of embedded gender images, helped to discern unconscious or implicit bias, stereotypes, and gender discrimination, in accordance with Heilman and Caleo (2018), Heilmann (2012), Tetlock (2019) and Rudman *et al.*, (2018). Throughout the Findings sections, I have strived to retain the authenticity of the participants' biographical narratives, which I was entrusted with as researcher. As the methodology chapter outlines, I selected certain text extracts from the interviews and omitted others. My reasons for assembling and retelling certain aspects of the interviews were closely correlated with the research questions and my process of making sense of participant responses. I do not claim to present evidence that is written in stone. In sentences such as, 'The divergent opinions by gender of the perceived nature and meaning of mentoring seem to correlate with the varying support they received from mentors of both

gender' I am not stating facts. Instead, I am attempting to convey my own interpretation of differences in the participant results to the reader. The process of making sense of the findings was rooted in my ontological stance and interpretative paradigm. The following paragraphs are meant to illustrate the interviewees' perceptions, experiences, and responses to supporters and barriers in their work environments, their applied strategies, and their views on legally binding gender quotas.

5.2 Barriers that affect women pursuing careers toward top positions

The next section discusses barriers and hindrances, cultural, societal (gender) aspects, and power and leadership aspects of the sixteen main themes outlined in the methodology chapter. The findings section on barriers to female managers on career paths toward top positions illustrates the far-reaching influence of embedded gender images within the historical and cultural background of the male-dominated German automotive industry. According to Hummelsheim and Hirschle (2010), this can be considered a cultural imprint, as we are all unconsciously shaped by our culture and socialisation. The direct quotations in the following sections show how metaphors (the male-breadwinner system, the glass cliff, the glass ceiling, and the glass slipper, as outlined in Chapter 3) disadvantage female managers. This is one reason why the female managers strongly supported a gender quota, while the male managers did not, arguing that society should change first. However, a society is formed by its historical and cultural imprint, as Hummelsheim and Hirschle (2010) have pointed out. The obstacles faced by female managers in a male-dominated industry were manifold, encompassing a wide array of embedded gender images, ranging from not being acknowledged as an equally valuable contributor to not having access to information or being excluded from an influential network.

The female participants mentioned that they were denied information that was shared between men in an 'informal, male information network'. Such larger networks are considered an advantage for men, as Ibarra (2015) has emphasised. The female managers discussed being the only women in male-dominated areas; in this PhD research project, such views are seen as embedded gender images, which have persisted from women's entry into the business world until the present day. In the same vein, the women found it difficult to access male networks. As Perrition (2006) points out, women should consider sponsorship to achieve career advancement. However, it is difficult for female managers to benefit from sponsorship when they and their mentors are unaware of deeply ingrained and embedded gender images, constituting a historical and cultural dimension, that influence their work environment. To put this into perspective, the German automotive industry has existed for almost 150 years, as Stephanie noted, and its male leadership is firmly established. Stephanie's argument that mandatory gender quotas are needed to change male leadership seems logical, given the far-reaching impact of the embedded gender images she experienced and perceived within the German automotive industry. As Kanter (1977) pointed out more than 40 years ago, numbers matter: the 'power of sheer numbers' (p. 45) makes a difference for women and their rights. Dominants specify the cultural framework and set the agenda. Marshall (1984) highlights existing barriers to female managers by sharing their personal business stories, some of which are almost identical to Ulrike's story 30 years later. Vinnicombe, in *Locks and Keys to the Boardroom'* (2011) looks back at her 2003 paper, hoping that, eight years later, the Davies report (2011) would have changed the situation for women on boards. However, in 2015, Durbin found that the Davies report had not triggered real change for female managers in the UK, making it impossible to argue against mandatory gender quotas. Although the ten female managers in this PhD research project delivered excellent results, they experienced some backlash and a strong headwind.

5.2.1 Organisational, societal, and historical embedded gender images

Aspects of decision-making power and embedded gender images, rooted in male management boards, are closely intertwined in this PhD research project (Graham, 2017; Holst and Wiemer, 2010). The all-male management of Stefan's patriarchal company refused to construct a kindergarten on the premises. In their decision, the management said that 2000 employees were not enough to justify such a project. This highlights the impact of male managers in decision-making positions and the negative consequences for female managers. It would be interesting to know how female managers in Stefan's company would have voted. However, the question was never up for debate, highlighting the far-reaching impact of embedded gender images in the German automotive industry. As previously discussed, embedded gender images are viewed as an umbrella term, which takes into consideration the outcome of bias, stereotypes, and under-representation, which affect female managers within a historical, societal, and cultural context. For this reason, the refusal to create better framework conditions for female managers was a decision made by male managers. Had more female managers been involved in top decision-making, there might have been a different result (Burnet, 2011).

Stefan favoured better framework conditions, such as kindergartens close to companies to make it easier for working parents. He was aware that many more years would pass before society and management boards accepted that change was required, as his company's refusal to support working parents confirmed. The responses of Stefan and Johannes, as well as Stephanie, Jennifer, and Sabine, reveal the significance of embedded gender images by reflecting the strong historical, cultural, and societal roots of deeply ingrained perceptions within German society.

> Stefan: The classical perspective towards the division of roles and tasks are taken on by many in the society. This particular image is strongly embedded in our society.
>
> Johannes: We have prejudices. This is a woman; this is a man and therefore, associated with something. I think the Germans are quite different than other peoples.

In alignment with Stefan and Johannes, Stephanie, Jennifer, and Sabine believed that organisational change had been historically engrained for many years and that change would therefore be slow (Ely and Meyerson, 2010).

> Stephanie: The automotive industry has a history of 100 years or rather 150 years and is marked by men which will not be changed overnight. Management cultures have been established and hierarchical thinking.
>
> Jennifer: They always feel that they have to justify themselves more if they argue harder on a woman. Well, they would fight more if only men were sitting at the table. If their counterpart is from another business which is part of the project team and there is a woman, I think they are not that stubborn or hard. You can tell that it is strenuous for them, this 'I have to be nice now'.
>
> Sabine: I don't think that they think I'm less intelligent than others, but that I'm less interested. So, stereotyped interests are assigned, like, oh, if the engine sounds great, you cannot judge that anyway, look at the seats, if the leather is chic. That's not something that's really deliberately addressed, but I believe it just happens subconsciously. They don't even think about it, but they think in stereotypes which makes it easier for them.

Due to the slow pace of change and established historical biases, stereotypes, and associated roles (Hummelsheim and Hirschle, 2010) in the German automotive industry, Stephanie strongly favoured a legally binding gender quota to achieve gender diversity.

> Stephanie: At the beginning, it requires a coercive mechanism to initiate change. This is what I have learned from change processes which I have accompanied so far in my life. There has to be one person who states that change is required, that it will be done and will remain that way.

To Tom, gender diversity was a concept to strive for, which could not be achieved through gender quotas because there were not enough qualified women available to work in the German automotive industry. As previously mentioned, both the labour market and the state

contribute, through specific family policies, to models such as the male-breadwinner (full-time employment) and female-carer (running the household and being responsible for raising children) models, which negatively affect women (Hummelsheim and Hirschle, 2010; Cooke, 2006).

> Tom: There are not many women coming from a university with a technical background. 90% of supervisory board members have a strong technical background.

Tom stated several times in his interview that he wanted women in top positions. His opinion correlated with comments from Stefan, who believed there were not enough female managers who could meet the required criteria.

> Stefan: I have not met a woman who would fit into the supervisory board. Perhaps I don't know her. She would have to stem from the automotive industry and already have been in a management position.

When I consider Stefan's quotation, I wonder which embedded gender images influenced his statement about not having 'met a woman who would fit into the supervisory board' If the lack of visibility of female managers is an issue in male top management boards (Grosvold *et al.*, 2015) as Stefan's statement suggests, then Ulrike's statement, aligned with research on recruiting processes (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013), seems to provide an explanation. Again, the glass slipper reveals systemic catalysts and barriers, rooted in the alignment between occupations and social identities and related to power and difference (Ashcraft, 2013).

> Ulrike: What I have witnessed is that very often men recruit rather other men than women because they know what to expect.
>
> Sabine: I think that in the first step a lot of fear resonates with the gentlemen. What happens when she gets pregnant in three years? Well, I think, there are so many fears anchored in their heads through a stupid experience and non-reflection and stereotypes and role models that are anchored in their head. I think that's of high importance. And it means you are trapped in a certain role image.

Thus, the concept of (potential) motherhood (Miller, 2014; Bernard and Corell, 2010) was another embedded gender image that created a barrier that these women had to deal with.

5.2.2 Being the only woman and the correlation with embedded gender images

Susanne was the only woman in her department; in meetings with 30 participants, she was the only female manager in a leading position. It took her a while to gain the trust of her all-male team.

> Susanne: Of course, I first had to gain acceptance so that the colleagues, who are all men, have confidence in me, that if I say something, that it makes sense and if I offer support, that's what I mean.
> So, to be heard, you really have to get your voice heard. It is a very different communication when you are the first woman into a pile of men. That's a rarity. There aren't many women here.

Katharina mentioned several times in her interview that being the only woman in an all-male management board made it challenging for her to stay equally informed. As outlined in Chapter 3, the glass ceiling describes an invisible glass barrier that prevents high-achieving women from reaching the top in their careers (Baumgartner and Schneider (2010). The lack of information and exclusion from male networks are aspects of the glass ceiling.

> Katharina: One of the barriers for me was that I was the only woman in the management team. I had the impression that the men would do a kind of 'buddy business' amongst themselves. I was considered as exotic. I had to fight in the beginning to have access in general and to discussions. They talk to each other as if they were drinking a beer or as if it were another situation without a woman being present. You have to jump into discussions and make them listen to you. They would invite each other for barbequing or to a football game and I was not asked to participate.

The research participant used martial and demanding language like 'I had to fight' and 'jump into … and make them listen to you' to emphasise how challenging it was for her to be accepted as a female manager. She felt excluded from 'buddy business', which made her

aware of not having access to vital information. Instead, she had to strategise ways of accessing information. It took some time before her male colleagues realised that she knew what she was talking about.

> Katharina: I had the impression that I had to prove myself. I had to do more to stand out of the male crowd. Perhaps men really think that women can't do certain things. As soon as it comes to the tough topics, to push a project through and to present numbers to the supervisory board they will look at you with wide eyes. They look at you and wonder that a woman knows the numbers and understands her business. They don't take you seriously at the beginning. I had a few incidents like these.

The need to prove her worth was an issue for Katharina and others. In broad terms, the female managers were met with incredulous amazement at their qualifications and personal assets. Katharina's and Ulrike's accounts reveal embedded gender images, in the form of role incongruity or 'lack of fit' (Heilman and Caleo, 2018).

> Ulrike: My male colleagues would be wondering why I was so dedicated to my job since my position in life would be another one. When those people realised that I was not only good at my job, but also cooked well and liked it, it didn't fit into their worldview at all.

Furthermore, Ulrike experienced specific examples of embedded gender images as part of doing gender. This seemed to reflect an integral part of the history of her former company.

> Ulrike: Gender was an issue in 1995 in one of the companies I worked in and I was surprised to find that 20 years later it still was. I was shocked. It is the way men behave and how they talk and who shakes hand with whom. I, except for a female assistant, was the only female manager in the room. They had a hard time to acknowledge the presence of a woman in their discussions: '... gentlemen – oh and lady of course'.

Stefan considered himself a manager who actively promoted women wherever possible. However, he mentioned that women and men were not perceived as equal in his company.

> Stefan: I think that a woman in this company if she wants to prevail has to be better than her male colleagues and still demonstrate leadership qualities.

Interestingly, Stefan's statement confirms that embedded gender images are experienced as part of doing gender. Stefan's comment that female and male managers in his company are assessed differently confirms the existence of embedded gender images. Being better is not the only criterion that a female manager has to fulfil – she must also demonstrate leadership qualities, which must meet the expectations of a patriarchal, male-dominated company. Stefan works for a company that has had no female managers in its first, second, or third levels of management since its foundation. Bias and stereotype research, outlined in detail in the Literature Review chapter, suggests that no one should be surprised that, after seven years of this PhD research project, there are still no female managers in top positions within this company.

Susanne believed that women had to do more than simply prove their worth. She believed that women represented a psychological and cultural threat to men. Women were therefore cut off from career development in her company to prevent them from acquiring too much influence in decision-making positions.

> Susanne: From my personal experience, men are just afraid of it, ok, a woman could be better than me and she saws on my chair and that's why it's the very reason why they say, well, I'll leave them act as a workhorse and they might reach a certain level and no further. Because then, the further you get into the upper management, the more influence you have, the more possibilities, things, processes to make. They are struggling with this process of change. In the automotive industry, because the past has actually shown us, with the strategy of how we drove, this company has been delivering successes for years. And it was men who were at the top, they were men in all these companies. They have just been confirmed with their way of doing it and see no need to change anything. And now comes the topic of women's quota and the like and that's just why there is the fight now.

The need for a female manager to be better than her male colleagues is confirmed by Stefan's account and experiences of female managers in this PhD research project. According to Susanne, however, the problem goes beyond women needing to perform better than men. Deeply ingrained embedded gender images in the German automotive company contribute to the barriers that women face when they aim for top positions.

5.2.3 Female managers as hypothetical working mothers and embedded gender images

One of the underpinning research questions addressed the issue of how participants referred to the concept of embedded gender images in their interviews. One example involved several distinct accounts of women being associated with motherhood (Struffolino *et al.,* 2016), ranging from becoming a mother to being a working mother or not wanting to be a mother. For Jasmin, embedded gender images made people unwilling to accept her choice to be a woman, but not a mother.

> Jasmin: My social environment would not understand and accept the fact that I didn't want to have children. When I changed my arguments and said that it had just not worked out for my husband and me, the discussions and inquiries had stopped. I learned that people wouldn't respect my decision.

Like Ulrike, Jasmin had to listen to many comments from East and West citizens about her decision to stay childless. Both women failed to meet social and cultural expectations (Ostner, 2010). To further understand the role and impact of embedded gender images, Ulrike's mother's perception of her own daughter's path through life is illustrative. In her interview, Ulrike shared that she was raised with the expectation that her role was to marry and have children (Rosenfeld *et al.,* 2004). In accordance with her mother's worldview and encouraged by West Germany's male-breadwinner-model (Ostner, 2010), the needs of a husband were

more important than those of a wife. Ulrike, despite being happy with her successful career and life without children, consciously decided not to challenge her mother's worldview, so that her 85-year-old mother would not question her own life. Both Jasmin and Stephanie came from East Germany, a society that encouraged women and working mothers to pursue careers (Ostner, 2010). Stephanie considered it normal that both her parents worked full-time in East Germany. Furthermore, Stephanie's husband's mother held a leading position. Her experience in West Germany shows how embedded gender images can become part of the language, mindset, and unknowingly accepted norms of society.

Martina was told indirectly that some of her colleagues thought she was a 'Rabenmutter' or 'raven mother' a German expression meaning 'uncaring mother'.

> Stephanie: In my circle of friends, a man from the region we live and who didn't know that I worked, spoke not only not diplomatic, but also rather nasty about a woman who worked and gave her child to childcare. He called her a raven mother. I had to react quickly about how to cope with the situation because there wasn't much time to think about it. I decided to tell him that I too was what he called raven mother and that I better left because I didn't think I had to put up with it. The man was shocked. I met the man 1,5 years later and he apologised. He was [now] a colleague from my wider circle of colleagues and he admitted that his mindset has been influenced by his up-bringing. His own mother had always been at home and cooked for him. It had become his ideal image of a mother.
>
> Martina: Actually from the same age colleagues, who said that their wife must stay at home and that one does not bring children into the world and then give them to someone else. It has been communicated indirectly.

The 'raven mother' who neglects her children is an image used in Germany to criticise working mothers. Sabine, who was raised in East Germany, went to work for a male-dominated company in West Germany. She was confronted with stereotypes about working mothers and their neglected children by a male manager:

> Sabine: I came here and heard from a leader that children who were in kindergarten were stupid and aggressive. And thought to me: o.k. Thank you very much.

Sven, born and raised in East Germany, moved to West Germany as a young man after the fall of the Wall. He compared expectations for working mothers in East and West Germany. His account conveys the culturally ingrained embedded image of a man accustomed to the East German system.

> Sven: So, the freedom to do that at all and also the possibility that you could bring your child to kindergarten and children's groups were nationwide in the GDR. You can argue about how good they were, I'll leave that open, but in any case, the offer was everywhere and no woman was looked at weirdly when she went to work. If a woman was at home and did not work, it was more likely to be noticed negatively. What does this woman do during the day? So there was rather the expectation: to be there for the family, but at the same time contribute to the livelihood. Here [West Germany] I have the impression, not even nationwide but already a lot, here I have the impression that it is ideal when a man works, his wife is at home and takes care of their children.

Stephanie referred to Dr. von der Leyen, who was appointed in 2006 by Angela Merkel and criticised for being a 'raven mother'. This is one of several barriers identified in this PhD research project that only the female managers had to deal with. The evidence highlights aggravating circumstances for female managers competing against their male counterparts. The male participants expected female managers of child-bearing age (up to 45 years) to need maternity-leave replacements and to work part-time afterwards. Mark and Johannes stated this frankly:

> Mark: I believe that women if they have a certain age won't be offered a job because they are in a child-bearing age. It results from the thought that women are more likely to take care of the children than the man. If I had two applications from women at the age of 37 and 45 and both were equally qualified, I would go for the 45 years.
>
> Johannes: I think very well whom I hire and whom I teach something. It starts at the top and continues to the bottom. It is quite logical. I have two women here today, one of them of child-bearing age and the other at the end of that time. Of course, I already think about who I will be promoting. Who will stay with me? I can spend the money only once and promoting simply means money.

The notion that working mothers are the main carers for joint children is well captured in the literature review. The analysis and data make it quite clear that the time-consuming task of

bringing up and taking care of children is mainly associated with working mothers and not with working fathers. The care-taking concept is deeply rooted in West German society and models such as the male-breadwinner model (full-time employment) and the female-carer model (running the household and being responsible for raising children) (Ostner, 2010¸ Hummelsheim and Hirschle, 2010; Cooke, 2006). Although Stefan talked about parental leave as being more common and accepted within his company, traditional perceptions (Rosenfeld *et al.,* 2004) seem slow to change (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013; Fletcher, 2004). It is safe to argue that the embedded gender images experienced by female participants in the German automotive industry are closely intertwined with German culture, based on cultural models that favour men's career paths.

> Stefan: If she [a female manager] becomes pregnant, I have a challenging situation to find a replacement for the next six months. Some of my colleagues advised me to choose men instead.

Stefan thought that society must get used to male managers taking six months off for parental leave, but that society would need time to adapt. Society also needs time to accept female managers working part-time for short periods, as Stephanie's account confirms. Both genders mentioned that part-time working mothers who were managers in leading positions faced challenging family and job expectations (Pande and Ford, 2011). Juliane felt that her new situation as a working mother was challenging. Her boss assured her that she could leave the office to pick up her children from kindergarten. However, despite his supportive stance, she started to miss vital information and felt cut off.

> Juliane: Yes, that's all clear and that's all accepted, um, but it means that you miss these appointments and are cut off from information. The meetings take place at 5:30 pm or they have been set up at short notice. I consider it as real barriers.

Juliane considered participating in management seminars, which lasted two and a half days and were scheduled over the weekend, as a real change for herself and her family. She felt guilty about her kids, who would wake up at night and ask for her, even though she knew her husband would take good care of their twins. In Stephanie's case, her colleagues, mainly childless women and men, expected her to work as many hours as before. They did not take her current situation, as a part-time manager with small children and a poor traffic situation from work to kindergarten, into consideration. This issue is one that many women on boards also encounter (Singh and Vinnicombe, 2004). Stephanie recounted times when she thought she would never be able to regain her professional reputation, due to all the barriers. She did not have a home office and flexible hours did not exist at that time.

> Stephanie: It was not common practice in my company that someone left at 3 p.m. People started to look at me and make comments – not only from men, but from women without children. They asked me whether I had free time and when I denied and said that I have two little children, they would only say: I see. I experienced a lack of understanding in my professional environment and only partial acceptance by my superiors. I reject the notion that having children are synonymous with terms of being a career ender.

In Juliane's company, part-time work was established, but there was a gap between signed contracts and reality for the female managers because of their workload.

> Juliane: I also know colleagues who work as managers part-time, instead of 40 hours, 30 hours. In fact, they read emails at home and come up with 40 hours, only getting less money. They have the official allowance to go home punctually. Is this what women really supports? No, it is not.

Unlike Stephanie, Mark felt that it was impossible for a part-time manager to complete all of his or her demanding and manifold tasks. In Sven's company, managerial job-sharing was part of the company's process of adapting to employee job expectations. Stephanie thought

that job sharing was a working model that ought to be tried and applied further, as other departments in her company had already done.

> Stephanie: The management within the sales organisation argues that job sharing doesn't work. I think this particular statement is too general.

As a female manager, Stephanie believed that other options would work for her and other female managers, but little was being done to change the situation for women. She concluded that it was time for a change, so that children would no longer be considered a career-ender for female managers.

5.2.4 Examples of power, leadership experiences, and related embedded gender images

The data revealed both aligned and differing views among participants on barriers to women in the work environment. The analysis and data draw on current business positions and concepts, such as ‘power in relation to gender’ (Brescoll, 2011; Huse and Solberg, 2006) and ‘gendered leadership experiences’ (Collinson, 2011; Ford, 2006), which assume that the leader has a formal leadership role and legitimate power, as Vial *et al.* (2016) define it. According to Fletcher (2004), the concepts of ‘doing power’, ‘doing gender’, and ‘doing leadership’ are embedded in social interactions and social networks of influence and hierarchical positions. Sabine, who was 21 years old at the start of her career, with long blond hair and blue eyes, was the only woman in a male-dominated department. She experienced bias, sexist language, and stereotypes and reacted accordingly.

> Sabine: When I started, 21, I had hip-length blond hair. I dye it now dark and I have noticed that actually, with this transition from blond to dark, my natural hair colour is really blonde, another perception has taken place. Sexist linguistic usage is known here, yes, but, but I do not know how serious the boys are, whether the colleagues are actually serious. I have also experienced that we have high-ranking people who then bring such expressions as ‘come, here, now we open all the pants and see who has the

> longer one'. Just as a picture for the conflict. And I thought, what is that now? Where am I? I was the only woman and they said that because I'm from East Germany, I can cope with it.

These examples suggest that personal perceptions were pivotal to how the participants dealt with gendered power and leadership experiences (Collinson and Hearn, 1994). Berdahl (2007) attributes sexual harassment to the desire to have power over women; to dominate them. Sexual harassment in its various forms can be viewed as staking out one's territory or strengthening one's sex-based status. Male participants conveyed very little negative gendered power or leadership experiences. Power can be perceived as initiating change and neutral, as Melé and Rosana (2003) have pointed out. In the same vein, Lines (2007) refers to power in change-management processes as influencing others and initiating change. Mark, as the youngest member of the management board ever appointed by his company, associated leaders with vision; their role was to motivate their teams to share their vision, as Ely *et al.* (2011) describe. If we apply Melé and Rosana's (2003) concept of change and Lines change-agent focus (2007) to Mark's account of a good leader, it becomes clear that, to Mark, a powerful leader was someone who invited others to follow his vision and change a situation, in accordance with his ideas.

> Mark: A good leader has to have the competence to have a vision for the future for the organisation and which path to take. And good leaders take their people with them. A good leader is to me a person with good reflections skills. You are not born as leader, but you develop as leader.

In the above quotation, Mark's ideal image of a leader was based on his superior, who was white and older than himself. He considered his superior a good leadership role model (Ely *et al.*, 2011; Collinson, 2011). In fact, several male superiors in this PhD research project were identified as crucial supporters. One explanation may reflect the large number (Kant, 1977) of

men in organisations, who are able to serve as role models, as Bass (2015) emphasises. However, as the next quotations show, male superiors should not automatically be equated with support. Unlike Mark, Katharina encountered different kinds of leaders and was sceptical of the concept of power, including the power of budgets and resources, as Lines (2007) emphasises.

> Katharina: My first boss was someone you wouldn't want to work with. He was a narcissist and self-assured and did not treat the team well. I associate power on the first instance with something negative.

All of the female research participants described similar misuse-of-power incidents. By contrast, only one male manager mentioned an experience of coercive power involving a person with hierarchical power (Vial *et al.,* 2016) during his sports career. In broad terms, only the female managers working in a male-dominated areas within their work environments mentioned physical or mental power issues or 'power-over' (Melé and Rosanas, 2003) related to gender. Ulrike's account provides an example.

> Ulrike: Once I had an encounter in an elevator with an American manager who lives in Russia and is placed very high in the hierarchy. I have been only able to manage it at that moment. I have addressed the issue in the evening. We were sitting in the hotel and I told him that I would like to talk about the situation in the elevator. He knew immediately that he had come too close to me. I told him that he is physically stronger than I am and I was afraid of him. I told him that I don't like to be afraid of him. I see him as a person of respect and therefore wanted him to know that I was experiencing fear. I wanted to know whether this was what he wanted. Since then the manager is very polite and respects me. It will never happen again and I'm sure he pays attention now to his behaviour when being alone with a woman in an elevator.

Similar misuse of power experiences were mentioned in several female accounts. Some women had to deal with these issues more than once; two ultimately made the decision to opt out and become self-employed. Stephanie learned to be cautious about sharing her ideas with

others. Even though her boss acknowledged her contribution, other colleagues presented her suggestions as their own ideas.

> Stephanie: I have learned from reading power literature how to make sure that my ideas are associated with my person. I do not share my ideas beforehand anymore, but discuss it first with my boss and then share it with the other team leaders. This way I make sure that it stays my idea.

Research participants of both genders experienced many forms of power. Power can be exercised via groups, societal norms, and expectations, as well as cultural images (Kruse and Prettyman, 2008; Berdahl, 2007) to name just a few forms of power mentioned in the interviews. Power and leadership issues turned out to be a crucial element for all of the female participants. Unlike the men, the women experienced negative encounters with power in manifold ways, as Lyness and Thompson (2000) outline. One barrier that these women experienced was the misuse of power (Sturm, 2001) by men in decision-making positions. This took the form of physical threats (Ulrike and Jasmin), bullying and accusations (Jasmin), group pressure (Katharina), and career paths limited by the prescribed decisions of a dominant father (Stephanie). The following assumption is a speculative and subjective interpretation of Jasmin's story. Edwards *et al.* (2015) use the example of Batman and Joker, actors representing good versus evil, to present comprehensible motives for both; this dilemma is partly reflected in Jasmin's story. Batman and Joker both believe that they are contributing to society in their own ways. Managers responsible for a high status project welcomed Jasmin, as a young business person, into their business world. They were dominants, who specified the framework for working with them and ruled by the power of numbers (Kanter, 1977). They were perceived from the outside as the 'good ones' (Kruse and Prettyman, 2008) or 'the Batmen of the company', experienced heroes, with higher qualifications and professional ranking than Jasmin. Later, these 'Batmen' took over the role of evil Joker because they believed in their right to press charges against Jasmin's actions. As previously discussed, she

was told a colleague that her career was over because she had proven the 'dominants' wrong. Ultimately, she left her job to escape 'tokenism' and power pressure. Jasmin's story illustrates dramatically how far off we are from concepts such as gender equality, shared power, and the prospect of improving the current situation for female managers in top positions. Embedded gender images and barriers to women managers have manifested in German culture and in the German automotive industry for a long time. As the Literature chapter outlines, Germany is based on a patriarchal and conservative-corporatist welfare state (Rosenfeld *et al.,* 2004), with a strong male-breadwinner model. As the male managers' statements make clear, structural business and organisational barriers to women still exist in organisations, decades after World War II (Johns, 2013). Holst and Kirsch (2016; 2015) note that none of the 100 largest companies in Germany had a female CEO in 2015; this illustrates the strength of long-lasting patriarchal leadership in German culture.

Grint (2004) can help to explain why leaders believe they have the right to justify their actions as good and comprehensible. However, even an understandable fear of losing control and power does not make an action right, as the case of Jasmin makes clear. In alignment with Collinson (2012), who described the actions of some leaders as excessive positive thinking, based on their own positive perceptions of themselves, Jasmin's male managers apparently found ways to justify their actions among themselves. What seems to have happened in Jasmin's case is described in the narcissistic-leadership literature as the 'dark side of leadership' (De Vries, 2004). Pelletier (2010) recommends identifying toxic leaders, independent of gender, as a first step toward freeing oneself of them. Jasmin did this in her own way by opting out. This case supports the claim that embedded gender images are deeply ingrained, at a cultural level, in Germany and the German automotive industry. To treat power and gendered leadership as autonomous entities is simply to ignore the fact that they are

interconnected and must be considered as such. According to Kruse and Prettyman (2008, p. 454), ‘As such, individuals derive power from their positional authority and role, their personal influence and charisma and their willingness and ability to impose their will on others’. When Jasmin reported her superior’s transgressions to someone at the top of the hierarchy, she triggered a backlash that she did not foresee. One explanation could be that she underestimated the importance of an assignment given by a superior, who oversaw her boss as well as herself. Although this is highly speculative, her bosses’ reaction may have been triggered by their perceived loss of reputation, power, and control. Since Jasmin was the token, the ‘odd one out’, she lost the power game.

5.3 Conclusion: barriers related to embedded gender images

This study seeks to address an issue that has been partially researched in the gender and management literature, while adding new insights. Given the emphasis that Kanter (1977) places upon tokenism as a barrier to female career advancement, and comparing her claim with current statistics of women in top positions in the German automotive industry, it is unsurprising that the findings of this thesis confirm the impact of tokenism as a barrier. However, there is more to the issue than that. The female managers in the examples above demonstrate the far-reaching impact of embedded gender images, which are deeply ingrained in the culture of the German automotive industry and amplified by metaphors, including the male-breadwinner, glass ceiling, glass cliff, and glass slipper (Kirsch, 2018; Ashcraft, 2013; Ryan et. Al, 2013; Hummelsheim and Hirschle, 2010; Baumgartner and Schneider, 2010; Ryan and Haslam, 2007). They add to the research findings outlined throughout this PhD research project. Once more, the notion of embedded gender images serves as a proxy for what women experience in cultural or socio-political contexts, defined as a cultural imprint (Hummelsheim and Hirschle, 2010) or cultural norms (Kruse and Prettyman, 2008), and in

work environments as unconscious bias, stereotypes, or second-generation gender bias (Ibarra *et al.*, 2013; Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Gill *et al.*, 2008; Walby, 2005; (Fletcher, 2004; Marshall, 1984; Kanter 1977). For example, Jasmin felt pressured to protect herself by withholding the truth that she did not want children because people could not accept that. Traditional role expectations of women and men from East and West Germany manifest in culture, history, and society as examples of embedded gender images, which are valid for both German cultures. Ulrike's mother's image of an ideal woman was someone who was married and had children. In her view, a woman did not need professional qualifications because her first aim in life was to fulfil her role as a woman and mother. In Ulrike's story, her mother applied her concept of traditional leadership roles and cultural embedded gender images to her daughter's world. Interestingly, Ulrike did not want to shatter her mother's embedded gender images or destroy her personal worldview. This is an example of how ingrained and rooted embedded gender images can be in culture and society. Stephanie was called a 'Rabenmutter' (raven mother) because she worked and did not fulfil her male colleague's image of the ideal mother, staying at home and raising children. These societal and cultural role expectations are embedded gender images, which female managers have experienced in the German automotive industry as career barriers. The conceptual framework of second-generation bias, which encompasses assumptions about gender, workplace structures, and behaviour, defines them as indirect forms of cultural (Kaufmann-Buhler, 2018) and organisational gender bias, or ingrained embedded gender images in the cultural dimension. The myriad challenges that female managers encountered within the German automotive industry reflect the impact of German cultural models. West Germany has a very strong male-breadwinner-oriented institutional system, attributable to specific values, norms, and beliefs that are anchored in masculine cultural preferences (Hummelheim and Hirsch, 2010). As mentioned in the literature review, 91% of German businesses are family-based (Krenek, 2015). Most German

automotive family businesses are governed by patriarchal family structures and male-dominated management boards (Graham, 2017), in accordance with Kanter's tokenism theory (1977). In fact, three of the four companies that male participants worked for started off as family-owned companies, while the fourth was no longer family-owned. These companies had three levels of hierarchy without a single woman in a top leadership position.

Although the East German political system favoured professional qualifications for women (Ostner, 2010), embedded gender images were part of the cultural and societal background, as Jasmin's case demonstrates. Ostner (2010) points out that East and West Germany shared a common cultural past, but had different policies when it came to women's professional careers and independence. Stephanie experienced a lack of understanding from her peers and her superior. While the child-effect had negative consequences for her, it apparently had none for her husband. As Rosenfeld *et al.* (2004) have discussed, men benefit from the traditional division of roles. As a consequence, there is little desire to change a situation which is favourable to men, as Sven also pointed out in his interview.

5.4 Participant strategies for engaging with barriers; experiencing power aspects and embedded gender images as tokens

The women in this PhD research project were highly qualified managers who had developed various survival strategies within their work environments. The following paragraph concentrates on the strategies they used to cope with barriers related to the following themes outlined in the Methodology chapter: 2. barriers and hindrances, 3. mentoring, 5. embedded gender images, 6. cultural (and societal) gender stereotypes, 7. organisational (gender) stereotypes, 8. networking, and 9. power and leadership. Katharina remembered a time when it was challenging to be accepted as an equal partner by her male colleagues.

> Katharina: If you are the only woman in a circle of men it feels as if you do not even exist. Of course, I went with them to events, went to a bar and watched a football

> game. You have to do it step by step until they realise I'm interested in it as well and that I'm not disturbing them. But you really have to be at the same level with them and you have to be knowledgeable about the topic.

Katharina's strategy for countering the impact of perceived culturally embedded gender images within the German automotive industry was to prove that she was an equal. After Katharina achieved acceptance at a lower level, she moved on to the decision-makers. Her adopted strategy was to convince and engage with male CEOs, who began to fully support her ideas and projects. She drafted a concept to improve the company's reputation and rolled it out internationally. The employee feedback signified high levels of satisfaction with Katharina's action plan.

Jasmin identified weak points and critical loopholes in several projects; she documented these and forwarded them to high-ranking company decision-makers. Her strategy was successful, as she was given responsibility for the project, as well as a project team and budget.

> Jasmin: My strategy to inform my big boss about the poor state of the project saved the company's reputation. The project has been very successful and the product is no. 1 amongst the competition. I have again hit many, really many men against the shinbone in their positions. They bear a grudge against me to this day because I believe that it has done harm to their careers.

Apparently, Jasmin did not anticipate any backlash as a consequence of her actions, which undermined the hierarchy by going over the heads of her immediate bosses. These male managers may have perceived the actions of a token woman as a loss of power, control, and reputation, leading them to turn against her. In fact, Jasmin's joy over the success of her project was short-lived. She later learned that her male colleagues resented her approach and had taken action against her. In the context of this thesis, the stories of Jasmin and Katharina

both reveal the relevance of the glass cliff metaphor, which describes the tendency to promote women to powerful decision-making positions during critical situations, when there is a high chance of failure. Both Katharina and Jasmin ultimately decided not to waste vital energy on fruitless activities. As a consequence of a perceived lack of support from their superiors, Katharina and Jasmin opted out. In hindsight, Jasmin would have stayed longer had she known that her company would appoint its first female manager to the supervisory board shortly after she gave notice. However, this announcement was made a few months later. Now, Katharina has been self-employed as a HR consultant for several years and Jasmin is enjoying a sabbatical year in 2017–2018 before she decides what to do next. Unlike Katharina and Jasmin, Ulrike and Stephanie continue to work for the same companies. Juliane's strategy was based on communicating and behaving differently in meetings.

> Juliane: I think it's balancing when women are around. Well, there were already rounds where I was told how fortunate it is that I am here now. That it is now a little more orderly, a little more structured, more sorted and not just, yes, baboon behaviour.

Ulrike's successful strategy for career advancement was to identify the key decision-maker in each project or company and ensure that she was visible to him.

> Ulrike: I have learned to identify the grey eminence in the room. The 'silverback' (Gorilla) who is an influential decision-maker. I built a relationship, find out their points of view, make them interested in me and my projects and keep them informed about my development.

When it comes to power issues, as in the example of her encounter in the elevator, Ulrike prefers to address a threat head on. She refuses to back down in cases of perceived power misuse because of what she has learned from coaching process and her own life experiences. The coaching process has strengthened her to find ways of dealing with concepts such as

‘doing power and doing leadership’, which she has experienced in the German automotive industry. To me, her example shows that female managers can learn via coaching to confront embedded gender images directly.

These research findings reveal how these women engaged strategically with the challenges they experienced or perceived as disadvantageous in their working environments. Again, the concepts of power, leadership, and gender (Turner and Hawkins, 2016; Lines, 2007; Fletcher, 2004) are closely intertwined. The female managers applied them in various different ways. Like Ulrike, they found ways to hit back and create powerful alliances. Some withdrew from the organisation to set up their own businesses, as Katharina did, or took time off to reflect on the situation like Jasmin. Some female managers developed strategic and powerful networks that included influential key players, who promoted their business careers. Both Katharina and Ulrike adopted this approach. In fact, Katharina was protected as the only female manager in a top position by her influential mentor, as long as he remained in the company. Drawing on Kanter’s token theory (1977) and Fletcher’s (2004) concept of ‘doing gender’ and ‘doing power’, Katharina experienced a backlash from her male peers when her male mentor left the company. Without protection from another male mentor, she could not sustain her position. Both Jasmin and Katharina were undermined by their peers. Both cases must be viewed through the lens of embedded gender images, which are deeply rooted in German culture, and especially in male-dominated areas, such as the German automotive industry.

According to Marshall (1999), a US officer commented that, to succeed when facing a threat, individuals needed alliances to help them fight back. As Katharina was the only woman in a top leadership position, she decided to opt out – and some might believe she was pushed out. Although Jasmin and Katharina tried to succeed, they were both outnumbered. Once again, ‘the power of sheer numbers’ (Kanter, 1977) and the impact of culturally embedded gender

images within the German automotive industry came into play. Both women deployed the same strategy: leaving their companies to change the course of their business lives. Neither woman saw an alternative at the time, although Jasmin would have stayed if she had known that the company would soon appoint a female leader her age as a board member. Taking a different approach, Stephanie applied a strategy of regular reflection and feedback, ensuring that she was always aware of what she needed to change to stay aligned with her team (Gordon, 2007). According to Fletcher (2004, p. 647–648), 'effectiveness in knowledge-based environments' is more than the single heroic actions of a few key decision-making individuals. Collaborative leadership matters. Ulrike's strategy was to a) approach the threat by directly confronting it, and b) to make sure that she was generally noticed by influential multi-key stakeholders (Turner and Hawkins, 2016). Of the four women, Ulrike had the highest rank. The strength her approach is that a person who decides to fight back develops self-in-relation (Fletcher, 2004) and determination. An increased number of female managers in top positions, achieving parity, are likely to change the embedded gender images, rooted within German culture and the German automotive industry, in the long term.

5.5 Conclusion: applied strategies within participant work environments

The research findings illustrate various participant approaches, which can be attributed to meaningful alliances and changing power dynamics, e.g. by claiming resources and budget. The female managers focused on implementing innovative ideas successfully. They negotiated over issues that were vital for them, such as resources and budgets, and rescued projects in crisis, changing the context by demonstrating high commitment, passion, and endurance. They did this by applying a multi-stakeholder strategy, which involved key decision-makers, high determination, and threats addressed heads on. Whereas men are

considered more assertive, logical and able to think strategically (agentic traits), women are described as loyal, caring, and nurturing (communal traits) as Sümer (2006) highlights. The present research findings partly refute these stereotypes. The female managers displayed the agentic traits associated with male managers: they delivered top results, achieved top performance, and demonstrated endurance, perseverance, and courage. It could be argued, however, that some of these positive outcomes were only achieved with the help of protective mentors or superiors, or via support provided throughout their careers. The findings of this PhD thesis confirm that argument as well (Kram, 1983). Based on the American cultural context and public view of women, power, and leadership (see Ely *et al.* for the 'vicious circle', 2011), Kruse and Prettyman (2008, p. 462) use the musical 'Wicked' to illustrate the argument that 'the narrative of women as successful competent leaders has yet to become a primary narrative in American schools today.' This thesis draws a lesson from Ulrike's encounter in the elevator, which clearly shows, in an international context (a German female manager meeting an American manager in Russia) that fortitude and perseverance can change power dynamics by 'undoing gender' and undoing 'power' (Fletcher, 2004). Her approach can be seen as a strategy designed to change the working environment. Despite this, Ulrike made sure, throughout her career, that she was visible to influential stakeholders.

The fact that women remain underrepresented at senior levels (Ely *et al.*, 2011) and Kanter's token theory is still valid after 40 years supports the argument that legally binding quotas are needed to achieve gender diversity. Only a quota can sufficiently change the number of male managers in decision-making positions. Ely *et al.* (2011), drawing on their experience of more than 50 leadership-development programmes, propose training women to pursue careers toward top positions, taking into consideration second-generation bias and embedded gender images. Working with 360-feedback and similar tools, and reflecting on them with coaches,

might teach women to become more visible within their working environment, and then recognised and rewarded for achieving good results.

Until gender diversity is the norm and not the exception, some women may choose to opt out until they are no longer tokens (Kanter, 1977). In this way, they can escape the struggle with embedded gender images being called ‘exotic’, as Katharina described, when she was the only female manager in a male-dominated working environment.

5.6 Participants’ views on gender quotas changing the working environment

As previously discussed, this thesis is positioned within the current gender-quota debate. Having established the context and setting, the participants were asked for their thoughts on this issue. Tom and Mark opposed the gender quota for several reasons:

> Tom: I consider a gender quota as discrimination towards women. Women are not found equally in top positions and on the supervisory board because there are not enough women as base pedestal and the government does not attract enough female into technical degree courses.
>
> Mark: I don't think that a gender quota is good. I don't believe that a gender quota will trigger a power shift. By having a gender quota, I'm not quite sure whether we'll have the best person in the right position. But gender quota is gender quota and I'm forced to act on it.

For both men, the discussion about a legally binding gender quota was missing the point. In their opinion, there weren’t enough well-trained women available to fill such high ranking positions. Grosvold *et al.* (2015) confirm this viewpoint in part, arguing that women who are not part of a pool of credible female candidates will not receive promotions. However, the authors emphasise that women cannot enter this pool without fulfilling several criteria that are challenging for women, given the traditional division of roles and the embedded gender

images outlined in this thesis. Participants Tom and Mark believed that women chosen via a gender quota and not on merit would not be good matches for the company. However, according to Akpinar-Sposito (2013) some male companies recruit for new managers on the golf course, rather than at work or on merit. According to Bass (2015) merit is subjective and dependent on an individual's influential network relationships. In addition, the literature has firmly established that men have larger and more influential networks than women (Ibarra, 2015) and that women are perceived as a threat to male networks (Wipperman, 2010).

While Stefan did not think that a legally binding gender quota would benefit women, as the quotation below shows, Sven thought it might be needed to create a power shift. Burnet (2011) has confirmed the significance of legally binding gender quotas by pointing out the changes that took place in Rwanda, where women seized the baton from a patriarchal gender paradigm and contributed to women's career progression. We are likely to observe the same pattern in Ethiopia, which achieved parity in its cabinet because of one male leader in a decision-making position (Staude, 2018).

> Stefan: I'm really against a regulated gender quota-system because honestly, the person should be chosen based on performance and competence.
>
> Sven: If a gender quota's purpose is to put people independent of their gender into a position where they do not belong and only meant to fulfil a criteria then it is from my point of view an absolute absurdity. It would be better for women if more women were in a top leadership position which actually calls for a gender quota. It makes a difference because women know what they are talking about.

According to Sven, women would benefit from having more women in top positions because female leaders would know what to take into consideration and what really mattered to female managers and working mothers. It is pure speculation, but perhaps the decision to vote against the kindergarten would have gone a different way with an equal number of female managers

on the supervisory board; of course, this situation is highly unlikely, with three levels of male managers running the company. Contrary to the views held by male managers in the quotations above, the female participants focused on their more than twenty years of business experience and the slow pace of change, in relation to numbers of women in top positions. I ask myself (as I did not put it forward as a research question) why the men in this PhD research project did not wonder at the lack of women in top positions in the German automotive industry. Perhaps they do not perceive women, power, and leadership to be closely connected (Kruse and Prettyman, 2008). This could provide a perfect example of embedded gender images rooted in history, culture, and society in the German automotive industry, pointing toward further research.

In stark contrast to the men's gender-quota stance, the women argued that the lack of gender diversity in power positions called for a legally binding gender quota to trigger a power shift.

> Beate: A gender quota is absolutely required; otherwise no changes will take place. Men will not support gender diversity if they don't have to. They stick together. I know of companies where the male owner does not want women at the top; I believe men are afraid of intelligent and strong women. I know about a certain man who would never ever accept a woman in a top position. His wife is the only woman on the supervisory board.
>
> Katharina: On the one hand, I don't want to have a gender quota because it is always something negative. On the other hand, nothing will change as long as things stay the way they are.
>
> Martina: I believe that it will not work without a quota. Not at the start. Once things have changed and antiquated structures have been pierced through, a gender quota will not be necessary anymore.
>
> Susanne: If I am not forced as a company, I can indeed keep my power or my way of working and so on because no one forces me. Only when this compulsion comes from the outside and I have to change something then the whole thing comes to fruition.

They were aware of the possible backlash accompanying a gender quota (Ahrendts, 2012), but nevertheless argued in favour of it. As Jasmin said, 'Unfortunately, a gender quota is required

to achieve a power shift'. Ulrike commented: 'I am very critical towards a gender quota but it is necessary to bring about change' The male managers argued against the gender quota by saying that traditional women's and men's roles had to change first in society. However, Kanter proposed token theory (1977) more than 40 years ago and current statistics reveal that the number of women in top positions remains low (Holst and Wrohlich, 2018). One can speculate about when this societal change in the traditional division of roles will ever happen.

Stephanie believed that the societal image of West Germany had undergone a slow, but steady change because of the influence of East Germany. Nevertheless, she felt that the change was too slow and required action.

> Stephanie: I'm absolutely convinced that it takes a mandatory mechanism to trigger change. It requires someone to press the thumb on it until the change is accepted and carried out. I was the only female team leader in 2001 among 80. Only when there was a 25% women gender quota set within the company, things started to change for the better. It seemed as if women became more confident. It needs proponents to change directions. Angela Merkel is a strong leader and other political female leaders support the change triggered by the Chancellor.
>
> Juliane: Yes, I think so by now. I said at the beginning, women's quota is totally stupid and you have to be able to measure the performance. Meanwhile, I say, I do not care any longer and if I'm a 'Quotenfrau' ['quota woman'] here, then at least I have a parking space and must not take care of a parking lot in the early morning, when I brought the children to school.

As highlighted before, legally binding gender quotas in Rwanda (Burnett, 2011) have changed women's lives for the better by opening up career and economic opportunities. Several researchers note the backlash against women that a legal gender quota could trigger (Dorner, 2013; Pande and Ford, 2011; De Paola *et al.*, 2010; Eagly and Carli, 2007). However, treating it as an issue of numbers, as the female participants have, suggests that only legally binding gender quotas will change the numbers of women in leading positions.

5.7 Conclusion: gender quotas impacting participants' working environments

This PhD research project makes a relevant contribution to the literature by providing an empirical investigation of how sixteen individuals in the German automotive industry view quotas. As we are now in the year 2020, substantial research has been undertaken to verify that women are still disadvantaged when it comes to occupying crucial positions of power for manifold reasons. In fact, two study participants left their jobs due to barriers that only existed for female managers, such as physical misuses of power, being the only woman, and lacking a male mentor to act as protector. The nature and purpose of a legally binding gender quota is to enhance gender diversity. For the female managers in this PhD research project, a quota would bring more women into top positions in the German automotive industry and thereby trigger a power shift. In contrast to Germany, Norway can rightly claim that the introduction of legally binding gender quotas has resulted in a large number of female leaders. Whether the increase in numbers has changed embedded gender images, time will tell. The numbers in Tanzania are strikingly similar. The female participants in this PhD research project argued that change was too slow. During their business lives, the number of women managers in decision-making positions had hardly changed. On that level, Tanzania and Germany are comparable. A legally binding gender quota for the German automotive industry could bring about a similar change in cultural traditional assumptions. The strong emotional response in favour of gender quotas among female managers in leading positions reflects their biographical narrative power and leadership and career advancement experiences. Comparing and contrasting arguments for and against gender quotas between the genders leaves the impression of 'colliding galaxies'. The strength of this approach is the extent to which it reveals gendered perceptions and differences of opinion. The data highlight strong opposition among male managers to a legally binding gender quota that would trigger change. The idea

of introducing a quota to trigger a power shift in the German automotive industry, thereby creating gender diversity, may at first seem excessive and unnecessary. However, those who disagree with this idea should take current statistics into account: only 3 percent of CEOs in the 500 largest worldwide companies are women (Neubauer, 2019). Furthermore, the experiences and perceptions of these female participants allows for an understanding of their strong and proactive support for gender quotas, contrasting with the responses of male participants, outlined in the sections on barriers. Once more, Professor Susan Durbin's (2015) inquiry into a legally binding gender quota to ensure gender diversity echoes what the female participants in this study voiced clearly: a power shift in top positions requires a legally binding gender quota.

5.8.1 Participants' perceived work-environment experiences

The next sections explain the value of the mentoring and coaching relationships and outcomes that participants either experienced or perceived. Their accounts were responses to research questions about catalysts they encountered in their careers. The interviews covered the participants' whole careers, from their first jobs to their current decision-making positions. Each was asked, at the beginning of the interview, to respond to the following research question: have there been supporters/mentors or catalysts to success in your childhood, at school, or in your business life – such as parents, teachers, superiors, or others? The responses centred on mentoring and networks, support from direct superiors, the management board, teams, parents, partners, friends, external supporters (Higgins and Kram, 2001), life lessons learned through hardship, role models, and personal experiences. The participants responded differently to the concept of mentoring within their companies in the German automotive industry. Some companies had established procedures that determined whether a person would receive support from a predefined mentor via a formal mentoring programme (Raggins

and Cotton, 1999). In these companies, an employee must first undergo an Assessment Centre (AC) assessment to demonstrate the skills and competences required for further career advancement. After successfully passing the AC, the employee will be accepted into a high-potential programme or offered a higher-ranking job. To be eligible to participate in an AC, however, the candidate must be recommended by a supervisor. The process is similar to the recruitment of women for boardroom positions described in Grosvold *et al.* (2015). However, the responses participants receive, further outlined in the following sections, emphasise a substantial difference in their relationships with mentors in the work environment. This expresses itself in the support they receive from their mentors and the impact it has on their career paths (Ibarra, 2015).

5.8.2 Catalysts

The next section discusses catalysts, referring to some of the sixteen themes, including supporting aspects, mentoring, and networking, outlined in the methodology chapter. Exploring the data, based on the interviews, indicates that the women and men in this study mainly discussed the impact of coaching and informal mentoring on their careers. In the same vein, the participants spoke about influential mentors or bosses within their companies and members of the supervisory boards who actively promoted or sponsored their projects or career advancement via their networks (Helms *et al.*, 2016). These catalysts were supporters, whose actions helped the participants, either by advancing their careers through functions such as visibility, exposure, protection, or coaching, or through psychosocial functions, such as personal or professional development (Kram, 1983). For working mothers, supporters also came from their external network, including partners, nannies, and domestic help. The

participants also mentioned circumstantial catalysts, such as luck, being in the right position at the right time, being noticed by someone influential, and being financially independent. After they narrated their childhood and school experiences, the participants shared their perceptions of people who had supported their careers. The interview questions did not explicitly ask what participants expected from their mentors, bosses, or supervisory-board members in their own organisations. Instead, they focused on the mere presence of catalysts. The strength of this approach is that participants themselves define the term ‘supporting circumstances’. The literature highlights interesting aspects of impact of mentoring for study participants (Higgins and Kram, 2001), outlined in the following sections.

5.8.3 Mentoring by supporting projects and ideas

In another view of mentoring, it is worth noting that the female participants talked mainly about receiving support to implement their ideas. Ulrike spoke about receiving resources to realise her idea of setting up a new business unit, which turned out to be a highly profitable and long-lasting idea. Katharina received backup for a prestigious international project, which she managed successfully.

> Katharina: The CEO, the CFO and the management team were supporting of me and my ideas. I was really lucky to have two members from the supervisory board who supported my projects. If they hadn't backed me up, I would have had to push through the projects all by myself – I think I would have experienced more resistance. Those two executive board members and I were on the same page. They knew that the projects I was committed to were significant for the company. They weren't the driving forces themselves, but were content to go along with it.

As this excerpt shows, Katharina refers to mentors in the same breath as receiving project support, without mentioning career advancement. Jasmin remembers being given resources by a high-ranking decision-maker for a crucial project in crisis, which she managed to rescue.

> Jasmin: I was sitting in my car and was crying, weeping bitterly because I said to myself this [new software] will never work, never ever. I have forwarded an actual state analysis directly to my 'big boss'. It took the whole Sunday, but it was worth it. An hour later I received an email from him which stated that he wanted to see me the next morning at 8 o'clock. He asked me whether the situation was as I had described it and I told him that I was raised to be honest and said yes. He said 'shit'. Nobody has told me that before. What would you be doing? I told him that I would do this and this and this and this and that I needed money and IT …and he said: Do it.

Many researchers have engaged in the debate about agentic and communal traits in the management and gender literature. Of these, Akpinar-Spositio (2013), Kolb (2012), Collinson and Hearn (1994); attribute agentic traits to men and communal traits to women. According to Scholl (2005), teamwork makes an essential contribution to a company's success; it relies on managers in leading positions to adopt communal and agentic traits, as highlighted by Sümer (2006). As the transcripts from the present study show, only female managers used their mentors' support to push through projects or ideas. This result is backed up by research carried out in a schooling context by Kruse and Prettyman (2008).

> Martina: The first mentor supported me by giving me challenging tasks in which I grew up. I had to decide a lot on my own. I have been the first to combine career and raising children.
>
> Jennifer: My boss, who hired me, always supported me strongly. He also supported me in going abroad for a few months. Well, he just said that the project existed and made it possible for me to work there.

To further understand the role and impact of mentoring for participants of both genders in their work environments, the question of received support suggests that these relationships need further examination, in accordance with Ragin's (2016) research. The female participants' relationships with mentors were characterised by a mutual understanding of the need for innovative and well-planned ideas to execute projects. In other words, for the male participants, mentoring meant career advancement. For the female participants, it meant getting support to implement innovative ideas, as Ulrike's case makes clear.

> Ulrike: I told him [the small broker] that I had an idea and asked him whether he was interested in it. Half a year later when I was taking examinations again, he approached me and asked me about my idea. We discussed my idea and I left afterwards the large American corporate insurance employer. The small broker could not understand why I had left the American major company and came to him instead. I went to the owner of the small broker company, outlined my idea again and told him what I needed – a fast information technology and an assistant to build up a new business unit.

In this case, Ulrike even accepted a change of company in return for the opportunity to conduct and implement a future-oriented technology. Her driving force and focus was mainly to prove that she could deliver what others had not thought of before. To her, such innovation was worth more than climbing up the career ladder in a major American company at that time, as she said in the interview.

5.8.4 Mentoring for career advancement

The literature recognises the impact of career mentoring, independent of race or gender (Helms *et al.*, 2016; Blake-Beard *et al.*, 2011; O'Neill and Blake-Beard, 2002; Friday *et al.*, 2004; Ragins and Cotton, 1999). It is therefore important to examine the various aspects of mentoring in detail; I will do this in subsequent sections on mentoring for career advancement and mentoring and coaching for psychosocial functions. Building on the idea that mentoring is crucial for a successful career, the next paragraphs highlight the different approaches adopted by female and male managers. First, mentoring must be evaluated in light of its impact on participants aiming for career advancement. At one point in her career, Ulrike worked for an American company in a high-potential programme, where she received a lot of training, even though she did not remember a mentor having proposed her for this training. After leaving the company, she received no further benefit from the programme. By contrast, Jasmin and Stephanie never participated in an AC, despite working for German companies. Stephanie mentioned the fact that she was not supported by one of her mentors as a distinct disadvantage. She wanted to be part of the pool of eligible candidates assigned to prestige

projects (Grosvold *et al.*, 2015), but was never given the opportunity to be assessed at the Assessment Centre. To her, this was a crucial roadblock, which significantly derailed her career. None of her male superiors bothered to take the time to discuss her career path in this particular German automotive company. Apparently, Stephanie did strike her male superiors as a manager who should be promoted via an AC; this type of discrimination suggests the presence of embedded gender images.

> Stephanie: I have worked well together with my superiors but they have always been on the hop and didn't have time to promote me. I have never been in a high potential programme. Promotion of a person outside the high potential programme doesn't exist. I have witnessed two other competent and professional women who have been in a high potential programme and who got supported by a mentor. I wonder how far I would have gotten with a mentor.

She wondered how far she would have gotten in a high-potential programme; at the time, this was not possible because of company financial restrictions. She compared herself to other female managers in her company, noting that career advancement without an AC evaluation was almost impossible, whereas Katharina never mentioned an AC at all. By contrast, Stefan and Mark received support from their mentors to advance their careers. Although Stefan did not participate in an AC, Mark did participate when he was made managing director. Even though Sven participated in an AC, he failed the first time and succeeded only 1.5 years later, after participating in a second AC. Two days later, he received a job offer that he considered a promotion. It thus seems clear that being part of an eligible pool of candidates (Grosvold *et al.*, 2015), in this case, via an Assessment Centre, can be vital for career advancement since involves an assessment of skills. According to Alimo-Metcalf (2010) recruiting processes are gendered.

The other male participants' relationships with their mentors, despite being integrated within projects, were primarily about career advancement, via visibility and exposure (Kram, 1983).

Johannes, who will take over a family-owned business, does not consider his own father a mentor, even though he supported him.

> Johannes: I had several mentors. One was of the same age as my father and with the same poor family background. He was one of the first trainees after World War II. However, he had undergone a completely different professional training. Then there was the owner of another company and he supported us as well. To call my father a mentor would be wrong. He has given me many development opportunities. However, to me a mentor is someone I can engage in dialogues.

According to Mark and Stefan, both of whom were members of the executive management board, the concept of mentoring signified a pathway to a leadership position.

> Mark: I got lucky because I had a new mentor since my former mentor had gone abroad. The boss of my new mentor noticed me when I took over the business area of my former mentor. One of my other former mentors had already become an executive director and promoted me. They said that I was very young, but they had confidence in me.
>
> Stefan: I had a mentor who set an example. He was the one who send me abroad to develop my career. Shortly after I came back from abroad, I entered into the Centre of Competence. This particular mentor was very influential for my career development.

The notion that mentoring was equivalent to career advancement appeared in both male accounts, where the mentor relationship was described as a very distinct form of support and relationship. Tom's account of the significance of an 'old boy's network' reached even further than his current employment. The data reveals an almost systematic tracking of the career paths of male research participants. This too calls for a process to promote gender diversity (Walby, 2005).

> Tom: I had influential mentors. I have worked with the company, but changed over to another company and another city because it fitted better with my wife's working conditions. After three years of working for a new company, someone from my former company contacted me and invited me to return. This man remembered me and it turned out to be career advancement. I had a second mentor who had confidence in my competence and suggested me as a person who could take on a position as plant manager. I realised that there was someone in the back who smoothed my path.

Tom's account aligns with that of Mark, who was similarly contacted by a former superior. As the literature points out (Ibarra, 2015; Periton, 2006; Zelechowski and Bilimoria, 2003) networks of men are larger and more influential than networks of women, a point that this PhD research project can confirm. In other words, divergent expectations by gender of the perceived nature and meaning of mentoring correlate with the varying support that men and women receive from mentors of both genders.

5.8.5 Mentoring and coaching for psychosocial functions

The next section provides a general discussion of mentoring and coaching for psychosocial functions, such as personal or professional development, in relation to the research data and research question b) What catalysts and barriers affect female managers? Both male and female participants said that working with coaches and mentors contributed to their personal and professional development (Zimmermann and Haug, 2019; Blackman *et al.*, 2016; Ragins, 2016). For some participants, mentors played a vital role in helping them develop strategic competence, soft skills, and self-confidence, as outlined in Blake-Beard *et al.* (2011). The term 'strategy' in this thesis includes the advice to stay close to influential stakeholders, plan and act on achieving long-term objectives, and direct actions toward achieving one's overall aims, as Turner and Hawkins relate (2016). Mark learned from his female mentor, a controlling manager, to realise his own potential: a quick mind, able to understand complex issues quickly and to break them down into manageable chunks. With his mentor's support, Mark learned to develop these particular soft skills, examined more closely in Ragins and Cotton (1999). He mentioned his mentor as a manager in a leading position who actively ensured his participation in an emerging team, arising from a new project. Helms *et al.* (2016) argue that a mentorship can change into a sponsorship, leading to strong support of the mentee. To Mark, strategic competence meant gaining experience of strategic planning; his

mentor supported this within a project. His task in the project was to develop and analyse shared devices, while concurrently developing a plan for a post-merger integration. His responsibility in his fourth project was to manage the international post-merger integration plan. Mark refers to his three mentors as key contributors to his career path.

> Mark: Actually, I had more than one mentor. The first one was a woman who recognised my consultant skills: The ability to quickly grasp things and to keep abstract and then get to the heart of it. She recognised and supported it. She was the controlling manager and former assistant of the shareholder. I did the first project with her. Then, I had a male mentor. He was the sales manager and honed my strategic skills. Then there was the system manager, the grey eminence who developed my technical competence. I did the second project with someone else. Then, the female mentor supported me strongly and integrated me into her team. She and the system managers supported me in a third project together. I had to develop and analyse shared services and plan the post-merger integration. I was then allowed to implement the plan in the fourth project in the USA.

Few studies have explored the relationships between female mentors and male protégés for several reasons, as O'Neill and Blake-Beard (2002) point out in a literature review. Mark's relationships with a female mentor who wanted to coach him and a male mentor involved the professional development of business skills and goal-oriented support to climb the career ladder step by step. 'She has not even thought about it for two days, but said immediately: I want to coach you' (Mark). By contrast, Ulrike's experience with two female coaches, one of whom was an external consultant to Ulrike's company, focused partly on the same topics as Mark's and partly on developing her inner strengths. Ulrike said that she became stronger, more self-confident, and tougher as a consequence of the coaching process mentioned by Bass (2015) and Rogers (2004). She said that the training she received was valuable. She also mentioned the management and business skills (Lines, 2007) that she learned from her first coach, arguing that professional learning was imperative for everyone in a leading position within a work environment (Turner and Hawkins, 2016). The work she did with her second

coach had a different focus (Clutterbuck, 2010), as it taught her ways and methods of recognising female attributes that she had previously had no access to (Bachkirova and Kaufmann, 2009a; Rogers, 2004). She emphasised that it was important for her to use 'female language' because she was a woman. As an example of 'male language', she refers to the saying: 'What doesn't kill us makes us stronger'. Ulrike pointed out that she, drawing on 'female language' would state: 'What doesn't kill us makes us more sensitive. More sensitive to what happens around us.'

> Ulrike: There were two women who supported me. One woman conducted workshops for the company I worked for. She was my coach for more than six years who taught me conflict management, rhetoric and strategy. She has helped me to find a way back to myself. Especially, in relation to the required tools for everyone who wants to be in a leading role in management at a later point. Very, very good. She was the one who recognised that there was a junction that needed to be resolved with psychoanalysis if necessary. It was important to find the right analyst, but I was lucky, found him and worked for two years with him. She was important during that time. I was trained a lot, no doubt about it, but I learned being a warrior and not Ulrike Mueller. This component of who truly Ulrike Mueller is has been missing. I knew I had a warrior within me, not an issue at all, otherwise I would not have been there doing all these things and enjoying it. However, the female part was missing; the part which well-rounded it all. That's when I met the second woman who taught me to find the missing puzzle piece and close the gap.

Ulrike's account of her personal and business-development experiences clarify the various forms of coaching and mentoring relationships, and the forms of support that exist between the research participants and their clients and mentors (Kram, 1993). This section has considered the relevance of coaching and mentoring. Its findings are in keeping with the concept of career advancement, as outlined in literature reviews by Ragins (2016) and Haug (2016; 2011), which highlight coaching, mentoring, and sponsorship. As their remarks show, the participants benefitted from their coaches and mentors in several different ways. In fact, there was a significant difference between the mentoring of women and men.

Women benefitted from mentoring by having their projects, resources, and ideas supported. Female managers protected by a male mentor were safe as long as their mentor was within proximity (Ibarra, 2015; Ibarra and Deshpande, 2007). By contrast, the men's mentoring objective was to enhance their career development and to support their next career moves. When their mentors changed departments or organisations, they did not experience the backlash or negative impact that Ulrike, Katharina, and Jasmin described. This is an effect that some women encounter (Rudman *et al.*, 2012). Vinnicombe (2011) postulates that women must be encouraged to put themselves forward for promotion. Stephanie tried to do this by asking to participate in an AC. As Kram (1983) points out, mentoring can accelerate a person's career development while also strengthening his or her psychosocial development, as the research findings suggest. According to Helms *et al.* (2016), both mentoring and sponsorship can become long-lasting and supportive relationships between two parties, as happened to both Stefan and Mark. Both men had worked with their mentors for several years in close business relationships.

In relation to coaching, several participants worked for many years with coaches. Katharina, when she decided to opt out, became self-employed as an HR coach and consultant. Mark emphasised the value he derived from coaching and continues to work with a coach. As in mentoring, coaching is a young discipline (Cox *et al.,* 2014). The coaching literature claims to provide the time needed to reflect on current situations, analysing them, and working with well-defined objectives to accelerate progress (Haug, 2011; Clutterbuck, 2010); Ulrike mentioned this as a core aspect of coaching. The key to a close relationship between coach and client is a level of trust and attachment between them (Graßmann and Schermuly, 2016). These authors argue that, during the coaching process, the client reveals inner experiences and puts him/ herself in a vulnerable position in front of the coach. As Ulrike's case suggests, a

coach may even refer a client to someone else that seems to support the coaching process. Cox and Bachkirova (2007) postulate that coaches who encounter challenging emotional situations during the coaching process may decide between four ways of dealing with them: 'using self-reflection or supervision, avoiding tackling the emotion considering it to belong to the client, actively exploring with the client, or referral of the client/termination' (p. 178). As a business coach, I believe that Ulrike's first coach may have adopted one of the first two approaches. Either way, coaching is goal-oriented and focused on developing an individual's strengths and personal assets (Graßman and Schermuly, 2016; Haug, 2011), as Ulrike and Mark's comments confirm.

In summary, the previous sections have addressed the research topic of catalysts. The mentoring and coaching experiences and perceptions of study participants in this PhD research project can help us appreciate and value such mentoring and coaching relationships and outcomes. Ulrike clearly benefited from her coaching process, which helped her develop into a trained manager and a self-confident person, who sees herself as warrior. As the section on barriers will also discuss, the coaching process helped her develop into a self-confident female manager who dared to confront a male manager who threatened her physically. The example of Ulrike demonstrates that coaching is a vital learning process, which can help women confront embedded gender images within a male dominated environment. For this reason, this thesis emphasises the value of coaching process in mitigating the impact of embedded gender images.

5.8.6 Networking power

In the next section, I will briefly address networking power (Lyness and Thompson, 2000) in various forms, as a catalyst that the participants mentioned and considered vital. All of the

participants said that networking was a crucial supporting factor (Zelechowski and Bilimoria, 2003), while only working mothers with children mentioned nannies and domestic help. The male participants did not have to organise childcare or domestic help. In fact, Stefan mentioned in his interview that he supported his wife whenever he could. His statement highlighted traditional roles, task clarifications, and associated embedded gender images rooted in historical and cultural assumptions, as in Ostner (2010).

The participants agreed that it was important to be seen at the right time by the right person, to be known for delivering excellent results, to make sure that one's network included influential stakeholders (Perriton, 2006), and to be aware of them and their projects and plans (Turner and Hawkins, 2016). Early in his career, Markus was contacted by a colleague from another department who introduced him to his own boss to discuss a job offer. He was accepted as a non-technical person by a technical department.

> Markus: I said I'll take a look at it. Then I joined him and talked to his boss and said, well, it could be an exciting story. I had no technical experience. And in that context, nonetheless, that worked well too, so if you look, yes, I would say if you looked at me at that time as a person, you'd probably say, yes, he did well, he developed himself in principle.

A few years into his career, Markus was again approached by another superior.

> Markus: At that time, the topic was management. The superior came and he said then, yes, I see your potential, I promote you and the management career went by itself.

Another few years passed and Markus received his first upper-management position. The superior who acted as his mentor and sponsor told him that he would support his next career move. Markus would not have to stick to the official way of doing things.

> Markus: He said, no, watch out, I will write to Mr. XY. Mr. XY was still boss of the company at that time. And that's exactly what we did, the plant manager at that time and me. We went to the boss together and my mentor who had previously written a letter to Mr. XY, saying: Here I have a candidate in which I see potential, please have

> a look. Yes, I still have the paper at home today and there is a written notice by the boss on it that is as follows: yes, I like the candidate and it's ok or something.

Although the power of networking (Ibarra and Deshpande, 2007) is neither new nor exclusive, it can be challenging for women to access influential groups or decision-makers, given the impact of embedded images (Ibarra *et al.*, 2010). In addition, identifying which group or influential person to choose (e.g., Mark's 'grey eminence' or Ulrike's 'silver gorilla') requires a strategic approach (Huse and Solberg, 2006).

For Stephanie, Beate, Martina, and Katharina, as working mothers, domestic help, a nanny, and the support of a partner constituted essential support in their private contexts. This support made it possible for them to go back to work full-time.

> Stephanie: I consider our nanny as a gift who enabled me to go fully back to work.
>
> Beate: I had a nanny, a cleaning lady, a female domestic servant and a supporting partner. We did household chores only at the weekend.
>
> Martina: We had a nanny and a cleaning lady and my husband stayed at home on the days I went to work.
>
> Katharina: My husband first swallowed hard at the thought of me being away for three days a week. I knew he would be able to manage the child with the in-laws. He had taken on a position as CEO and did not have to travel so much anymore. He left the house at 9 in the morning and came home at 7 in the evening. To him it was more important than to me to see his son growing up. I was fine with not seeing our son for three days a week.

In the accounts of all of these female managers (Stephanie, Beate, Martina and Katharina) marriage was a stabilising factor. Katharina's husband, a manager in a leading position, and Martina's husband, who had a well-paid job, assumed the cultural role of child-raising, which is normally associated with women (Hummelsheim and Hirschle, 2010). These participants

appear to have experienced a correlation between their networking power and career advancement, as their statements make clear.

5.9 Conclusion: catalysts from the participants' work environments

Having gathered data from ten women and six men, I am convinced that making sense of the findings is a valuable process, which strengthens and contextualises in relation to well-established research, e.g. the women-in-management literature (Durbin, 2015; Marshall, 2000) and gender research (Ibarra *et al.,* 2013; Ely and Meyerson, 2010; 2000; Walby, 2005). The interview data and participant perceptions display a high degree of convergence in relation to catalysts within a supporting work environment. The participants experienced three main supporters or catalysts, which were crucial for their career development. Firstly, they established informal relationships with mentors who helped the female participants get their projects or ideas supported and helped the male participants advance their careers (Helms *et al.,* 2016; Blake-Beard *et al.,* 2011). Secondly, working with a mentor emphasised the participants' psychosocial development and strengthened their personal and business skills (Higgins and Kram, 2011; Kram, 1983). Thirdly, business networks were was vital to the career advancement of both men and women (Ibarra and Deshpande, 2007; Lyness and Thomson, 2000; Ibarra, 1993). However, the men's networks seemed more influential and strategy-oriented (Vinnicombe, 2011; Sheridan, 2002) e.g., keeping track of the male managers even when they left the company. For working mothers, the networks provided a backup solution to balance their challenging work-family demands and their own career expectations (Singh and Vinnicombe, 2004). Taking these findings and linking them to the existing literature clarifies that managers who were protégés of professional mentors benefited from those informal relationships, which are credited with having a greater impact (Blake-Beard *et al.*, 2011; Ragins and Cotton, 1999). The framework of mentoring as a multiple

developmental relationship or multiple dyadic relationships with peers, senior colleagues, and family members (Kram, 1983) was especially evident in Katharina's and Mark's cases. As previously mentioned, the process of mentoring encompasses coaching, exposure-and-visibility, sponsorship, and challenging work assignments; these proved to be the cornerstone in Ulrike's and Mark's developmental relationships with their female coaches and female and male mentors (Ragins, 2016). Mentoring is considered a supporting relationship, with a focus on strategic approaches to career advancement (Helms *et al.*, 2016) as the male managers' accounts made clear. These research findings align with Helm *et al.* (2016), who found that mentored female managers talked about 'giving back to others'. The female managers in this PhD research project used the support they received from mentors in a similar way: 'to give back' to their teams or projects. In relation to networks, Katharina and Jasmin were perceived as a threat to the old-boy network and experienced negative actions to sabotage their career (Carli and Eagly, 2011; Baumgartner and Schneider (2010). Networking power is an established success factor, leading to career development and promotion. Stephanie's and Jasmin's careers were derailed because they had no networking power, while the male managers' careers accelerated (Vinnicombe, 2011). Furthermore, creating alliances (Huse and Solberg, 2006) and seeking and maintaining affiliations to enforce change from within organisations underpins a collective approach, which aims to bring about changes from an inside, outside, or marginal position (Meyerson and Scully, 1995). Ulrike, as the only female manager in her company, did this repeatedly by closely managing her relationships with powerful and influential stakeholders (Turner and Hawkins, 2016). Again, the different ways that women and men use and experience networking power are striking. Access to influential networks is a preliminary stage for strategic career movement (Ibarra, 2015), as the cases of Mark, Katharina, and Ulrike demonstrate.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION – 'images of inner strengths'

This chapter addresses the findings via the 'images of inner strengths' and metaphors outlined in detail in the Literature and Methodology chapter. These 'images of inner strengths' represent the research participants' core experiences, which emerged from my interpretative analysis of their stories. To me, these metaphors supported the process of understanding the far-reaching impact of the concept of embedded gender images. For example, in the case of Jasmin (Jeanne d'Arc) they helped me understand that, while she was rescuing an important project for her company, she was also violating some unwritten rules within her male-dominated environment. These metaphors strengthened the process of revealing parallel levels of complex dynamic issues, such as doing gender, doing power, and doing leadership (Fletcher, 2004).

The metaphors relate to the following research questions:

a. What is the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas, as explored through the concept of embedded gender images?
b. What catalysts and barriers affect female managers?

Dissonances in the findings between female and male managers challenge key assumptions in the case against gender quotas (Lord Davies Report, 2014). I would argue that these dissonances and embedded gender images partly explain the barriers that obstruct female managers on career paths toward top positions.

As outlined in the Methodology chapter, the 'images of inner strengths' that I pictured in my mind's eye, stand for my own insights into various dimensions of organisational (Ely and Meyerson, 2010) cultural (Hummelsheim and Hirschle, 2010), historical (Metcalfe and Woodhams, 2012; Marshall, 1984; Kanter, 1977) and biographical aspects (Gill *et al.*, 2008).

Broussine, drawing on Burke (1992) called metaphors ‘windows into the soul of the social system’. In fact, being able to compare the stories (Appendix 7) and ‘images of inner strengths’ helped me see what I had not understood previously: that embedded gender images, as a proxy for bias, stereotypes, second-generation gender bias (Ibarra *et al.*, 2013; Ely *et al.*, 2011) and power issues (Huse and Solberg, 2006; Sun Tsu, 500 BC/2008; Fletcher, 2004), were mainly a career issue for female participants. In particular, Jasmin’s story highlights the ‘boundaries of good versus evil’ (Edwards *et al.*, 2015, p. 7). She was told that her career development was deliberately blocked so that she would not become too powerful. Her example reveals what this thesis refers to: embedded gender images, rooted in German culture and acting as barriers to female managers in the German automotive industry.

The graphic (Appendix 6), which lists, either descriptively or directly, adjectives that the participants used in interviews, as outlined in the methodology chapter, is in German. It was developed prior to the creation of stories or ‘images of inner strengths’. The graphics, which have been presented at key speeches in Germany, present the personal characteristics of the female and male participants, revealing clear similarities and differences. The graphics focus on words that reveal these strengths and barriers from the researcher’s perspective, which is subjective and interpretative. My images of the participants’ inner strengths, however, emerged as a result of creating the stories described in detail in the Methodology chapter.

The graphic (Appendix 6) represents female and male managers in top positions, with strong similarities between their personal characteristics. Their positions on a legally binding gender quota are not linked to their profiles, but to their power and leadership experiences, as the extracts from the stories and ‘images of inner strengths’ disclose. This in itself reflects the embedded gender images that are culturally rooted in the German automotive industry, which only the female managers experienced as barriers. In the methodology chapter, the three parts

of the analytical framework, namely, transcripts, stories and 'images of inner strengths' were products of a thought process that emerged from an intensive immersion in the data over long periods. The 'images of inner strengths' reveal, on an individual level, the shared experience (managers' experiences on their way to top positions) and shared reference point (representation of inner strengths). As I also applied a reflective stance, the 'images of inner strengths' centred the individual's experiences in a representative gender experience. This revealed the need to consider organisational, cultural, and historical aspects. Above all, this interpretative analysis offers a new lens for investigating barriers to female managers. Embedded gender images, as an overarching concept, encompass outcomes including stereotypes, bias, lack of protection from a male mentor, incongruence, threat, tokenism, and the lack of a network, represented in the four female 'images of inner strengths'. The interpretations of stories are presented as 'images of inner strengths' and further explored in the next section.

6.1 Representation of inner strengths and the impact of power experiences

In this PhD research project, the research aim was to explore reasons for the continued relative absence of female managers in top positions within the context of the current German legally binding gender-quota debate. Within this context, I wondered whether the experiences of these participants could act as an indicator for other women on career paths toward top positions in the German automotive industry. In this thesis, women and men in top positions shared certain characteristics, which emerged during my reading of the transcripts. The characteristics included rebellious actions and a distinct mindset towards people higher up in the hierarchy, whether parents, official representatives, peers, or high-status people. The participants' fighting spirit helped them choose what was best for them in challenging situations. According to Collinson and Hearn (1994), however, male middle managers seem

to associate successful management characteristics more with men than with women. It is worth noting that only the women in this PhD research project encountered additional roadblocks in their work environments or physical and verbal threats on their career paths. I refer to these as embedded gender images, rooted in the culture of the German automotive industry. These barriers and roadblocks are described via 'images of inner strengths', which display them in various forms, as outlined in the Methodology chapter. Although the female participants managed to break through the glass ceiling and survive the glass cliff (Kirsch, 2018; Smith, 2012; Hoobler *et al.*, 2009; Ryan and Haslam, 2007; Weyer, 2007; Cotter *et al.*, 2001), their achievements were only temporary. Interestingly, the women's success was linked to the presence and protection of mentors; they became vulnerable to attack when their mentors left the work environment (Kram, 1983). Helms *et al.,* (2016) argue that a mentorship can turn into a long-lasting relationship or sponsorship; this happened in the case of Katharina. Her mentor backed up her ideas and accompanied and supported her, enabling her to roll out an international programme. However, 'the power of sheer numbers' (Kanter, 1977, p. 45), along with the dominant views of her male peers and the stress of being the only woman in top management, made Katharina ultimately decide to opt out. The findings of this study align with current research on gender, leadership, and power (Zimmermann and Haug, 2019; Swartz *et al.*, 2016; Hoyt and Murphy, 2015; Bass, 2015; Ely *et al.*, 2011; Collinson, 2011; Mavin, 2008; Fletcher, 2004; Kolb, 2002; Ely and Meyerson, 2000; Kolb and Merrill-Sands, 1999; Kanter, 1977), as well as on prejudice, stereotypes, and second-generation bias. In summary, these findings relate to embedded gender images that are deeply ingrained in German culture and the German automotive industry, as outlined in the Literature section. They act as barriers to women aiming for top positions. A legally binding gender quota is therefore needed to trigger a power shift.

6.2.1 Excerpt of a story leading to ‘images of inner strengths’: Ulrike

> Ulrike was born in 1965, as the last of three children. She was not meant to be born or to live. She was not expected or wanted. Her family saw her as a financial burden. Fifty years later, Ulrike has risen to a top leadership position, one level beneath the supervisory board. The company belongs to an international global player in the automotive industry. Her journey to a top leadership position represents her inner strengths: her perseverance and value-based leadership style, her honed fighting skills, and her smartness and strategic approach. She was often the only woman in a male-dominated hostile arena.
>
> Ulrike has to take certain safety measures because she has been stalked for more than thirty years. There have been several attempts on her life over the years. Trusting other people is a precious and rare gift for her. There are times when she manages to form close relationships with people, but in general, close relationships are still an issue she struggles with. Over the course of her life, Ulrike has turned into a female warrior fighting against the odds. In this way, she has managed to get in touch with her female identity and to hold on to it, which is very important to her.

The following paragraph describes the ‘image of inner strengths’ that I held before my mind’s eye. I understand that readers would find it easier to look at drawings by the young artist I initially worked with. As discussed in the Methodology chapter, however, we could not settle on a formal agreement that worked for both of us. The ‘image of inner strengths’ stands for past adversaries that Ulrike left behind; they are represented by blackness in the background. As she has managed to release what was holding her back, Ulrike stands at the front. The encounters have made her stronger and the journey to herself reveals her strength and her female core as ‘Ulrike the warrior’, dressed partly in armour. Ulrike holds a spear, a weapon that represents her strength as a warrior. As she mentioned using ‘female language’ to represent her female strength, her long hair flows in the wind. Some wise women are standing close to her, representing the strength and wisdom that Ulrike believes women have. When I

talked to her about my ‘images of inner strengths’ she explained that a photograph of her actually existed where she was standing in the position I described and holding a spear. Broussine (2008, p. 76) drawing on Harper (1998) mentions ‘photographs taken by the researcher and which capture something that is culturally meaningful to the participant’, leading to a dialogue between the researcher and the participant. Although I did not use photographs, these ‘images of inner strengths’ represent the interpretative image I had before my mind’s eye. These ‘images of inner strength’ support this research by adding another perspective to the investigation of barriers that female managers experience on their career paths toward top positions. The applied creative method of developing ‘images of inner strengths’ reveals culturally ingrained and embedded gender images in the German automotive industry. Again, the warrior image represents Ulrike’s many battles in a male-dominated environment. She turned into a strong female manager, able to deal with unexpected encounters, as captured in the elevator example.

6.2.2 Excerpt of a story leading to ‘images of inner strengths’: Katharina

> Katharina and her husband are equal partners in many respects. At points in their careers they have worked for the same company at equivalent levels and enjoyed their highly active business lives. These have included travelling around the world, participating in fancy business events, such as Formula One racing and dancing at the Vienna Opera Ball, and taking trips to Dubai, the US, and other countries. Katharina was on the road 36 out of 52 weeks in the year and would often meet her husband at the airport between business meetings. Afterwards, at another company, while still responsible for national and international plants, she had a child. Her husband, parents-in-law, and Katharina herself shared childcare responsibilities. After four years, she changed companies and became HR Global Director, responsible for 24,000 employees and an international roll-out programme for 14 plants in 14 different countries. She enjoyed her international leadership role, but decided in 2014 to

become self-employed. She was tired of the power games and unable to live by her own values.

The following paragraph describes the 'image of inner strengths' that I imagined for Katharina. She stands high on a mountain plateau, looking out over a vast valley. Beneath her, a river forces its way through. She radiates strength, freedom, and joy and is surrounded by a blue sky and a bright shining sun. At the end of the mountain plateau, two men stand with her – her husband and the influential mentor who supported her throughout her career and helped her achieve a top leadership position. It is a moment of victorious joy and thankfulness. However, it also shows the current situation for female managers aiming for top positions in the German automotive industry. It reveals that female managers working in male-dominated areas depend on the protection of male managers, as Katharina and Jasmin's stories confirm. This is another example of culturally ingrained embedded gender images in the German automotive industry. Legally binding quotas are needed to achieve parity; it is hoped that they will eventually change these cultural imprints.

6.2.3 Excerpt of a story, leading to 'images of inner strengths': Jasmin

Jasmin was born in 1968 in East Germany. She describes her parents as strong personalities, with the father being the alpha-animal in the family for many years until roles switched when her father's health deteriorated, and her mother became the alpha-animal. Jasmin has developed a strong and close relationship with her parents. She has relied on them both as mentors throughout her life, even though she considers herself closer to her dad. She believes in the potential of people and has several times led teams out of periods of crisis to successful outcomes. In fact, by exposing the discrepancies in a project, she revealed that managers responsible for the project had done a poor job of managing it. Her high identification with corporate objectives, underpinned by her desire to prove that she could do things, meant that she neglected

her own health. More than once she did not comply with the standards set by influential decision-makers within the organisation. She was attacked severely several times from within.

The following paragraph describes the ‘image of inner strengths’ that I had before my mind’s eye: I saw ‘Jasmin as female knight’, as the French national heroine Jeanne d’Arc, the Maid of Orleans. She was sitting on a horse in shiny knight’s armour, with a white flag held high in her hand. She was surrounded by her loyal team members, who would follow her into battle. At the same time, however, she was unknowingly surrounded by men hiding behind the trees in a dark wood and waiting for a good time to attack. Considering the research question about shared characteristics, it is quite obvious that female managers share strengths, such as being courageous, being a role model, and being willing to work hard. The barriers revealed in the ‘images of inner strengths’ show that the female managers struggled with managers or peers threatening them or withholding support. The embedded gender images and barriers that these women experienced are closely intertwined with cultural and traditional assumptions, rooted in the German automotive industry.

6.2.4 Excerpt of a story leading to ‘images of inner strengths’: Stephanie

Stephanie was born in East Germany in 1970. Her entire childhood and adolescence were overshadowed by the death of her birth mother and the power exercised by her father. A predefined path outlined by her father lay ahead of her. She recalls that his reaction pushed her down into a black pit of despair, which created a fortress around her. It made her leave her parent's home at an early age. Her leadership style is different today because of a business seminar she attended, which turned out to be an eye-opener. It was called 'encounters in superior quality' and she learned to address issues under an iceberg. As with an iceberg, some elements of her personality were hard to see under the surface. Although she had never been aware of these, they

> influenced her actions nonetheless. She reflected on her way of doing things, the learnings from her childhood, and realised that she wanted to execute her role as a leader differently.

The following paragraph describes the 'image of inner strengths' that I imagined when I thought about Stephanie. In fact, I imagined a metaphor: the phoenix rising from the ashes before my mind's eyes. Stephanie and the mythical phoenix were one and the same, closely intertwined and symbolising her strength to start anew. Stephanie had managed to free herself from her past, including her father's interventions and regulations. She had freed herself from what was holding her back. Again and again, she had to fight her own inner demons, but she succeeded in the end. Again, all of these 'images of inner strengths' are interpretative and closely aligned to my own experiences with traditional role assumptions of women, which are rooted in German culture and the German automotive industry. The stories of the female managers and their 'images of inner strengths' clash with the male managers' stories and 'images of inner strengths', outlined in the following sections. These dissonances are examples of embedded gender images, acting as barriers to female managers on career paths toward top positions.

6.2.5 Excerpt of a story leading to 'images of inner strengths': Mark

> Mark was born in 1971 and went to America as a young student because he wanted to escape the high pressure to perform placed on him by his parents and their superiority. Having as a tutor a former Navy College Professor who believed in individual responsibility and acted in accordance with that belief, changed the course of his life completely and permanently. Mark became intrinsically motivated and turned into an ambitious, hard-working high achiever and strategic player. He set out to withstand the high pressure from his parents, but encountered an even more challenging person: Mark himself. The feeling that others might be better than he was motivated him to

> keep on studying hard. He finished as an A student. He completed a PhD in physics and afterwards pursued a career as manager. Influential mentors played a key role in his career development. By the age of 36, he was business leader in the company. By 50, he wants to be financially independent, so that he can stay true to his values and afford to leave any company if circumstances require.

The following paragraph describes the 'image of inner strengths' that I had before my mind's eye: I saw Mark as a 'world conqueror', walking on piles of shiny golden coins that led to the largest tower of glittering coins. Mark stood there looking out into the sky because he was standing so high up that he had the world under his feet. He was holding pure lightning, as a representation of victory, in his right hand. The culturally embedded gender image in Mark's example was the speed with which he climbed the career ladder. This was made possible by his large and powerful network; he participated in an assessment programme and was promoted by mentors and sponsors in high-ranking positions. In this way, he was given many opportunities to show his competence and skills in front of male managers in decision-making positions.

6.2.6 Excerpt of a story leading to 'images of inner strengths': Tom

> Tom was born in 1967 in East Germany. He finished high school with excellent grades, and was at the top of his school. Whatever he did, he wanted to do thoroughly. When he did sport, he wanted to be best, and when he did a project in school, a good grade was mandatory. Tom cannot explain his perfectionism; this is the way he has always been. He has learned to take responsibility for his mistakes and he expects the same from others, as mistakes should be seen as a way to learn. Tom wanted to study something with a strong practical focus. He chose engineering, with a focus on European special welding engineering. He studied hard, but still found time to celebrate and enjoy his leisure time. His wife studied medicine and made enormous efforts to manage her studies. That fact that both parents worked was culturally anchored in East Germany. When they had a son, they hired an au-pair and Tom's

wife worked part time for a short period. Mentors have had an influential and significant impact on Tom's career.

The following paragraph describes the 'image of inner strengths' that I had in my mind's eye: I saw Tom as 'dynamic athlete' running at a high speed, with arms high in the air to help him run even faster. He was all red and black, symbolising dynamism and power. He was alone and entirely focused on himself and being the fastest runner to cross the finish line. The culturally and organisational embedded gender image is represented by Tom's career path, which was levelled by a benevolent manager who wanted him to be a part of a powerful network. In the interview, Tom revealed that the managers from his company kept track of his business career and made sure that he returned and stayed with them.

6.2.7 Excerpt of a story leading to 'images of inner strengths': Stefan

Stefan was born in 1957. His father was his first role model and an engineer. He would describe his father's leadership style as rather hierarchical and his mother's approach as solution-oriented and stabilising. Both parents' characteristics have left their mark on Stefan and prepared him for success as a team-oriented person in a hierarchical business environment. His qualifications and experiences introduced him to different schools of thought and strong contrasts. Stefan feels that it is not acceptable to fill a vacancy with male applicants just because a woman could become pregnant. He believes there is a lack of willingness to achieve gender diversity or integration. Stefan acts as mentor for women who are or have been in his team. He has actively developed them so that they can move on to higher positions. They still seek him out to ask for advice and feedback on various topics. It is a key element for successful career development that women have a supporting superior or mentor within a company.

The following paragraph describes the 'image of inner strengths' that I had before my mind's eye: I saw Stefan as a 'runner with a baton, passing it on to a woman on a running track. They

were in a competition with other running teams. Both of them were people of colour. Stefan was part of a team of runners, fulfilling his duty by passing the baton to a woman on his team at the highest possible speed. He had given everything.

6.2.8 Excerpt of a story leading to 'images of inner strengths': Sven

> Sven was born in 1974 in East Germany. His father was a pastor and his mother a catechist, teaching the principles of the Christian religion. They gave Sven and his two brothers a lot of space to become independent and to make their own (sometimes painful) experiences. Neither of them joined the youth group of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), which was strongly influenced by the ruling party. They were therefore socially outcast, but learned they could remain true to themselves. Competitive sport was encouraged and supported by the GDR. Sven was an 8th grade regional decathlon champion and hoped to participate in a competition in Cuba. When he was told that he had to join the youth group to go to Cuba, he declined. He was kicked out of the training squad the next day. Not long afterwards, at 17 years old, he found himself in a wheelchair with a spinal injury, not knowing whether he would ever be able to walk again. These life experiences taught him to stick to his values and bear the consequences.

The following paragraph describes the 'image of inner strengths' that I had before my mind's eye: I saw Sven as a 'drained, but enduring athlete' holding his right fist in the air to signal victory. He was sweating; one look at his face showed that whatever he was doing before was strenuous. In the background were a wheelchair and the GDR flag, representing the past challenges that he overcame through perseverance and holding on to his values.

6.2.9 Analysis of the 'images of inner strengths'

The 'images of inner strengths' reveal similar themes among the participants' distinct power and leadership experiences. However, they lead to different results for the female managers. The female 'images of inner strengths' feature power threats that they experienced, managed, and survived, as well as the strategies they used to manage or hit back. The male 'images of inner strengths' also feature concepts of power, but their power experiences represent victory, strength, and good future prospects. Two reveal divergent dimensions, as Sven survived hardship and Stefan shared power. In Sven's case, being oppressed by a GDR representative and enduring grave physical injuries twice shattered personal ambitions and dreams. Stefan lived cultural and gender diversity as he and his Asian wife had two daughters. Stefan therefore deviated from the traditional role and tasks he was raised to fulfil. The 'images of inner strengths' emerged in response to stories derived from the core categories I identified and outlined in the Methodology chapter. Creating 'images of inner strengths' was a way of conveying my interpretation of the participants' power, leadership experiences, and emotional responses to the reader. Hence, when I write of small, dark figures in the female 'images of inner strengths', as in Jasmin's case, they represent male colleagues or superiors waiting to challenge the female manager at the first possible opportunity. I imagined streaks of dark colour, representing past or future threats. As the 'images of inner strengths' provide snapshots of their biographies, rather than representing their entire careers, some negative power experiences are not depicted, as in Katharina's case. Taking her entire biography into account, some of her male peers waited until her protective mentor had left the company, leaving her open to harsh criticism and severe attacks. The function of such informal mentors, protecting the protégé (interviewee) from attack, as part of the mentor relationship, stopped working when the mentors left the company or division (in Jasmin's case).

The ‘images of inner strengths’ are snapshots of key themes that emerged from the biographical narratives the participants shared with me. What all the ‘images of inner strengths’ have in common are moments of success. However, the power experiences of female managers also include threatening physical, mental, or psychological power attacks. The female ‘images of inner strengths’ show personal victories made possible by strong personal traits, such as: a) hitting back as warrior (Ulrike); b) displaying endurance and persistence in her victorious roll-out across many countries (Katharina); c) identification with her team and commitment with projects in crisis (Jasmin); and d) rising from a difficult period as a phoenix from the ashes (Stephanie). However, it is important to remember that, when they were no longer protected by supervising mentors, two female managers left their companies. The ‘images of inner strengths’ are my own attempt to make sense of the findings from a different perspective.

This study set out to understand what embedded gender images and barriers female managers experience now and in the past. This perspective also considered historical, societal, and especially cultural dimensions, as outlined in the Literature Review and Findings sections. Marshall (1995) used stories to share and analyse the business experiences of female managers. Gabriel (2004) advised researchers to use stories carefully, which I did by forwarding the stories to the participants for acceptance. Taking it to the next level, I used ‘images of inner strengths’ to express my subjective perception of the core characteristics and circumstances that shaped the participants. Reoccurring of words formed ‘images of inner strengths’ in my mind. As Bailey and Di McAtee (2003) have said: ‘We remind other researchers that there is another way of telling’ (p. 56). The darkened background in Ulrike’s ‘image of inner strength’ represents danger. The stories and ‘images of inner strengths’ contribute to the existing literature by raising awareness of the following points: a) tokenism is as a barrier; b) women need influential mentors to protect them as they advance in their

careers; and c) women face embedded gender images. Alongside the analysed transcripts, the additional applied analysis via stories and 'images of inner strengths' contributes to a rich and dense investigation of embedded gender images, which are deeply rooted in German culture and the German automotive industry.

6.3. Conclusion: representation of 'images of inner strengths'

The theoretical perspective underpinning this PhD research project is clarified in the second part of this thesis, which attempts to make sense of the data. One theme that emerged from the interviews was the high congruence between the participants' rebellious and ambitious behaviours. However, the differences between the participants' stories were far more revealing. When the 'images of inner strengths' were viewed through a gender-dissonance lens, the theme of embedded gender images emerged strongly in the women's visual metaphors. These visual metaphors symbolised the barriers that female managers experienced during their careers. They are my personal interpretations, which I do not claim to be true or valid. Given my subjectivity as a female researcher and business coach in the German automotive industry, I have myself experienced and perceived embedded gender images. This may have been the reason why I only came up with metaphors for the female managers. However, I would argue that the concept of embedded gender images is made visible across dimensions of culture, society, and history by the use of 'images of inner strengths', as outlined in the Literature and Methodology chapters and the Findings sections. Scholars are aware that gender bias, stereotypes, and second-generation bias will not be mitigated or removed, as barriers to the careers of female managers, simply by raising awareness. Simply pointing out hindrances, barriers, glass ceilings, and learning techniques will not deal with them. The findings of this study support the argument that catalysts, such as working with

coaches and mentors or participating in seminars, can help women develop strategies to partly overcome barriers on their career paths toward top positions. However, these barriers still exist, after researchers critically evaluated them more than 40 years ago; it is therefore highly probably that they will persist. Taking everything together, it is easy to understand why the four female participants support the introduction of legally binding gender quotas to trigger a power shift. This Findings and Discussion section therefore concludes that, based on the views of four female and two male participants, it may be time for a change, and even a mandatory one.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This research project was situated within the context of the legally binding gender-quota debate in Germany. In 2016, Chancellor Angela Merkel, the first female Chancellor since the formation of West Germany after the Second World War, introduced a legally binding 30% gender quota for top positions in large companies and the civil service. In 2019, she made the case for parity. Guided by the research aims detailed below, this thesis has explored the continued relative absence of female managers in top positions, within the context of the current German legally binding gender-quota debate. The following research questions make a significant theoretical contribution and address the empirical evidence analysed in this PhD research project.

a) What is the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas, as explored through the concept of embedded gender images?

b) What catalysts and barriers affect female managers?

The first research question emerged from the power and leadership literature. It reflected my impression that perceived barriers to women were rooted in a historical, societal, and cultural context. Initially, this questioned seemed somewhat vague; I was not sure whether to send it to the participants. However, findings related to the concept of embedded gender images are manifold. Under this umbrella concept, stereotypes, biases, and many metaphors find a place; these include the male-breadwinner, glass cliff, glass ceiling, and glass slipper. The empirical evidence gathered through this research project reveals that embedded gender images are deeply ingrained in historical, societal, and cultural attitudes. This evidence should not be restricted to a single theoretical domain because it can apply to several others, including gendered leadership, power dynamics, and barriers to women in management. One major

family business, led by a patriarchal owner, has had three management levels without women for more than 100 years. The situation is similar in other family businesses investigated for this thesis. If we examine the past 100 years in these companies and their male-dominated management levels, time seems to have stood still, as gender diversity is still a far cry away. The findings of this PhD research project contribute to theory, policy, and practice in relation to gender, power, and management theory and the debates that informed this study. Key theoretical concepts have been acknowledged, revisited, and partly refuted or confirmed. In addition, this thesis has highlighted gaps in the empirical research, which need further consideration. Embedded gender images, which act as barriers to female managers in the German automotive industry, are deeply ingrained in German culture. Examples include traditional role assumptions and cultural metaphors, such as the male-breadwinner model, economic dependence of women on their husbands (Ostner, 2010), glass ceiling (Faragher, 2018; Ibarra, 2013; Johns, 2013; Weyer, 2007), glass cliff (Kirsch, 2018; Smith, 2012; Hoobler *et al.*, 2009; Ryan and Haslam, 2007; Weyer, 2007; Cotter *et al.*, 2001), and glass slipper (Ashcraft, 2013). These cultural embedded gender images act as barriers to female managers in the German automotive industry. They justify further exploration of the relationship between tokenism and legally binding gender quotas, through the concept of embedded gender images. Such research can be used to support a power shift in decision-making positions in the German automotive industry.

This section formulates concluding propositions about the following themes: a) the nature and purpose of legally binding gender quotas; b) the concept of embedded gender images; and c) the applied reflective approach. Taken together, these contribute to discussions of the theory, policies, and practice of gender diversity in the German automotive industry. The findings are illustrated from the participants' and researcher's perspectives. As the Methodology chapter

indicates, several methods were used to gather and analyse data via multiple lenses (McCormack, 2000) during the research process (Appendix 2). First, the transcripts were analysed thematically (Appendix 3), based on biographical narratives (for an excerpt, see Appendix 4) and interview questions (Appendix 1.1). For example, the participants were asked about their stance towards legally binding quotas. Second, a summary-data table was developed for use as a coding schema (Appendix 3) to support further categorisation. Third, stories (Appendix 7) were developed from the transcripts. Fourth, the stories were used to build 'images of inner strengths' (Findings, Chapter 2), which allowed me to interpret the participants' perceived core strengths, as an aspect of the emerging themes. These applied methods made it possible to address the research questions via several layers of analysis, which allowed rich data to emerge.

7.1 Key insights

The transcript data showed that catalysts, including male and female mentors, stakeholders, coaches, and influential networks were significant for both genders. When supporting people were no longer present, having relocated within or left the company, the protection they offered to women on career paths toward top positions ceased. This did not happen to the male managers. As the biographic narratives revealed, the mentors of male managers stayed in contact with them for the long term. In a related finding, mentors supported female managers by providing resources, budgets (Lines, 2007), and some career-advancement. By contrast, all of the male participants made use of their mentors or sponsors to advance their careers. The male managers climbed the career ladder with support from mentors and sponsors, who introduced them to significant decision-makers and made sure that they were given projects with high visibility within the company. Katharina was the only female

manager whose mentor acted in part as a sponsor, giving her high-visibility projects and backing her decisions. Ulrike did not turn her innovative and profitable business idea into a project because a mentor promoted her, but because the owner of the company supported her idea. He did not act as her mentor or sponsor. In short, all of the male managers received long-lasting and highly effective mentoring and support; the same cannot be said for the female managers, as their stories relate. When Jasmin and Katharina's male mentors left, the consequences for both women were serious, and they ultimately left their companies. None of the male managers experienced the same consequences. One explanation may be that men, rather than women, are seen as leaders (Bass, 2015). Embedded gender images are deeply rooted in German culture and especially in the German automotive industry; the slogan, 'think male – think manager' may help to explain the lack of women in these companies (Ryan *et al.* 2011). At the time of this PhD research project, none of the female managers held top positions in their companies. Given the cultural impact of embedded gender images for female managers in the German automotive industry, this thesis recommends further exploration of the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas, using the concept of embedded gender images to discuss ways to change the power balance in decision-making positions.

Those participants who had worked with coaches perceived coaching as an opportunity to reflect, learn, change (Zimmermann and Haug, 2019; Cox and Bachkirova, 2007; Gordon, 2007), and become stronger versions of themselves (Bass, 2015). The participants perceived influential stakeholders, some acting as mentors or sponsors, as strong supporters of their career advancement (Ragins, 2016; Helms *et al.*, 2016). While the male managers spoke about being proactively sponsored by their mentors through their influential networks, the female managers mentioned being given resources for projects. Only in one case did a female

manager use the strategy of making herself visible to influential stakeholders (Turner and Hawkins, 2016; Ely *et al.*, 2011). Male participants were contacted via their networks by former superiors and asked to re-join companies they had left. They were offered career advancement as incentive. Although I did not ask specifically about the participants' networks, it soon became evident from the participants' biographies and professional careers that the men were supported by powerful networks, while the women were not (Ibarra and Desphande, 2007; Ibarra, 1993). Mentors, coaches, stakeholders, and influential networks were key catalysts to various degrees, which differed between genders, for all participants. However, the findings underline how vital it is to train women through strategic coaching for career development (Haug and Zimmermann, 2020 in press). Ulrike's example reveals the need to develop strategies to enhance the positions of female managers. Ulrike applied the concept of stakeholder management by influencing an influential decision-maker, the 'silverback' (Gorilla). She was the only female manager to recognise that women need to build relationships with influential decision-makers, learn their points of view, make them interested in the women and their projects, and keep them informed about their career development. As well as applying stakeholder management strategy, she learned through coaching to develop the strength to hit back. In summary, it seems clear that female managers would benefit from tailored, strategic career coaching, which could raise their awareness of embedded gender images within the German automotive industry. The stories and 'images of inner strengths' show that these embedded gender images are widespread throughout German culture and have a negative effect on female managers only. As the Literature Review explains, embedded gender images are closely intertwined with historical, societal, and culturally rooted role assumptions in German society.

In relation to barriers, one interview question investigated the current situation of women pursuing leadership positions. The views of female and male managers were not the same. The stories and 'images of inner strengths' revealed embedded gender images that are deeply rooted in the culture of Germany and especially in the German automotive industry, as a male-dominated area. These embedded gender images acted as barriers to the female managers pursuing top leadership positions. When asked about barriers to women, the male participants argued that: a) societal change must take place first, so that women will be accepted in top positions (Kruse and Prettyman, 2008; and b) there are not enough qualified women (Grosvold *et al.,* 2015). By contrast, the female managers mentioned barriers, such as not being accepted as equally professional and knowledgeable leaders (Collinson, 2011; Kruse and Prettyman, 2008), gender-related power misuse (Fletcher, 2004), stereotypes and second-generation bias (Swartz *et al.,* 2016; Hoyt and Murphy, 2015; Ely *et al.*, 2011; Kolb, 2002; Ely and Meyerson, 2000), and being tokens (Kanter, 1977). These barriers meant that they were the only woman at senior management level and faced episodes of backlash, including sexual harassment (Collinson and Collinson, 1996) and a mobbing that almost ended in an official indictment. These barriers were based on gender and correlated experiences and perceptions, as outlined in the Findings sections.

This study set out to honour a silent promise that I gave, as a researcher, while conducting interviews with these women: to *give voice* to their personal experiences and stories, so that other women could learn from them, as they asked me to do. From Carcary (2009), I learned to listen to what people were really saying; I therefore read the transcripts several times, in some cases going back to the audio recordings. In hindsight, I believe that I fulfilled this silent promise by focusing on the coaching and mentoring of female managers in leading positions, offering strategic career coaching, and raising awareness of embedded gender images, which

are deeply rooted in German culture. I also fulfilled this promise by delivering keynote speeches, publishing articles, and finally, after seven years of research, submitting the dissertation. Another key element of this research was the need to find satisfactory answers to the research questions, or at least a better understanding of the subject under investigation. The research questions focused on the lack of women in top positions, barriers, catalysts, personal experiences and perceptions, typical characteristics of female and male leaders in top positions, the learnings of female managers pursuing top positions, and the notion of embedded gender images, as highlighted in the findings and conclusion chapters.

7.2 Contribution

This PhD thesis make an original contribution because it is the first study of the German automotive industry to investigate the barriers and catalysts that female managers encounter during their careers, based on the concept of embedded gender images and situated within the context of a gender-quota debate. Earlier studies have reported on single aspects of gender quotas, gender bias, stereotypes, and second-generation bias within companies and cultures, or from a historical point of view. This thesis contributes to the discussion of legally binding gender quotas (Durbin, 2015) using embedded gender images as a proxy for ingrained stereotypes and second-generation bias. These gender images are rooted in organisations, male management boards (Graham, 2017; Holst and Wiemer, 2010), work environments (Ibarra *et al.*, 2013; Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Gill *et al.*, 2008; Walby, 2005), gender at senior manager levels, workplace structures, and behaviour (Durbin, 2015; Ely and Meyerson, 2000; Marshall, 1984; Kanter 1977). They appear in power dynamics related to gender, networks of influence, positions of hierarchy (Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Huse and Solberg, 2006; Fletcher, 2004), society (Kruse and Prettyman, 2008), and German history and culture (Ostner, 2010;

Hummelsheim and Hirschle, 2010; Rosenfeld *et al.,* 2004). This study therefore recommends developing a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas and their links to embedded gender images. Such studies can help to increase the number of women in top positions in the German automotive industry. This PhD research project illustrates the notion of embedded gender images, featuring data derived from sixteen female and male managers in the German automotive industry. What the findings add to the existing gender-diversity debates is the recommendation that legal gender quotas be introduced to mitigate the impact of embedded gender images, which are rooted in German culture and the work environment. This thesis also recommends including strategic career development in university coaching and mentoring programmes and training schools, at an early stage. Beyond this general contribution to theory, policy, and practice, the following sections will discuss specific points.

7.2.1 Theory contribution

This PhD research project set out to examine the lack of female managers in top positions. It did so by exploring the need for legally binding gender quotas, given the fact that embedded gender images are rooted in German culture and German organisations, and particularly in male management boards (Graham, 2017; Holst and Wiemer, 2010). In the work environment, there is clear evidence of unconscious bias, stereotypes, and second-generation gender bias (Ibarra *et al.*, 2013; Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Gill *et al.*, 2008; Walby, 2005). In this context, metaphors such as the glass cliff (Ryan and Haslam, 2007), glass slipper (Ashcraft, 2013), and glass ceiling, proposed by Marilyn Loden some 40 years ago (Faragher, 2018; Ibarra, 2013), have become synonymous with stereotypes, bias, and social closure, e.g. networks that exclude women (Kuhlich *et al.*, 2014; Johns, 2013; Rudman *et al.*, 2012. The

thesis also discusses gender at senior manager level, in workplace structures and behaviour (Durbin, 2015; Ely and Meyerson, 2000; Marshall, 1984; Kanter 1977), in the concepts of 'doing power', 'doing gender', and 'doing leadership', which are embedded in social interactions and social networks of influence and positions of hierarchy (Ely and Meyerson, 2010; Huse and Solberg, 2006; Fletcher, 2004). It also relates this discussion to society (Kruse and Prettyman, 2008), history, and German culture (Ostner, 2010; Hummelsheim and Hirschle, 2010; Cooke, 2006; Rosenfeld *et al.*, 2004).

The relationship between tokenism and gender quotas seems clear, given the fact that the investigated companies have never had female CEOs or (many) women in the management levels below. Furthermore, the participants' statements reveal barriers to female managers aiming for top positions, as outlined throughout the Findings and Discussion sections. These issues are also considered from a perspective of impact, linked with embedded gender images as an overarching concept. I have attempted to establish a line of well-argued explanations (Cornelissen, 2017) to raise awareness and analytical sensitivity toward the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas, in efforts to foster gender diversity. The overarching concept of embedded gender images allowed me to expand on theoretical discussions in the women-in-management literature, including aspects of the historical, cultural, and societal context. This concept has been missing from the literature to date. I recommend that future researchers adopt the concept as a frame of reference, in place of simple tokenism, which is part of the overarching concept of embedded gender images. My assumptions are grounded in prior literature and findings (Delbridge and Fiss, 2013) related to women in management, debates about tokenism, the question of whether critical mass or critical actors are more relevant to achieving gender diversity, the bias and stereotypes that women face, arguments for and against gender quotas, power plays, and other theories, concepts, models, and

metaphors. The assumptions theorised in the two literature chapters invite further theoretical discussions about the impact of embedded gender images. They also support the need for gender quotas to foster gender diversity. This thesis aims to fill a significant gap in the current theoretical women-in-management literature, a process that Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) call 'gap-spotting'. In this way, it aims to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas, via embedded gender images. Legally binding gender quotas are emphasised because they represent a concerted effort to counteract tokenism, which relate to subtle power dynamics and their impact on gender diversity. Such quotas could mitigate the impact of embedded gendered images over time. I arrived at this insight through the data analysis, which revealed that female managers face levels of expectation that their male peers are not expected to meet. The perception of female managers' tasks and roles is deeply rooted within historical, societal, and cultural expectations of their complex roles as female managers, working mothers, women, and knowledge-and-competence bearers. The manifold unjustified expectations placed on female managers will not disappear on their own.

7.2.1 Policy contribution

The nature and purpose of a gender quota is to contribute to gender diversity by increasing the number of women in leading positions, potentially changing policies, and influencing business on a larger scale (Hughes *et al.*, 2017). According to Nanivadekar (2006, p. 119), 'Gender quotas are a form of compensation for historical injustice suffered by identifiable groups and represent evidence of society's commitment to redress that injustice.' Baldez (2006, p. 109) concludes in her study of gender laws that such laws offer a smart response to 'the "intractability of male dominance" that characterises so many political systems.' As

O'Brian and Rickne 2016; p. 114) point out, 'quotas may bring more qualified women into the candidate pool for leadership posts, which could in turn increase the probability that a woman will be chosen to head her party.' For several historical, cultural, and societal reasons, the concept of embedded gender images captures the need for gender quotas to accelerate the process of getting more women into top leadership positions. What we face in the 21th century is well captured in the following statement:

> Only when we reach the situation when we do not feel the need to comment on the appointment of a woman **because she is a woman** will we have reached the point where women are routinely both accepted and established within business and public services as senior decision-makers. This feels a long way off and is unlikely to happen in my own lifetime (Durbin, 2015).

These discussions of the barriers that women face on their way to decision-making positions signal the significance of expanding discussions on policies and practices to achieve gender diversity.

To change the impact of embedded gender images in the long run, legally binding gender quotas would be a good start. These 'ubiquitous, but invisible embedded gender images' contribute to the discussion of barriers to gender diversity and further discussions about the need for legally binding gender quotas to achieve parity in decision-making positions. One recommendation, derived from the findings of this thesis, is to increase the number of female managers in decision-making positions, such as supervisory boards or executive management, via legally binding gender quotas, which can accelerate the process of achieving gender diversity and parity (O'Brien and Rickne, 2016). Nanivadekar (2006), who compared and contrasted mandatory gender quotas in India, the US, and several other countries, concludes that gender quotas were a first step toward achieving gender diversity, even if they merely

increased the number of women in decision-making positions. Taking the new contribution of this PhD research project into account, alongside the above-mentioned literature, it becomes obvious that embedded gender images, acting as barriers to female managers on career paths toward top positions, will not disappear without legal enforcement. Numerous objections to gender quotas warn about possible retaliation against women, power pressure, stigmatisation, elite discrimination, and aggressive and controlling behaviour by men (see trade-off effects in O'Brien and Rickne, 2016). This political backlash is closely aligned with the embedded gender images that women experience as they rise toward top positions in the German automotive industry. While legal gender quotas will not eliminate embedded gender images, they will accelerate the process bringing more women into top positions to advance gender diversity (Fine *et al.*, 2020). If gender quotas change the impact of embedded gender images and increase the number of women in top positions, the process may trigger a power shift and ultimately a redistribution of power (Dahlerup, 2008). This process could begin by increasing the number of women in top positions as role models, who can help to change traditional assumptions about women, power, and leadership in German history, society, and culture over time (O'Brien and Rickne, 2016; Ely *et al.*, 2011. As Burnet (2011) points out, gender quotas and equality policies will not change everything for the better, but at least they will promote the acceptance of professional women and improve perceptions and attitudes. The findings of this PhD project suggest that embedded gender images, rooted in German culture and society, will begin to fade once gender diversity and parity are achieved.

7.2.2 Empirical contribution

This analysis has focused on barriers and catalysts impacted by embedded gender images in the German automotive industry. The analysis was based on transcripts, which discussed the

participants' childhood experiences, as they flowed into adolescence and professional careers. These transcripts yielded rich data, from the participants' perspectives, enabling me to develop a common understanding of their core stories, which the participants confirmed in writing. The transcripts and stories revealed that all of the participants encountered similar catalysts. I also asked the interviewees what they thought about the lack of female managers in top positions, and whether gender quotas were a good idea. The research questions asked: a) What is the relationship between tokenism and gender quotas, explored through the concept of embedded gender images? and b) What catalysts and barriers affect female managers? The first question was complex – even choosing the right words took some time. It was challenging for the female managers to answer, it was even more difficult for the male managers. In one interview, I clumsily asked the female participant: Have you ever experienced something that you think happened to you because you are a woman and would not have happened if you were a man? I felt like a complete idiot for framing the question as I did. Although the response I received confirmed that I was on the right track, I decided to change my approach. In later interviews with female managers, their responses confirmed that women experience various biases, such as being ignored by men. One young, slim, and nice-looking female manager began dying her long, blond hair brown to avoid being stereotyped. Still, I felt dissatisfied with the way I had re-formulated the question and also with the depth of the participants' answers. I therefore dropped the question completely and waited to see what would emerge. The difficulty involved in explaining the concept of barriers to men, identified in the literature as 'gender bias' persuaded me to investigate this issue in a different way. The analysis of the interviews was intended to shed light on this issue. However, the notion of embedded gender images did not emerge until I compared the 'images of inner strengths'. Using the 'images of inner strengths' as part of a reflective research process allowed me to reach another level of analysis, which revealed that embedded gender images

were rooted in German culture and the work environment, where they acted as barriers to female managers in the German automotive industry.

These ‘images of inner strengths’ revealed gender differences and similarities, in relation to barriers. The similarities are detailed in Appendix 6; they include: being bold, straightforward, sticking to their own values, displaying a fighting spirit, and being quick to grasp information. The attitudes of female and male managers towards their working environments and project challenges offered insights into the shared characteristics and behaviour of men and women in top positions. However, they also revealed that female managers would benefit from specific awareness training to help them respond to embedded gender images rooted in German culture and the work environment. The findings on coaching, mentoring, and sponsorship tell us that teaching and training of women by mentors and coaches could begin with tailored programmes of strategic coaching and mentoring for career advancement at universities or training schools. The findings on coaching highlight the need to become familiar with strategic career-development elements, such as managing stakeholders, developing and drawing on powerful networks, influencing significant decision-makers, becoming visible and attracting sponsorships, gaining self-confidence and learning to live in a power arena, and dealing with threatening situations. Coaching should focus on raising awareness of embedded gender images in German culture and especially the German automotive industry. The findings on mentoring and sponsorship can contribute to career advancement for managers, helping them gain support from influential networks and decision-makers, acquire high-visibility projects within the company, and achieve promotion to the next career level.

7.2. Personal reflections

This PhD research project has investigated the continued relative absence of female managers in top positions, as well and catalysts and barriers that women encounter during their careers. It has made a contribution to gender and tokenism theory, policy, and practice, since gender diversity is a controversial concept, which is regularly debated in the German automotive industry. I wanted to understand more clearly why so many male voices opposed mandatory gender quotas and where I would stand, once I had studied the relevant theory, policies, and practice. I now understand better why the male participants perceived gender quotas as a threat: they are likely to trigger a power shift. My interpretative framework allowed me to use emerging creative research methods for sense-making, as part of the research process. The 'images of inner strengths' and metaphors strengthened the process of making sense of the concept of embedded gender images.

In hindsight, this dissertation has been a personal journey, which has developed my researcher skills and given me confidence to speak up for my individual needs within my family, as a self-employed business woman, practitioner, and academic. There have been some aspects that I have managed less well, for example by falling back into my traditional role as a mother, housewife, and married woman as soon as I enter my home. To bypass these gender expectations, I worked on my dissertation in other locations. It was easier to write in hotels and rented apartments, focusing on my objectives as a researcher, rather than fulfilling the traditional and societal expectations of family and neighbours. I was well aware of the fact that the embedded gender images I was investigating were part of my own traditional upbringing. In fact, this PhD research project was the first time any woman in my family had rejected the traditional division of gender roles. Although I understood the impact of gender-

role expectations, it took some conscious decisions to change them. Approximately two years into the PhD research process, my husband started to do the laundry; he also took over household chores while I was on business trips. During the final two years of the thesis, our 22-year-old son started to cook, clean, and buy groceries, thereby changing the traditional division of roles he had observed, experienced, and perceived in his parents' marriage. He adapted to the new model and now contributes, alongside his 19-year-old sister, to the household chores they are expected to do together. My own acknowledgement and efforts to change the embedded gender images rooted in my upbringing made it possible for my children too to move past the embedded gender images they had grown up with.

My journey as researcher was challenging for several other reasons as well. I remember how frustrated I was between 2013 and 2017 as a foreign student struggling with words and concepts such as ontology, epistemology, methodology, research methods, theoretical framework, and paradigm. I have spent countless hours reading articles in German and English, taking courses, watching online modules (even while making pancakes), going to conferences, and simply trying to understand the meaning of concepts and to apply them correctly. In the summer of 2017, I had, for the first time, the feeling that I could grasp it a little bit. After I came back from a long run in the forest, I drew the words and concepts as pathways on a piece of paper; this made the process much easier for me. Being disciplined, focused, planning seven years ahead of time, and keeping milestones and deadlines gradually became easier. It was much more difficult to increase my turnover as a business coach to finance my studies and create dedicated writing time. Some questions remain, and I will eventually have to address them. For example: Where do I go from here? The iterative learning process has become part of my daily life and I do not want to stop. I feel as if my learning journey has only just begun.

7.2.1 Changing the context as a female researcher

I am well aware that the small contribution made by this PhD research project will not rewrite history, create a general theory of gender bias, or change the challenging situations that female managers experience during their careers. I have given several keynote speeches, which involved approximate 50 hours of preparation and lasted about two hours in total. The result was a PowerPoint presentation with several graphics (see Appendix 6), a summary and an informative and entertaining key note, in which I shared a finding that emerged from this research: female managers are a valuable asset at top management level. I experienced this process several times and in different industries, and ultimately offered two different sets of findings to two different audiences. The first set of findings about barriers, mentoring, power, and leadership attracted a mainly female audience. The second set of findings about leadership characteristics attracted a mixed audience. From this I learned the power of labelling an idea. Or, as the military strategist Sun Tsu (Marshall, 2008) argued, power is only part of the whole story and having a good strategy and applying smart tactics is the other part. This holds true for embedded gender images, which span a broad historical and cultural dimension within the German automotive industry.

To further illustrate Sun Tsu's argument, the next section will discuss how to deal strategically with embedded gender images in the German automotive industry. I met with the diversity director of a major German automotive company to discuss a keynote speech related to the findings of this PhD research project. The director, who was not German, advised me to label my keynote speeches differently, pointing out that the German automotive industry, which was ruled by male managers, did not show much interest in discussing diversity. Managers had a negative view of gender diversity. We agreed to call the keynote speech 'Führungskraft 4.0' (Leaders 4.0) to attract a diverse audience. This experience further

confirmed the barriers associated with embedded gender images and the influence (power) wielded by people in decision-making positions. Over the years, I learned to adapted titles to audiences. In a European research project, I was asked, as practitioner, to focus on the gender diversity issue in a technical-medical environment. I was also allowed to present my research at conferences in Norway and Spain (Appendix 6).

7.2.2 A working mother and wife

The power of learning is well demonstrated in Kolb's learning cycle (1984). It was inevitable that seven years of doing research would have an impact on me, my husband, and our children. My husband has accepted what he could not change. Our children have seen their mother studying, reading, and listening to Open University methodology lessons while cooking or cleaning, participating in university modules online, disappearing for summer courses, and talking about barriers to women to various degrees. I know I began to raise our children differently once I became aware of my own embedded gender images. To avoid gendered societal expectations, both children have learned to share (or ignore) household chores on equal terms. I have taken both children to the sports resort where I spent a few weeks writing every year.

7.3 Limitations of this study and further research

The Methodology chapter has outlined the research strategy and methods that I selected and applied throughout this PhD research project. Some of the previously explained limitations of this study must be examined in detail to ensure that they are not repeated in other studies. This process of transparency is vital, as it can help prospective researchers compensate for potential limitations in their own studies.

7.3.1 Timeframe and research methods

One of the major challenges I encountered was attempting to do this research part time. Over the course of seven years, it required a lot of discipline and focus to stay on track and fulfil all of the requirements for a degree. However, a more significant challenge was the need to repeatedly and regularly immerse myself in the data, context, and a foreign language. Alongside publishing, speaking at conferences abroad, and preparing keynote speeches in English and German, this required a large amount of time. Eventually, my supervisors encouraged me to set aside dedicated writing time. Second, had I known from the beginning that creative research methods were part of the research process, I would have approached the literature and the concept of embedded gender images differently, generating data in more creative ways. The third point relates to design, as mentioned in the Methodology chapter. Carcary (2009) mentions four levels of interpretation for qualitative research: interaction with empirical material; underlying meanings; critical interpretation; and reflection on text production and the use of language. I believe that this PhD research project would have benefitted from a different design that highlighted underlying meanings. The concept of embedded gender images should stand alone in a research context, with research carried out in various industries using larger samples. Although the implications are particularly significant for the German automotive industry, it is not representative of all German industries. Last, it was important to consider the subjectivity of the researcher, who had been part of the system, experiencing similar barriers to those described by the female participants (Trahar, 2009). I acknowledge that my interpretative framework can contain only a ‘partial truth’ (Seale, Gobo, Gubriumand Silverman, 2004); it is subject to my own personal experiences, as a female researcher and business entrepreneur, raised with distinctly traditional gender-based role

divisions. My emotions during the interviews convinced me that the research project was primarily a learning experience and an opportunity to give voice to the participants.

7.3.2 Implications for further research studies

The limitations referred to above suggest various areas for future research. Female and male participants could be asked to draw the barriers they experienced during their careers, using symbols and colours. The drawings could be assigned to gender groups for better comparison. An analysis of the gender-group findings could reveal embedded gender images, attitudes, and behaviours (Fletcher, 2004). This approach would allow scholars to carry out research in large organisations and various industries worldwide, and thus to compare and contrast a large body of emerging data.

It is essential to address the current political debate over gender quotas in different countries in relation to supervisory board dynamics. The present PhD research project cannot predict how long it will take to eliminate embedded gender images from a global perspective. This will require further research.

Further research is also needed to predict the impact and consequences of embedded gender images within German industries. Due to global changes worldwide (Deloitte, 2011), it is unclear how female managers in leading positions will impact the dominant patriarchal-leadership approach within family businesses (Osnes *et al.*, 2016) and other industries. In relation to family-owned businesses, leadership and management theory focuses on the (male) individual as the sole source of leadership, ignoring the role of female co-founders of family-owned companies (Osnes *et al.*, 2016; Barrett and Moores, 2009). In large companies, most of the influential decision-makers are men, almost to the complete exclusion of women (Osnes, 2016). The embedded gender images discussed in this PhD research project have addressed a

number of significant issues; this raise the question of what it will take to navigate the challenges and barriers that future female leaders are likely to encounter (Ely, Ibarra and Kolb, 2011) in German industries. Further research could clarify these issues.

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Appendix case study embedded gender images

Excerpt from a Case Study Haug, 2016; parts of it are published in Osnes, G. (Ed.). (2016). *Family Capitalism: Best practices in ownership and leadership*. Taylor and Francis.

HERITAGE OF A MALE-DOMINATED LEADERSHIP FOR FOUR GENERATIONS

A case study from the German utilities industry describes a four generation family founded in 1952 after World War II, a medium-sized enterprise with approximately 140 employees and 39 million in revenues. They are currently in a long and well-prepared transition phase from third to fourth generation. Traditionally passed down from father to son the business is now preparing for a shift to a gender-balanced leadership to be continued by the coming generation. The founding of the company had been an emergency solution. After World War II, the federal state government searched for different water sources in various regions to provide drinking water for the locals. The water they discovered proved to be too hard and contained too many minerals so the sources were shut. The founder located a business for drinking water and lemonades in an area close by. When the house was hit by bombs in April 1945, the previous family was forced to find a new existence for themselves. The founder for this new business tested the water, bought the areaand started on a shoestring. He had the water analysed and appreciated its high concentrate of magnesium and calcium which he thought was perfect for strengthening one's health. What was once the vision of the founder had become the leading strategy of the company and accumulated advantage on the financial, socio-emotional and symbolizing dimension. With a long term perspective in mind the present leader realizes that it is time to accentuate the transition to the fourth generation.

This next paragraph provides insights into the leader's learning process from past events and examines closer the leader and follower dynamics. Grint (2011) argues that leadership is best

learned in retrospect and that perfect leaders or perfect leadership is non-existing. It is trial and error and learning from experiencing and reflecting upon it. If reflection is a key aspect to learning then it might explain the power shift the company experienced after two financial crises. The financial failures and need for safety which the company experienced over the last 40 years had led to a strong decision making position by the current leader. It can be concluded that by doing so he laid the foundation of his right as 'power instance'. However, Conger (1990) cautions to the greater personal control a leader achieves by means of conquering a crisis successfully. There is danger in the correlating process of not paying heed to advice and recommendations by staff as one of them states: *"Sometimes our boss reaches decisions without considering our viewpoints and you cannot talk to him"*. The company's history has brought forward decisive and trusted leaders with high positive visibility (Gordon, 2011). It can therefore be assumed that the undercurrent relationship dynamics of power and authority created not only a framework for a male dominated leadership style over three generations, but also a strong almost unhealthy attachment of employees (Allix, 2000). The burnout of one manager close to the leader characterizes the high impact that leader-follower dynamics can cause (Kellermann, 2005). One of the managers stated: "*Sometimes I feel responsible where I am not responsible*". The high loyalty among staff underpinned by high ethical standards of the company's leader and family members supports effectiveness (De Hoogh and Den Hartog, 2008). However, the leader-follower relationship allows for concerns about idiosyncratic aspects of the leadership (Gordon, 2011) and the leader-follower identity which is "inextricably linked, mutually reinforcingand shifting within context" (Collinson, 2006: 187). It is evident in the manifestation of follower's perspectives of the CEO as the leader prototype. Standards set out by the leader are taken as regulating guidelines for the entire organisation and management as one of the management team members states: *"Decisions are made together in consensus, but the current leader makes the final decision"*.

The company's metaphor of a rigid airship "Zeppelin", with the leader and a male non-family CEO steering it and followers knowing their roles and task, stands for their ethical values. The interdependent aspects of their group identity are revealed itself in follower statements such as *"We try to hold on to our strengths as a family owned business"*. Consequently, it can be concluded that the company is characterized by an interdependent and interconnected relationship between leaders and followers (Grint, 2005). The evidence highlights that the top-down impact is demonstrating a strong leader-follower dynamic. Even though they consider decisions made in consensus it is the CEO's decision as last power instance on the matter that is carried out. Collinson (2006) cautions awareness of the complexity of followers' identities which seems to surface in this particular case study from the German utilities industry. It could be characterized as unison agreement on following the leader's vision and guidelines.

To contrast, a critical mass of women on board, 30% respectively, or three women as in a case study from the German utilities industry (cousin, sister and niece) is required to enhance corporate impact (Jia and Zhang, 2013; Joecks, Pulland Vetter, 2012). Since this is not the case, it can be concluded that power issues within the next leadership generation are likely to emerge. The first woman to work in the company was the founder's spouse. She considered it her duty to ensure harmony by fulfilling her role as serving and contributing partner (Eagly and Johnson, 1990). As part of her upbringing she did not resent the leadership role her husband occupied. She states: "*Because my mother has loved her husband so much she did it for him because she was raised like that. She has always helped others. It has never been different*". In return, women have never held a position of power within the company. The son's leader, stemming from three generations of male leaders, exposed to a male leadership style and used to his father as the final power instance on subjects at hand has to share power

and authority with his cousin (Pesonen, Tienariand Vanhala, 2009). Power issues could emerge in meetings where there is little room for transformational leadership style, but rather rational decision making (Grisone and Beeby, 2007). The young female leader comes from generations of women not exercising positions of dominance and cannot draw on established role models (Ionescu, 2012).

Traditional mainstream leadership and management theory focus on the (male) individual as sole source of leadership, thereby neglecting the role of female co-founders in family owned companies (Barrett and Moores, 2009). Early literature focuses on male entrepreneurship (Brush, 2006) even though entrepreneurship on its own is clearly defined as gender neutral, thereby highlighting the impact is has on the growth of a company's assets. However, women are more present as family leaders than ever (Hampton, 2009) and a ground shifting in leadership in family owned companies is steadily taking place. What makes family owned businesses unique (Casperz and Thomas, 2015) and what sets them apart from corporate companies are the differing values and "the call" to lead and manage for generations to come. It can be concluded that a visibly seen power shift like a) the leader's female cousin on the executive board and b) a transition of change like a prospective gendered-balanced generation of leaders is going to challenge embedded images and attitudes (Collinson, 2011) by customers and employees alike. The established male leadership style which staff and clients alike have been used to might trigger different reactions. It could result in resistance to female leadership, evaluating them less positively, withholding information or bypassing the female leaders (Eagly and Karau, 2002).

REFLECTIONS ON EMBEDDED IMAGES REGULATING A GERMAN FAMILY BUSINESS FROM THE GERMAN UTILITIES INDUSTRY

According to the leader's sister success is equally owed to the hidden female champions (Boulouta, 2013) and they are now stepping into the limelight (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchelland Ristikari, 2011). It seems, however, as if the golden thread in a case study from the German utilities industry is that the hidden champions, the female co-founder and the second generation mother of the current leader, have been disappeared from the memories of the male memory when it comes to leader impact. The three male interview partners in this particular case study from the German utilities industry did not mention the women's participation in setting up the business. It was only in the first female interview that the niece of the owner mentioned her grandmother's role. However, she only pointed out that the many household duties she was responsible for had made it possible for the owner and his brother to set up the business in the first place. Collinson emphasizes that embedded images are guiding men and women in decision-making processes alike (Collinson, 2011). One of the most surprising results was the fact that nobody considered the female co-founder, the interviewee's grandmother, as noteworthy. Only after I finished the analysis and had compared it to the international findings with the other case studies, did I realize that an important part was missing. I inquired about the grandmother's support in setting up the business after World War II. As a result, the family investigated their family history and were astonished to find her significant part in setting up the business. Not only did she raise the children, but she was also an equal business partner to her husband. They shared responsibilities, tasks and duties. The difference was that only the male founder was perceived as the "real business owner". It highlights the fact that the hidden champions have been hidden for almost four generations by female and male family members alike. Four generations later, in this particular case study from the German utilities industry one of the daughters has still not entered the company as a major decision maker, but remains in the background for now. Her female cousin is setting the stage for her by becoming chief financial officer (CFO) as the socio-political context is

changing. This is in a business where women have never held an official position of power within the company. The younger cousin of the upcoming CFO states about her entry into the so far male dominated patriarchal leadership system: *"It is sure to change, there is a new authorized signatory, she is sure to bring change and rock the boat a little, simply because I believe a woman does things differently".* Drawing on Jepson's framework model (2009) and linking it to Gordon's historical antecedents (2002) the case study from the German utilities industry seems to be a strong indicator for embedded images (Collinson, 2011) on a wide cultural dimension.

CONCLUSION

Social Change and Broader Impact through Intended or Unintended Consequences

The development in the socio-political landscape after the 1940's and 50's enhances this entitlement that female family business leaders have. The family business daughters from a German family owned business from a German utilities industry would be welcome to have children, would be given support by the entire family, kept up-to-date on all business related issues and re-enter the family business at any self-determined point in time. She would not have to choose between family and career, only when to re-enter the company. We are wondering if, even on an international level, something unique is happening on a larger scale. Female co-founders and the current generation, sisters and daughters of a case study from the German utilities industry, can no longer be considered as hidden champions. They have already entered the limelight and can be seen performing on a national, regional and maybe soon a global stage.

The leadership and embedded images discussed in this paper has addressed a number of significant issues which bring forth the question of what it would take to navigate the

challenges and barriers most likely to intercede with the upcoming female leadership (Ely, Ibarraand Kolb, 2011) within the family business of a German utilities industry. More women on the executive board might ensure higher impact (de Luic-Carnicer, Martínez-Sánchez, Pérez-Pérezand Vela-Jiménez, 2008). Experienced consultants could smooth the path by focusing on gender specific potentials (McKinsey 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010) within this specific German family business and participate in meetings with a reflection session afterwards. It could unveil embedded images, attitudes and behaviours (Fletcher, 2004). What we have found surprising is that the family business environment enabled women to execute powerful roles and have a family at the time they wanted. Having children and executing powerful roles was part of the long-term strategic approach of the co-founders and their next generations. It raises interesting considerations of what corporate companies can do in order to draw on successful family business concepts.

FURTHER RESEARCH

It would require additional research to predict the impact and consequences of embedded images, attitudes and stereotypes at deep structural level female family business leaders might encounter. Due to global changes worldwide (Deloitte, 2011) the question arises for future research how on a larger scale the impact of new female leaders within family business companies will influence the traditional dominating male heroic leadership approach within family owned businesses.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Documents participants received prior to the interview:

Appendix 1.1 Interview protocol and researcher guide

What to bring along:

- A small audio-recording device. If the interview is conducted via Skype it is necessary to check for recording quality.
- Crayons for drawing (organisation in the mind)

Contracting with the participants:

The interviewers will be approached by a professional stance. The interviewee will be contacted before and given the time to talk and agree on being interviewed face-to-face or via phone/skype. This might contribute to the interviewed person to ask others to participate, or to have a license to contact others.

The participants will be sent the information "package" containing a letter describing the research, a short version of the interview guide, a document describing their rights as research objects and a short description of the PhD dissertation.

Collecting the material

Estimated time for an interview is 1 to 1 ½ hours, semi-structured and informal. The respondents can read the interview guide attached to the information letter. They will have access to it in advance to make them less anxious about what the researcher is going to ask about and they also can be better prepared.

The researcher will take some notes of thoughts and feelings regarding how she came in contact with the participant and how the entry was. It could also be about the agreement which was made with them and how arrangements were made for the interview.

How to use observations and reflections in the interview:

There will be 30 minutes for structured documenting immediately after the interview. Focus will be on the subjective and objective account, analysis of the incident and personal learning. There will be space given for later thoughts and reflections after reading the transcripts for the first time. The interviewer will go back to using the recorder or notebook if new things come to her mind at a later stage.

INTERVIEW TOPICS

A. Approach

The interviewer will allow herself to be drawn into the interviewee's personal story and anecdotes, experiences and narratives. Therefore the main objective is to be with the interviewee, following the thread of the story and following up with asking of their thoughts and feelings connected to these stories, films, frames. Evaluating and analysing does not play a role at this point of time.

B. Basic Format

The different themes and points below will overlap within the interview, some will go through it all and it will take only a prompt or a short question to get more detail from their part of the story. It does not have to follow in a particular sequence but all of them will be asked to start with an organisation in the mind drawing followed by concrete and personal stories ('turning points', 'supporting mechanism' and' influential key players').

As mentioned before serve the research questions: questions about support?
a) What is the nature and purpose of gender diversity on boards within organisations? b) What are the challenges for female business leaders to get and remain on boards within organisations? c) What would men and women gain from gender diversity on boards within organisations? d) What changes on boards need to take place in order to experience a power shift towards gender diversity? e) What are the cultural implications? f) What would a gender quota counterbalance?
Research questions: g) What is the nature of power? h) Is power gender-neutral?

Gender dynamics and personal narrative(s)

Exercise to start with:
"Could you take the crayons please and draw an organisation- in- the- mind? Could you make me see how you view yourself within your organisation? Who is close to you?"
Here are the instructions: Please use neither names nor an organization chart. You can use symbols, pictures or anything else you would like.

Theme 1: Biography of successful female executives

- Could you tell me about your childhood, your career development and who supported you to follow your aspirations?
- What made the difference?
- Would you know of someone who has made it to the top?
- What made the difference?

Theme 2: Gender issues

- How has gender issues been important in your organisation and different roles?
- Is there a mandate for a gender quota to promote female non-executive directors on boards?
- What are your ideas and thoughts?

Theme 3: Cultural, social and political context

- In which ways shapes your culture the role of females?
- What are the social expectations of women in your culture? In your organisation?
- How are the roles of women displayed in a political context?

Interview questions: The questions might slightly vary and will be adapted to the interviewee.

1. External barriers:
    - What do you personally consider as the external barriers for women achieving top positions within companies?

- Would you like to share a story, anecdote or your experience with me?
- What are your thoughts and feelings about it?

2. Internal barriers:
    - What do you personally consider as the internal barriers for women achieving top positions within companies?
    - Would you like to share a story, anecdote or your experience with me?
    - What are your thoughts and feelings about it?

3. Legally binding gender quotas:
    - What is your point of view regarding women benefitting from legally binding gender quotas to promote women on boards?
    - Would you like to share a story, anecdote or your experience with me?
    - What are your thoughts and feelings about it?

4. Gender-balanced boards:
    - Thinking and looking at the current discussions about gender-balanced boards, what is your vantage point?
    - Would you like to share a story, anecdote or your experience with me?
    - What are your thoughts and feelings about it?

5. Determinants for recruiting applicants:
    - What do you think are the determinants for recruiting applicants?
    - Would you like to share a story, anecdote or your experience with me?
    - What are your thoughts and feelings about it?

6. Number of qualified women
    - What is your opinion towards a sufficient number of qualified women serving as non-executives directors if gender quotas were introduced?
    - Would you like to share a story, anecdote or your experience with me?
    - What are your thoughts and feelings about it?

Summary and last thoughts

When you think about the themes we have gone through in the interview, what do you consider to be important for changing the future prospects for female executives? What is it that would have to be different for the next generation?

1. Any conclusions, last comments or recommendations?

Thank you for taking the time for this interview.

Mona Haug

Appendix 1.2: Invitation letter to companies and participants

2016

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

herzlich möchten wir Sie dazu einladen, Ihr Expertenwissen und Ihren persönlichen Standpunkt in die **Führungsstudie „Gender quotas for top positions: a myth or a mandate?“** einzubringen.
Dieses Dissertationsprojekt wird in Zusammenarbeit mit der University of the West of England, Bristol und der Tiba Management GmbH durchgeführt.
Hintergrund des Projektes ist die kontroverse Diskussion zum Thema ‚Frauen in Führungspositionen'. Unsere Analysen, Erkenntnisse und Evaluationen tragen dazu bei, ein klar umrissenes Verständnis für die Perspektiven von weiblichen Führungskräften aus Sicht der Führungskräfte in der deutschen Automobilindustrie aufzuzeigen.

Insbesondere bedeutungsvoll sind für uns die einzelnen Standpunkte von weiblichen und männlichen Führungskräften zum Thema Karriereentwicklung und Aufstiegschancen für Frauen innerhalb der Automobilindustrie. Damit sind alle Führungskräfte gemeint, die eine personelle oder technische Verantwortung im Unternehmen ausüben.
Die Ermittlung von Kernkompetenzen, Optionen und Barrieren, sowie signifikante Aspekte und Impulse sollen eine Grundlage schaffen für:

- **Die Erstellung eines Kompetenzprofils von weiblichen Führungskräften**
- **Ein Mentoring Programm und übergreifendes Netzwerk für zukünftige weibliche Führungskräfte**
- **Ein Wissens-und Talentmanagement von diversity teams, um die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit von Unternehmen zu erhöhen**

Die Studie wird zu einem noch zu bestimmenden Zeitpunkt in 2015/2016 stattfinden: (1-1,5 Stunden Interviews mit weiblichen und männlichen Teilnehmern).
Wir freuen uns sehr, wenn Sie Ihr Interesse an dieser Studie bekunden und diesbezüglich sich mit einer Teilnahme an der Studie bereit erklären. Bitte lassen Sie uns eine Nachricht unter unten aufgeführten Kontaktdaten zukommen. Wir melden uns umgehend bei Ihnen, um weitere Details zu besprechen.
Mit besten Grüßen,

Mona Haug
und das Supervisoren Team der University of the West of England, Bristol.

Kontakt:
Mona Haug, PhD c.
University of the West of England, info@monahaug.de , www.monahaug.de, Tel. +49 (170) 473 4760
Sponsor: Tiba Management GmbH

Appendix 1.3: Interview Consent Form
Mona Haug, MA

1. I am aware that the purpose of this interview is to discuss my professional career and work experience. The results of this interview will be used in Mona Haug's forthcoming PhD dissertation and may also be published in other scholarly media and for future publications (such as articles, books, book chapter etc.) and for public events (e.g. keynote presentations, coaching courses etc.).

2. I have been informed that the interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes and that I will be audiotaped. Follow-up questions may be asked later via email to clarify a point or explore an area of interest uncovered later in the study.

3. I understand that Mona Haug will retain the master-copy of this audiotape and create a transcript of the interview, both of which will be securely held and protected for safe keeping. ***I will receive the transcript and the interpretive "story" prior to publication.***

4. I understand my responses are confidential and that my identity will not be revealed. If a response is quoted directly, a pseudonym will be assigned and no information will be provided to link this material to me directly.

5. I will not be asked to discuss classified material or mission specifics which might compromise security in any way.

6. I understand that this interview is completely voluntary and that I may stop the interview or withdraw from the study at any time.

7. I understand that there are no anticipated risks of my participation in this interview beyond a possible mild fatigue. If I do feel uncomfortable, I understand that I can contact the researcher directly: Mona Haug, +49 (0) 170 473 4760 or info@monahaug.de or www.monahaug.de or the Supervisor Dr Doris Schedlitzki, +44 (0) 117 328 1700 (Doris.Schedlitzki@uwe.ac.uk).

8. Prior to signing this consent form, I was given the opportunity to ask any questions.

9. I understand that there is no agreement, written or verbal, beyond that expressed in this consent form. If I would like, I may keep a copy of this consent form for my records.

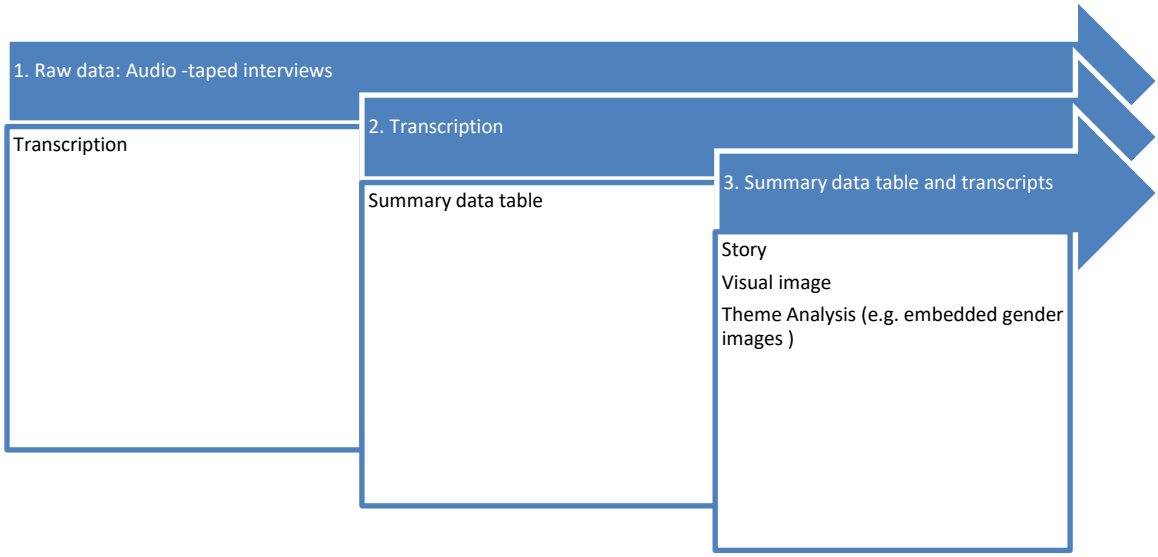
By signing this document I am indicating that I understand the above explanations and, on that basis, I give consent to my voluntary participation in this research.

_____ _____

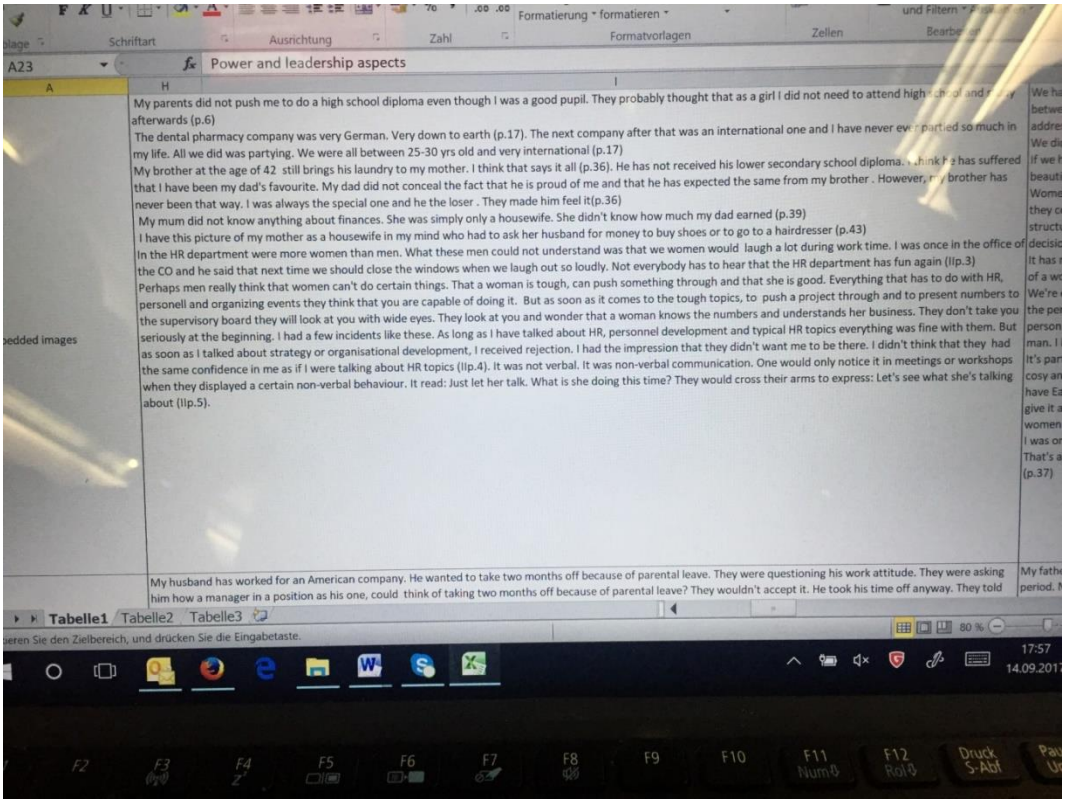
Signature Date

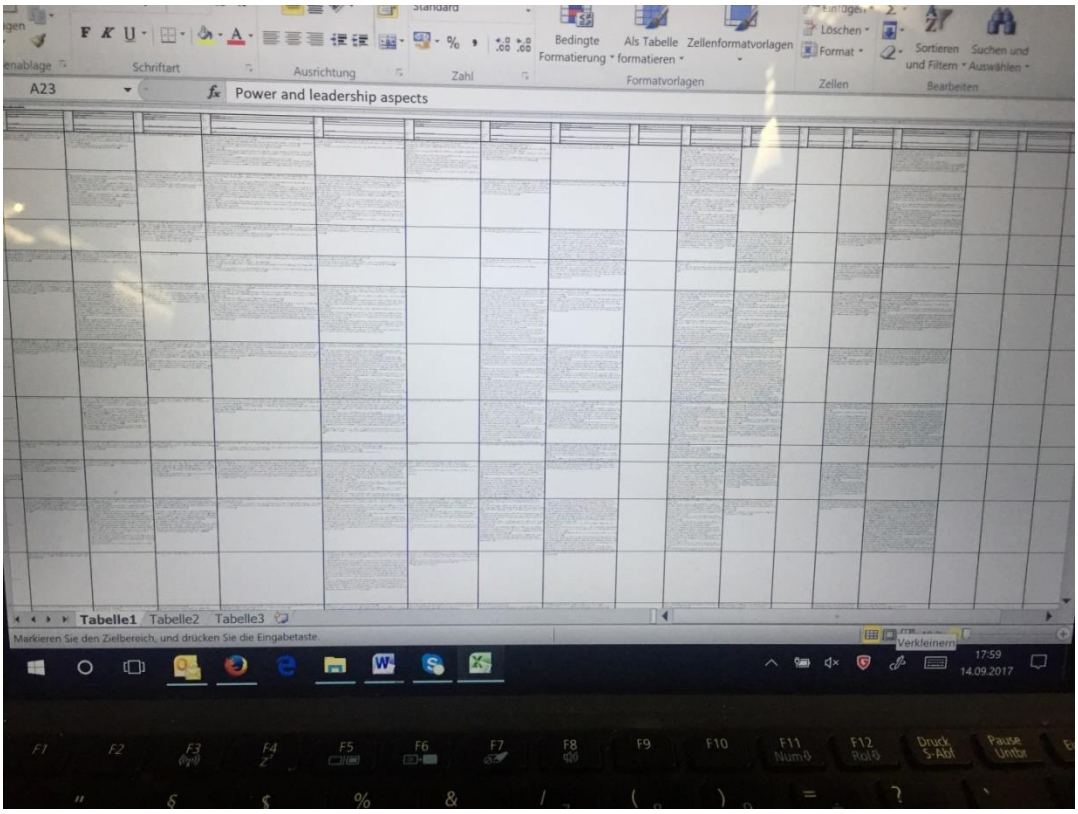
_____ Print Name

Appendix 2: Research Process



Appendix 3: Summary data table





Appendix 4: Excerpt from a transcript

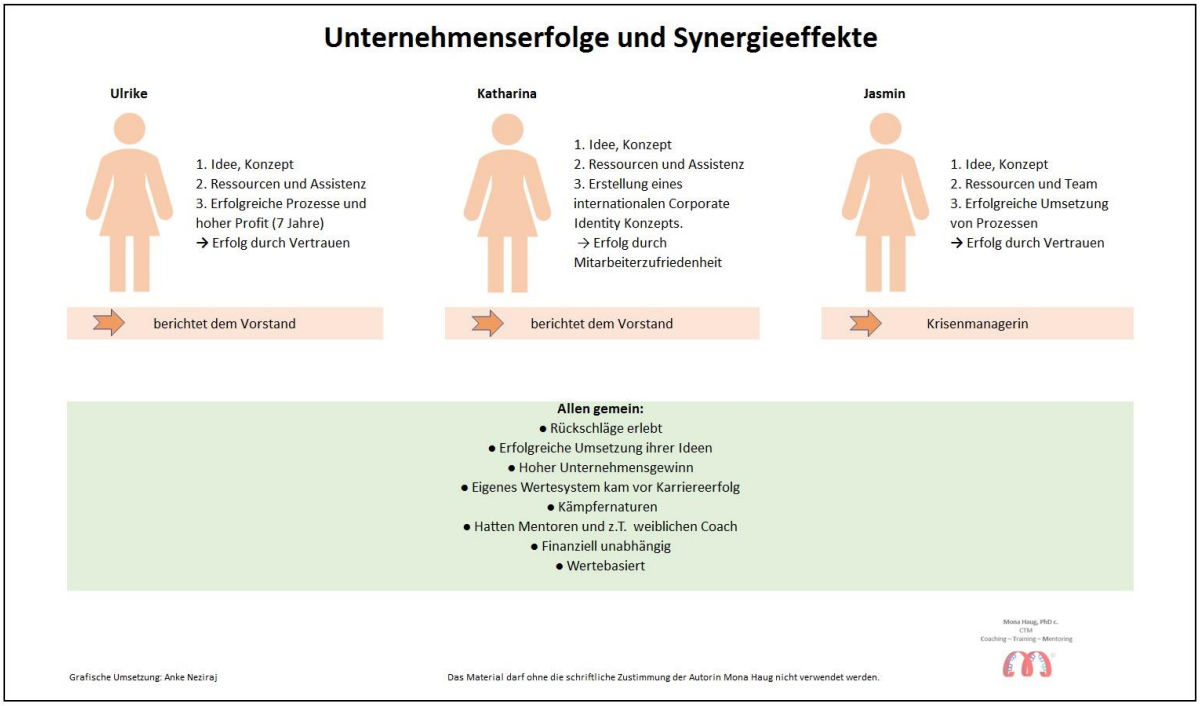
Mona	Was würdest du sagen deiner Meinung nach, wenn du dir das so anschaust. Was sind die Barrieren für Frauen in eurem Unternehmen oder auch generell, wenn du so schaust, um Karriere zu machen? Deine persönliche Meinung. Was sind da für dich die Barrieren? Extern, intern? Also, was bringen Frauen selber mit sich, wo du sagst „toll“ oder eben auch nicht? Oder was sind deine Erfahrungen, die du gemacht hast?
Interview-partner	Also, ich simplifiziere das wahrscheinlich extrem. Aber ich reduziere das sehr, sehr stark auf das Thema Kinder. Ich kann dazu nachher auch ein ganz gutes Beispiel sagen. Die Erziehung der Kinder obliegt im Rollenverständnis der Gesellschaft und der Familien nach wie vor sehr stark der Frau. Es ist zum größten Teil die Frau, die zurücksteckt und nicht der Mann, bzgl. der Karriere. Und ich denke, es ist sehr schwer Kinder und Karriere unter einen Hut zu bekommen, das ist extrem schwer. Wenn du dich tatsächlich dann ein Stück weit rausnimmst - also, ich bringe jetzt mal das Beispiel, das mich umtreibt, wenn du dich rausnimmst und dich erstmal sehr stark auf die Familie konzentrierst, um dann später wieder in die Karriere einzusteigen, da verlierst du einfach ganz arg wichtige Jahre. Und die holst du nicht mehr auf. Dir fehlt dann, finde ich, auch ein Stück dieser jugendlichen Leichtigkeit, die dich in der Karriere sehr stark und sehr schnell nach oben bringt. Deswegen bleiben Frauen oft stecken, was mir sehr leid tut. Denn ich glaube, dass Frauen oft die besseren Manager sind. Ich glaube, dass Männer sich in ihren Managementqualitäten überschätzen. Aber das Thema Kinder und damit auch Aussetzen der Karriere, das kannst du einfach nicht delegieren. Ich will dir kurz das Beispiel nennen. Ich hatte, in der Firma, in der ich für die letzten vier Jahre war, einen Bereich, der war geprägt von Frauen. Und zwar war das der Bereich

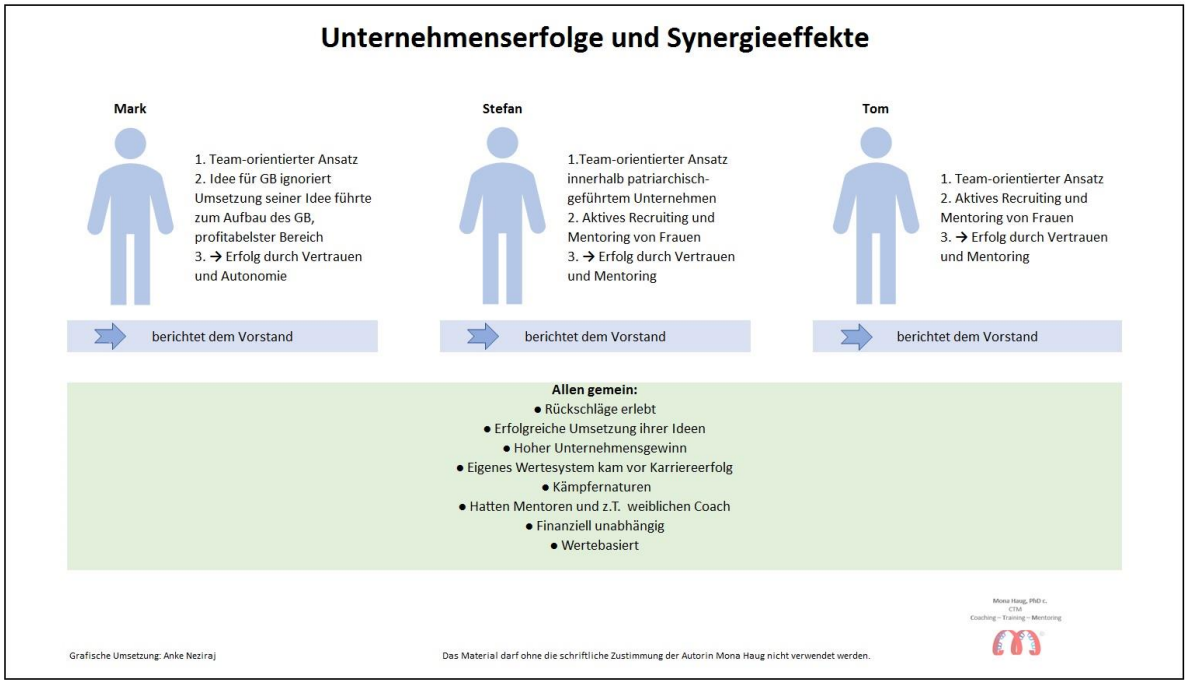
	Anwendungsentwicklung. Es ging um ein Produkt, das sehr häufig im privaten aber auch im Geschäftsbereich benutzt wird. Dieses Produkt ist sehr intelligent, denn es hat eine automatische Steuerung integriert. Damit du das Produkt aber herstellen kannst, brauchst du ganz viel Wissen, über die Dinge, die mit diesem Produkt weiterverarbeitet werden. Das ist ein Bereich, in dem sehr viele Frauen studieren. D.h., die Frauenquote in dieser Abteilung war enorm hoch. Ich hatte nie einen Bereich, der so problematisch war, wie dieser und wo viel Zwietracht enthalten war. Warum war das so? Es waren alles gute Frauen, die dort gearbeitet haben, total nett. Aber, sie haben dann Kinder bekommen und sind dann erst einmal ausgeschieden und kamen später wieder zurück. Dann haben sie Vollzeit oder Halbzeit gearbeitet. Also, bei Teilzeit haben sie 20 oder 25 Stunden gearbeitet und haben gleichzeitig das Problem mit den Kindern managen müssen. So, jetzt ist ein Kind nun einmal im Kindergarten und es gibt genau ein Zeitfenster von einer viertel Stunde, in der du das Kind abholst. Die Mütter haben dann ihre Arbeit gemacht und jetzt bist du eben in einem Projektgeschäft und da kommt mal mehr und mal weniger Arbeit rein. Es war aber für alle immer klar, dass sie um Punkt zwei oder halb drei Uhr, wann auch immer der Termin war, ihren Stift hingelegt haben und ihre Kinder abgeholt haben. Was war die Konsequenz? Wer hat die Arbeit aufgehoben? Das waren diejenigen, die keine Kinder hatten und die mussten dann quasi Nachsitzen. Es gab da tatsächlich sogar einige Väter, die eben in Vollzeit gearbeitet haben – und ich bringe jetzt mal ganz bewusst digital – die dann unglaublich sauer waren, weil sie gesagt haben, jetzt muss ich länger arbeiten, sehe mein Kind heute Abend nicht zum Abendessen, weil die anderen konsequent ihre Kinder aus dem Kindergarten abholen. Und das hat echt zu Spannungen geführt, in dem Bereich. Ich hatte dort

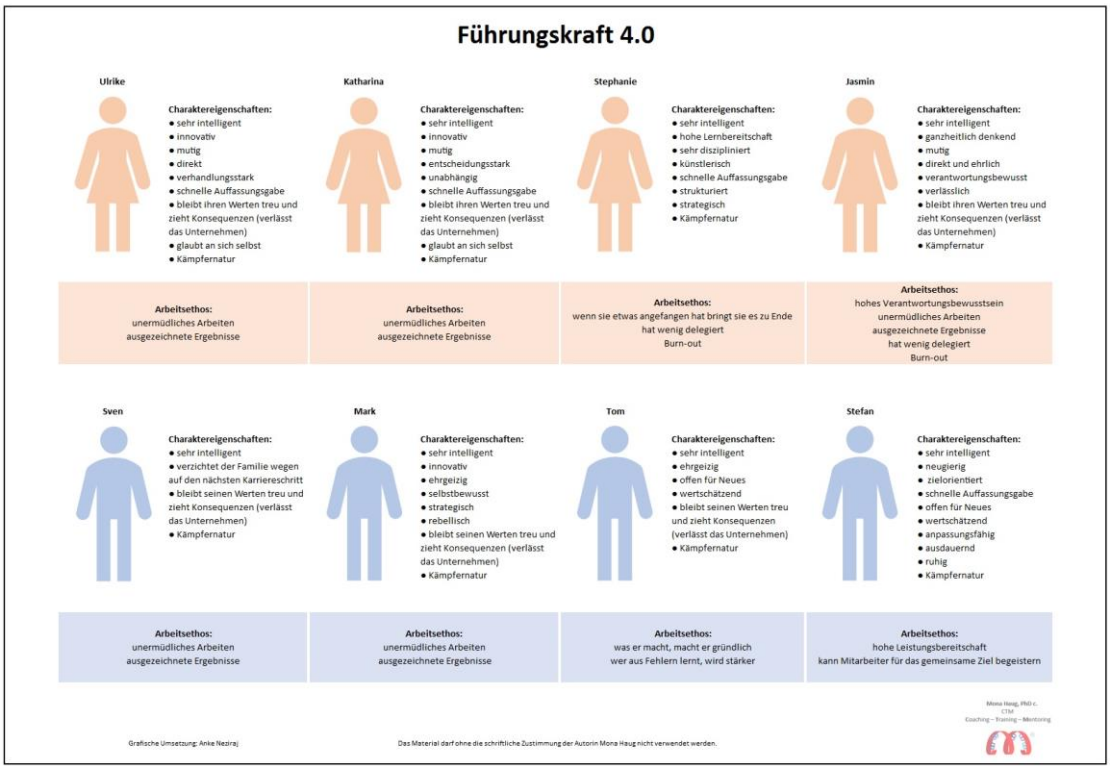
	eine Führungskraft, die ist extrem gefördert worden von der Firma, war quasi unter der direkten Schirmherrschaft des Sharholders und die ist fast an der Situation – sie sollte das Projekt leiten, der nächsten Generation – und ist fast an der Situation, dass sie das Projekt leiten sollte und eben auch für die Kinder da sein sollte, wobei sie mit ihrem Mann schon eine Regelung getroffen hatte, dass der Mann auch nur vier Tage arbeitet, also, der hat dann schon einen Teil übernommen. Aber daran ist sie fast zerbrochen. Die hat also diese Spannung zwischen „Ich möchte eigentlich gerne eine gute Mutter sein“ und „Ich möchte aber auch eine gute Projektleiterin sein“, das hat sie nicht hinbekommen. Ich habe sie dann aus der Position genommen und habe ihr eine andere Führungsposition gegeben, die flexibler war und mit der Kindererziehung besser vereinbar war. Weil, wenn du ein Projekt leitest, das geht nicht. Das funktioniert nicht. Du kannst nicht einfach deine Stunden von 9.00 Uhr bis 17.00 Uhr arbeiten und dann einfach gehen und die Aufgaben delegieren. Du musst da sein. Ein Projekt lebt von deiner Kraft. Und wenn du diese Kraft nicht hast oder letztlich auch nicht authentisch bist, dann funktioniert das nicht. Also authentisch bist, in der Art der Forderungen, die du stellst, das meine ich damit. Ich glaube, das ist das größte Dilemma und die größte Hürde für Frauen, wirklich top Karrieren zu machen.

Appendix 5: Self-reflection as a woman, mother and wife at a women's retreat in 2013

Appendix 6: Presentation first findings







Presentation at a medical-technical conference in Norway:

Appendix 7: Stories

You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience
in which you really stop to look fear in the face.
You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror.
I can take the next thing that comes along'.

Eleanor Roosevelt

Ulrike's story
Fighting against the odds

Marshall (1995), telling the life story of Ruth, one of the characters in her book 'Women managers moving on', starts her chapter by writing: *This is a story which cannot fully be told* (p. 257). Exactly 20 years later, I want Ulrike's story to start just the same: *This is a story which cannot fully be told.* After forwarding the transcript to Ulrike she commented on how much she must have trusted me by sharing her entire story. She was concerned about the depth and details she has shared with me. I reassured her that she would be able to author her own story to make sure that her identity will not be revealed. Trusting other people is a precious and rare gift for her. Over the course of her life, Ulrike has turned into a female warrior fighting against the odds and thereby managed to get in touch with her female identity and hold on to it which is very important to her. Ulrike was born in 1965 and was the last one of three children. Fifty years later, Ulrike has risen to a top leadership position and is one level beneath the supervisory board. The company belongs to an international global player in the automotive industry. Her journey to a top leadership position represents her inner strength; her perseverance and value-based leadership style; her honed fighting skills; her smartness and strategic approach while often being the only woman in a male-dominated hostile arena.

Central themes

Having the right to live and succeed in a sometimes hostile environment was central to her story and to her identity. She emphasizes the significance of wise women throughout history and has been fortunate to have met various from whom she learned a lot. She believes that women are extremely powerful in times of uncertainty and crisis situations. Therefore, as a logical consequence to her, more women are needed as significant decision makers on supervisory boards. Ulrike is only promoting a legally binding quota insofar that it triggers a power shift. However, in her opinion it is not the best initiative to strengthen women's influence. Her life experience in business has taught her that only a few women are senior enough to accept other strong women next to them. She wants her story to be told to encourage other women to fight against the odds on their journey to a top leadership position.

Learnings from her childhood and early years in business

I have been called into question for the first 17 years of my life. I would not fit into the system. The next 20 years I have spent on trying to find answers for what's wrong or right and why it is so. My journey will never end. Her parents sent her to Australia when she was 17. She stayed as a guest with an Australian family and that's when she experienced what belonging to a family means. The experience triggered an understanding of her distanced relationship with her parents. She grew up in a very strict German home which she appreciates today but could not back then. Her father was a voluntary pilot and Ulrike has grown up observing him standing by his values. She has learned from her father to stand by her values too. Ulrike argues that she has learned to test boundaries by rebelling against her mother. She was raised with the expectation that as a woman her role was to marry and have children. Her mother was born in 1930 and she came from an up-tight household. She has been very strict with Ulrike. According to her mother's worldview the needs of the husband was more important than the wife's. Her parents were wondering why she would be so job-

oriented because she was not meant to be successful in a job. Her mother only mentioned decades later that it seemed as if Ulrike was happy even though she was not married nor had children. Ulrike decided consciously not to challenge her mother's worldview, so that her mother who is 85 years old would not question her own life.

Her first job as an apprentice taught her the essentials of the leadership style she would not want to acquire. The patriarch of the family-owned company she worked for oversaw personally every single employee and made sure they arrived on time. She knew back then that being in an office and led by such a person was not what she was looking for in life. A series of different jobs followed after the first one. When she applied once more for a new job, she knew that she didn't have any of the qualifications, but she asked for a chance nevertheless. She pointed out that it might turn into a win-win situation and she got accepted and given the opportunity to prove herself. At another company she was within a high potential program, but because she could not agree on their values she felt she had to leave the company. Ulrike concludes that she has learned in her life that it is important to stay true to one's convictions independent of other people's expectations.

Being faster and smarter than others

Ulrike finished her high school diploma with an A. She managed her apprenticeship in half of the time due to her intelligence. She accomplished a German economist degree at the same time as being an apprentice and a fellow degree afterwards. She has participated in a high potential program and participated in trainings over the course of 25 years. She started out working in the back office, then first woman as sales representative, then first woman as in-house broker for another company. Ulrike works today in an extremely patriarchal male-

dominated area and is one level beneath supervisory level. Ulrike states: *It is one thing to be intelligent and another to use it. Intelligence and madness are closely allied. Another issue is if you don't know what's right or wrong and when one is so different from others as it has been in my case. Why have I always been faster than others? Why did I never have to study hard? Why does everything come so easy to me? I have critically inquired it all.* During her business career she managed a high profit for one of her employers. It all started when Ulrike was approached by a small broker to whom she mentioned that she had an idea and asked him whether he was interested in it. Half a year later he asked her again about her vision. She outlined it again and told him what she needed - a fast information technology and an assistant. As a result of trusting Ulrike and meeting her requirements, the broker was rewarded with a significant amount as business profit. The business has been profiting highly because of her innovations. The processes are still in place and work well after 7 years. Her superior has never understood what she had actually implemented, but he trusted her completely. He was courageous enough to give her a chance. Looking back at the different companies she worked for, she commented on the fact that power games are still in place and have not changed at all. As an example she describes a meeting and the déjà vu she experienced recently when attending the company she started out with 20 years ago: *Nothing has changed over the last 20 years in this company. I was shocked. Really shocked. What I have witnessed is that very often men recruit rather other men than women because they know what to expect. Gender was an issue in 1995 in one of the companies I worked in and I was surprised to find that 20 years later it still was. It is the way men behave; how they talk and who shakes hand with whom. I, except for a female assistant, was the only female manager in the room. They had a hard time to acknowledge the presence of a woman in their discussions: "... gentlemen - oh, and lady of course.*

She recommends that women identify the silverback in the company. The 'silverback' (Gorilla) is an influential decision maker. Women need to build a relationship with the silverback, find out their points of view, make them interested in them and their projects and keep them informed about their development. It is significant to align them to the same long-term strategies or at least have them on board. The challenge is to identify them because quite often they don't necessarily have an official position of power. However, they influence decisions through verbal and non-verbal signs. Therefore it is vital to establish a contact which allows to build a relationship, but at the same time to keep a respectful distance.

Learnings from the strengths of her vulnerability and power dynamics applied in a business environment

I've picked up on a comment by Ulrike made earlier in the interview and asked her what she had meant by saying that her vulnerability would make her strong at work. She'd be afraid of her vulnerability within a relationship but at work it makes her stronger she repeated. She has good and bad days and had to learn to address it when someone touched a sore spot. She works a lot in male-dominated countries such as Italy and Russia. She then told me about an unpleasant experience which she once had in Russia. She had been in an elevator with an American manager who lives in Russia and holds a very high position in the hierarchy when he started to overstep boundaries. She neither froze nor let anything happen; she recounts that she was only just able to manage the situation. She addressed the issue in a straightforward manner in the evening when they were sitting in the hotel. She told the manager that she would like to talk about the situation in the elevator. He knew immediately that he had come too close to her. She stated as a matter of fact that the manager is physically stronger than her and that his reaction made her afraid of him. She pointed out that she doesn't like to be afraid

of him. She considered him to be a person of respect and therefore wanted him to know that she had experienced fear. She inquired whether this had been his intention. He assured her that it had never been his intention. Since the exchange the manager is very polite and respects her. Ulrike believes that it will never happen again and she is certain that from that day on the manager paid attention to his behaviour. Especially when being alone with a woman in an elevator. She continues that she has very seldom met a woman trying to wield power over her. It has been mostly men. She has learnt to recognize when someone tries to wield power over her. She concludes that today power is active and not reactive and this is what makes the difference. Due to what she has experienced in life and has been able to emotionally reflect on, she can be who she is today. She realized that she does not only have to live with ambiguity, but also has to feel really comfortable with it. To live with ambiguity means to be able to survive. To feel comfortable with it means to enjoy what a person is doing. With everything there is. According to her, this is a highly energetic process and constantly on the move.

Learnings from other women and male mentors: Being a warrior and yet a feminine, powerful woman

To her, women have always served as wise consultants. However, they have always been feared at the same time. From her point of view, the role of women has not changed much for thousands of years. That's why she thinks that it is important to have the right women sitting on boards. Uncertainty surrounds us all and she is convinced that women have an incredible strength to deal with situations where change takes place. Companies would be well advised to have a woman on the executive board. She pointed out that she prefers to use a 'female language' because she is after all a woman. She argues that tough events make women not

harder, but more sensitive and help them to realize what's going on around them. She remembered receiving support from other people. One of them was her coach for more than six years. She learned from her how to be a warrior but not the real her. She knew she had a warrior within her, but didn't know who she truly was. She felt the female part in her was missing. Referring to the second woman who entered her life as a wise woman she points out that it was because of her that she got in touch with herself. Finally, after working with the wise woman for quite some time, Ulrike was capable of putting the missing puzzle pieces together. Nowadays, she accepts the up and downs in her life: *If the sea is rough, I'll find a way and if the sea is calm, it is ok with me too. I am at peace with myself.*

When pondering on male mentors in her life she listed several: The owner of the broker company for giving her the chance to expand on her innovative idea. Another mentor was her riding instructor who supported and promoted her. Even though she experienced due to his special support, envy at the age of 11 and didn't understand it then. Another mentor she recalls was her tutor at high school who was the first to allow her to think beyond the obvious and to critically question generally accepted statements. Then a team project leader who supported and trained her even though he knew he would lose her in the end. And a man in the business environment who supported her against massive resistance from other men because she was the first woman in distribution at a time when engineering was very male dominated.

Observations on women on their way to top leadership positions

Ulrike recites that she has met many people who have been in constant turmoil with themselves. They didn't know where they belonged and how to satisfy all the requirements of society. They wanted to be a good mother and be successful in a job at the same time and actually enjoy it which just didn’t work. Whether they impose it upon themselves, she doesn’t

know, but it is a crucial point for their professional development. To Ulrike, they have to be at peace whatever they decide on. As long as they are at peace with it, it shouldn't matter what their environment thinks of their decision. She argues that she has met many women who are very successful in their job, but found it challenging to accept themselves that their job means so much to them. As long as they and their families are at peace with it, they should not be concerned about what society thinks of their decision.

When I asked about her attitude towards a legally binding quota she replied that she is rather critical towards a gender quota. She thinks that only a few women have learnt to be authentic and accept the shark tank, the boy's club, as it is. She is often part of events from the boy's club, but she knows that she will never be part of it and she doesn't mind. She added that women can have great professional knowledge, be well acquainted with technology, be really extraordinary at what they are doing and still have to accept that they are moving within boundaries. As a matter of fact to Ulrike, and without judging it she added, the external requirements of a man's world exist and they are just there. She believes that it is incredible difficult for a woman to find their place or position and be true to themselves as a women at the same time. According to Ulrike, not many women have the potential for it. Only senior or experienced women align with other women at executive level. However, she argues that it is complete nonsense when women stick together to go against men. She emphasizes it again: *Complete nonsense.* Her recommendation to other women who want to make it to the top: *1. Get support via a mentor or coach or anyone who's aware of unconscious mechanisms. You need to become aware of it and learn how to deal with it. Then, learn the rules of the game - at the verbal and non-verbal level. Learn to identify the grey eminence in the room; the 'silverback' (Gorilla) who is a key person in the game. Challenges: 1. Identify them. 2. Establish a contact which allows you to build a relationship, but keep a distance - 1m as for Gorillas* (email 22.11.2015)

A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.

John C. Maxwell

Jasmin's story
Attacks from within

Jasmin's story starts while she was still in the womb. She was not planned and when her parents discovered that the mother was pregnant, it was too late to have an abortion. The mother was six months pregnant at the time of diagnosis and seriously ill. The doctor offered her two options: Either the mother would fight or both mother and child would die. The father decided to stop hisPhD research project which he worked on for the government and accepted a career-break. He wanted to support his wife in her fight for life which had been hanging like a Sword of Damocles over their heads. Jasmin describes her parents as strong personalities with the father being the alpha-animal in the family for many years until roles were switched as her father's health deteriorated and the mother became the alpha-animal. Jasmin has developed a strong and close relationship with her parents. She has been drawing on both of them as mentors throughout her life, even though she considers herself closer to her dad.

Attacks from within have marked her life as a student and later on as a sales manager. Fighting for her core values and struggling to live by them within a hostile, mainly male environment has been a repetitive pattern for many business years.

Central themes

Her core values which she was taught by her parents encompassed being open and honest, punctual, precise, reliable, polite and respectful to others. Furthermore, her father, who was a role model to her, taught her to believe in the potential of people and in supporting them. Jasmin was born in 1968 in East Germany and her life is marked by significant shifts. She was forced to accept a change of direction in her education due to an influential decision-maker playing political power games. Her mother was never a member of the ruling party and Jasmin did not comply with standards considered to be important by her teacher. Her father supported her in finding an apprenticeship so that she would have a degree. She experienced the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 as an historic event which opened new doors for her and her family even though it meant at the same time that her education was non-accredited.

Her innate drive to lead can be traced back to her first role of spokesperson during her studies. Her learnings as a representative of students included an awareness of influential negative group dynamics and a breach of trust by someone she had confided in. During her business life the aspects listed above would be the common thread she experienced. She believed in the potential of people and led teams several times out of a state of crisis to successful outcomes. Her high identification with corporate objectives underpinned by her desire to prove that she could do it meant that she neglected her own health. More than once she did not comply to the standards set by influential decision-makers within the organisation and was attacked severely several times from within.

High identification with company's objectives or being a successful leader of projects in crisis

Several times throughout her business career she was given demanding and challenging tasks which she mastered successfully. Three times she raised the warning bell to signal a looming crisis for the different companies she worked for. The first time she pro-actively warned the owner of his untrustworthy partner and offered to take over his responsibilities to save the

company. After the company went into insolvency proceedings the owner admitted to Jasmin that he should have listened to her and regretted not having done so.

The second time took place when she was still in her probationary period at a new company. She was 30 years old when she produced a document which listed all the deficiencies of the current project. She was fully aware that problems had been swept under the carpet. In her opinion, the launch of the new product into the market was doomed to fail and the reputation of the company was at risk. She had ignored all hierarchy levels by forwarding the document directly to her 'big boss'. It was done so on a Sunday and she waited anxiously for his decision. An hour later she received an email from him which stated that her 'big boss' wanted to see her the next morning at 8 o'clock. After the meeting she had achieved two things. On the one hand, the respect and back-up of the 'big boss' which included resources, budget and decision-making power and on the other hand, managers not well disposed to her actions and her person. As a matter of fact, by exposing the discrepancies of the project it revealed concurrently that the responsible managers in charge had done a poor job so far. The third time took place while she was still at the same company. Jasmin once again raised a warning signal because a different project was at risk and she decided to offer solutions. Once again she ignored hierarchy levels. This time other managers threatened that she should not do it but she decided to ignore them and prepare a presentation for a supervisory team member. She succeeded and received resources, support and a budget. The same managers, who had threatened her at the beginning, congratulated her afterwards on her successful outcome. *But do you know, Mrs Haug, with this, I have again hit many, really many men against the shinbone in their positions. They bear a grudge against me to this day because I believe that it has done harm to their career (p.21).*

Leadership competence

Her professional behaviour is marked by being pro-active, determined and open and honest. She achieved outstanding results in a high potential programme she was participating in, even though the responsible people only brought her into the programme at a late date. Jasmin contributes her success in managing projects in crisis to having a great team she can depend on. Whenever she was given the responsibility for a project, she would sit down with her new team and analyse and assess the situation with them. They executed necessary actions and acted as one team. Team members shared her vision and were committed to achieving a common objective. They trusted each other and worked long hours and achieved excellent results for the company. *I believe I have added sustainably to it with my team because suddenly, always when we have pulled out the cart and things work well and they can achieve laurels for themselves, then someone suddenly comes by and says: Bogner, I could take over your area. They either take my area or are appointed as my superiors* (p.3a).

She paid a high price for living by her values. She showed physical symptoms of a burn-out after the first project in crisis was handed over to her. The mentor Jasmin was working with privately recommended that she take a break. She was close to a second burn-out with another (informal role of a) project in crisis (Ely *et al*, 2011) she was responsible for at a later point of time. She had been threatened by peers and managers in higher positions and had to deal with being a scape-goat. One of her superiors accused her of being responsible for errors identified in an audit. She had to take on a lawyer and even though she could prove she was not responsible, it was a challenging time for her. She was responsible for uncovering political schemes and power relations several times and experienced being shouted at and physically cornered.

When she decided to move into another business unit, an older colleague shared his point of view with her. *He gave me feedback to my person and how he views me, how they have always tried to deliberately limit my professional development so that I would not become*

independent and leave or saw the legs from under them. I have cried because I could not believe that this is how they see me within the company (p.10a).

It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles. Then the victory is yours. It cannot be taken from you, not by angels or by demons, heaven or hell.

Buddha

Stephanie's story

Stephanie was born in East Germany in 1970. Her mother committed suicide within the same year Stephanie, her fourth daughter, was born. Her mother suffered from strong depressions and had known that her husband had been unfaithful to her. Stephanie says that she can talk quite rationally about it now because it belongs to the past, but it has been a formative experience for her. It is a taboo subject in her family and has not being addressed by her father or by her step-mother who was the former lover of her father.

Her father and step-mother, both doctors themselves, to whom she refers as parents in her interview, never motivated her to pursue artistic skills. Her parents were bourgeois-conservative and social recognition was extremely important to her father. Only discipline and performance mattered to him and he believed that good performance was not even worth mentioning. When her father realized that she wanted to study art he dismissed it as unprofitable and told her that she would do something reasonable. She should study education instead. A predefined path outlined by her father lay ahead of her. She recalls that his reaction pushed her down into a black pit of despair which resulted in creating a fortress around her.

Her entire childhood and adolescence was over shadowed by the death of her birth mother and the power exercised by her father. It made her leave her parent's home at an early age. It was an escape, an escape ahead she says. Since then, she has tried to live an independent life and to do things differently.

Central themes

Reflections on past events enabled her to become a better leader

Stephanie is disciplined, artisticand quick to grasp complex issues, good at structuring and planning. When she starts something, she finishes it. She came to terms with the fact that she could not pursue an art career because she realized that her other strengths underpinned her current profession. The recession in 2009 prevented her from having the chance to participate in a high potential program, but she had a male mentor who supported her. She loves her job which involves a budget of 70 million euros with which comes a lot or responsibility, a flood of information and the needs of staff under her responsibility, She enjoys motivating others to go the extra mile and to show them how to break down an immense workload into small manageable chunks. Her leadership style is different today because of a business seminar she attended which turned out to be an eye-opener. It was called 'encounters in superior quality' and she learned to address issues under an iceberg. As with an iceberg there were elements of her personality hard to see underneath the surface, which she had never been aware of, but were influencing her actions nevertheless. Once she became aware of it, she understood why she acted the way she did. She reflected on her way of doing things, the learnings from her childhood and realized that she wanted to execute her role as a leader differently. She decided to hold on to valuable behaviour acquired during her childhood and changed unhelpful mind-set and actions step-by-step.

She recalls losing team members in her first leadership role while she had not been aware of her leadership style. Losing team members not in the sense of them applying for another position, but they told her that she was too remote from them. She was the locomotive, but at the very back were the wagons and she had just lost them. The seminar and her children taught her that she has a choice of what kind of person and leader she wants to be. It includes sometimes ignoring orders given by her boss in order to protect her team members. She has a

good relationship with them and often knows about their private issues and how much to ask of them at certain points.

ROI created for the organisation and government by working mothers

Stephanie believes that the societal image of West Germany has undergone a change because of the many impulses they have received from East Germany. In East Germany women were considered value-adding. She thinks it had to do with the fact that women contributed to the social safety net by paying taxes. If they had an academic background they paid even more. If a person has paid into the government support fund for more than 40 years, it adds to an enormous sum of money. It is a rational, economic approach because of the economic sector which is involved. There are childcare facilities, kindergarten and jobs for many people. If one looks at the chain of effects it could be called a social revolution which is slowly taking place. No newspaper reports about the opening of five new kindergartens, but change is happening at a subliminal level.

There are enough women who could be in a higher position at her company, but it would require a bottom-up approach. It won't happen because no one will leave their position or be satisfied with a lower position. Women do not get developed into higher positions. At the moment there is a blockage from above that hinders it. From an ROI point of view it doesn't make sense to let these women go because they are carriers of know-how. She doesn't know of one position which was occupied at her company where the responsible manager would recruit someone he hasn't known before. Men only recruit someone who is from a hierarchy level below.

Insights of a working mother

An immense area of tension for her was the inner conflict between her love for her job and the need to be close to her children. The first child was planned, but the second child came

unexpectedly after 1, 5 years which meant she could not go back to work. Her first years with two children and working at the same time were awful she sighs. External factors like the traffic situation made it challenging for her. There were times where she thought she would never be able to get back the professional reputation she had before. The automotive industry has a history of 100 years or rather 150 years and is marked by men which will not be changed overnight. In 2008/9 it was an unspoken expectation by her superiors that even though she worked only 25 hours, she would display full performance as a manager. She had to grow thick-skinned especially among colleagues; women without children and men alike.

It was normal that both parents would work in East Germany. The mother of Stephanie's husband was in a leading position. In their circle of friends, a man who didn't know that she worked spoke not only undiplomatically, but also rather nastily about a woman who worked and put her child into childcare. He called her "Rabenmutter", which is a term used to criticize working mothers. She had to think quickly how to cope with the situation because there wasn't much time to react. She told him that she too was what he called "Rabenmutter" and that she had better leave the discussion because she didn't think she had to put up with it. The man was shocked. She met the man 1,5 years later and he apologized. He was someone from her wider circle of colleagues and he admitted that his mind-set has been influenced by his up-bringing. His own mother had always been at home and cooked for him. It has become his ideal image of a mother. In general, Stephanie experienced a lack of understanding, inflexibilityand home office wasn't possible and flexible hours didn't exist at that time. It was challenging for her to be at work by 9 a.m. with two little children. The change in turn came when they hired a nanny and domestic help.

Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts. Winston Churchill

Katharina's story

Katharina and her husband are equal partners in many respects. They have at some point in their careers both worked for the same company at equivalent hierarchy level and enjoyed their highly active business life. It included travelling around the world, participating in posh business events such as formula one racing and dancing at the Vienna Opera Ball, trips to Dubai, USA and other countries. Katharina was on the road 36 weeks of 52 and would often meet her husband at the airport between business meetings. Afterwards, at another company, whilst still responsible for national and international plants, she had their child and her husband, her parents-in-law and Katharina shared responsibilities for the child. After four years, she changed companies and became HR Global Director. She was responsible for 24.000 employees and an international roll-out programme for 14 plants in 14 different countries. She enjoyed her international leadership role, but decided in 2014 to become self-employed due to power games and not being able to continue living by her values.

Central themes

Childhood Experiences and Key Characteristics

She remembers beautiful walks of long distances to her kindergarten from an early age ~~on~~. She walked up to 2 km to her nursery every day by herself when she was around three or four years old. In hindsight, her parents were rarely present throughout the first years and she learned to be independent. At school, learning always came easily to her. She never had to do household chores, but instead was taught by her father, who was an independent sales person, to do the financial accounting for his business. Whatever skills would be required for a task or job she would acquire it. She knew that her parents would never agree of her idea of going to

the US for one year as an Au-pair. She therefore prepared everything herself and forwarded her CV; and at one point a telephone interview had to take place. The host family sent her their details and the Au-pair organisation the tickets. She finally talked to her parents and it was quite a blow to them, but they didn't prevent her from doing what she wanted to do. She believes she grew up in an ideal world because her parents supported and never stopped her.

She remembers that she applied for a job at a company in 1993 where Excel skills were required. She stated in the job application interview that she had experience with Excel. After the interview, she bought herself a PC and an Excel programme and taught herself at nights.

Business life aspects from the parent's perspectives

Katharina was hard-working, dedicated to everything she did and pro-active in her different jobs. Her bosses noted her mind-set and competences and her career took off. After three months in a top leadership job, Katharina realized that she was pregnant. She went to her German boss who had a degree in social education and told him about the situation. He asked her how she intended to continue her job and that made all the difference to her. She outlined her plan to him. Her boss recommended training an assistant who would support her and back her up so that she could first work part-time and then gradually build up to full time. She could make use of the latest technology so that she would not have to travel so much and work from home. She started part-time with 20 hours, then moved up to 30 and then 40. As her job involved a lot of strategic decision making she was able to work from home for three days and only needed to go to the office two days a week. She stayed with the company for four years and successfully combined being a mother and a female manager in a top leadership position.

Katharina's husband worked for an American company during that time. He wanted to take two months off in parental leave. The management questioned his work attitude as a manager

in his position and would not go along with it. He took his time off anyway. Upon his return he was told that due to the company's situation they had to cancel some of the contracts with expensive managers and he was among them. Katharina, as HR expert, recommended that her husband fight for his rights because an American company located in Germany has to abide by the German law. They hired a lawyer and got compensation and seven months of exemptions.

Experiences as the only woman at an international executive management level.

In her last employee position of HR Global Director Katharina held the highest ranking position, she was the only woman in a top management position. She had the impression that the men would do a kind of 'buddy business' amongst themselves. She had to fight in the beginning to have access to information in general and to discussions. To be the only woman in a circle of men felt to her as if she did not even exist to them. They talked to each other as if they were drinking a beer among themselves without a woman being present. After a while, when they realized that she knew something as well and contributed to the discussion, it got better for her. However, she had to jump into discussions and make them listen to her. They would invite each other for barbequing or to a football game and she was not asked to participate. She had to approach them step by step until they realized that she was not disturbing them, but was also knowledgeable about the different topics. The automotive industry is very male-dominated she states and cars are very important. When they realized that she knew a lot about the topic it got better. However, she had the impression that she had to prove herself. She had to do more and more positively to stand out of the male crowd. It was taken for granted when her male colleagues did something positively, but not so for her.

Her new position and the supporting CEO and CO gave her the possibility to roll-out an international benchmark and achieve high positive visibility. They explained the company's

strategy to the employees worldwide. They asked them about their values; their strengths, their weaknesses. Katharina remembers it as a really interesting time with employees who had sparkling eyes. It was as if for the first time in 20 years someone from the executive management explained the strategy of the company and asked the employees about their opinions. They went to 14 plants in 14 countries, conducted many workshops and worked with many employees.

She states that her colleagues at her level viewed her as an inconvenience and were uncomfortable with her. Perhaps men really think that women cannot do certain things she wonders. It seemed to her as if they did not believe that a woman is tough and pushes something through and that she is good at it. Everything that has to do with HR, personnel and organizing events they think a woman is capable of doing it. But as soon as it comes to the tough topics, to push a project through and to present numbers to the supervisory board they will look at you with wide eyes she says. They look at you and wonder how a woman knows the numbers and understands her business. They did not take her seriously at the beginning. She recalls a few incidents. As long as she talked about HR they were fine with her but as soon as she spoke about strategy or organisational development she lost their confidence and got the impression she was not welcome. It was not verbal what she experienced, but rather non-verbal communication. She would only notice it in meetings or workshops when they displayed a certain non-verbal behaviour. It read: *Just let her talk. What is she doing this time? They would cross their arms to express: Let's see what she's talking about* (p.5). After the CEO left and three managers from the lower level moved up, things changed dramatically. These managers had not been supporters of her before and they were not after their promotion. Katharina is strongly convinced because of the power games she witnessed that men will not support women to get promoted into executive boards. *If they are*

not forced to do it, they will not do it (II, p8.). When she left the company in 2014 her position was not filled by another female candidate for at least two years.

Strength does not come from winning. Your struggles develop your strengths. When you go through hardships and decide not to surrender, that is strength.

Mahatma Gandhi

Sven's story

Sven was born in 1974 in East Germany. His father was a pastor and his mother a catechist. They gave him and his two brothers a lot of space to become independent and to make their own sometimes painful experiences. Neither of them joined the youth group of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) which was strongly influenced by the ruling party. They were therefore socially outcast, but learned they could remain true to themselves. Competitive sport was encouraged and supported by the GDR. Sven was an 8th grade regional champion in decathlon and hoped to participate in sports a competition in Cuba. When he was told he had to join the youth group in order to go to Cuba, he declined. He was kicked out of the training squad the next day. Not long afterwards, being 17 years old, he found himself in a wheelchair due to a spinal injury, not knowing whether he would ever be able to walk again. These life experiences have taught him to stick to his values and bear the consequences of it. Also, to stay calm in times of pressure and focus on what really mattered to him.

Central themes

Core values

His parents regretted having so little time for their children and he has tried to do it differently with his own children. He got divorced, but built a house just 500 metres from his children, this worked for everyone. Career wise, he has colleagues who are placed higher in the hierarchy. He decided quite consciously against some of their decisions and was fully aware of the fact that it would restrict his career. If he had decided to go abroad or to headquarters

his career would be different, but being close to his children is of higher importance to him. Either there will be still time to climb up the career ladder at a later point or there will not or he accepts the consequences.

His view and experiences on working mothers in East and West Germany

Usually, both parents were working in the GDR. Women in East Germany had their children between 18 and 20 years and by 40, they were done with their family planning. In contrast, it seems to Sven that in West Germany women start to have children at 30 years and mainly have one child. If a woman in East Germany had not gone back to work people would wonder how they could afford it and whether they worked for the GDR's secret police, the Stasi. In the GDR, people expected women to take care of their family and work at the same time. Sven does not think it is favourable when children of six months or directly after birth stay at a nursery. But if it has to be, because one breadwinner is not enough to cover the family's expenses then it is useful to have good nurseries available. In the GDR, women and men are considered equal of value and if the parents decided to work both the framework conditions made it possible. In West Germany it seems to be ideal if a man works and his wife stays at home and takes care of the children who attend kindergarten, preferably the entire day. Ideally, she also has a domestic help. If this is common in a society it coins the attitude towards women who work or who are at home Sven thinks. He would say that West Germany has not done anything in the 70s or 80s for women so that they can be successful, have a career and a family at the same time. Not every woman in East Germany had a top leadership position, but there were many and they had female division managers.

Organisational framework conditions and statements towards gender quota from the top hierarchy

Sven wants to have women in his team because of their different skills and strengths and gender diversity. He wonders whether the women in his company know about all the possibilities the company has to offer them. They can choose between part-time jobs, home office and other options. He also questions whether women who manage their job and family responsibilities talk about it publicly or whether they are hiding their light under the bushel? His company could invest much more in being attractive to young female candidates. He points out that the German Federal Army attracts applicants via trailers in cinemas and posters everywhere because they do not have junior staff. They show women in their advertisements because they want to have gender diversity in their teams. They have managed to attract young women and his company should adopt this marketing strategy.

If a gender quota's purpose is to put people independent of their gender into a position where they do not belongand are only meant to fulfil a criteria then it is in his point of view an absolute absurdity. In his company, they should think about how to support young women who demonstrate potential even after they have finished their apprenticeship. It is important to accelerate the process so that they can think about how to balance a career with their family and life plans.

Since 2007, Sven is on the executive board and when a woman becomes pregnant it is an issue for discussion. They will talk about when she is expected to be back at work as well who replaces her in the meantime. The executive board meetings which he has attended so far discuss it quite open and sensibly. However, he remembers a meeting 5 to 6 years ago with many managers present and the gender quota topic was an issue. Two years later they were at a five-star hotel and his top boss stood there and announced to them how successful and fantastic this year has been. He continued by saying he was fortunate to get a woman to join his team within the allotted otherwise he would not have met his target agreement. Sven felt his jaw drop when he heard the statement. He knows a gender quota does not have to be a bad

thing, but it was rather negatively coined. Regardless of a lack of tact and even if only men had been present and it was meant as joke the statement was inappropriate. There were 10 to 15% women present at this particular meeting and it was really meant as serious statement. In his experience, the best collaboration was with mixed teams of different gender, culture and nations. If studies are true, it might still take a while to achieve gender diversity and a gender quota might be necessary to speed up the process even though he prefers hiring by merit and not by gender quota.

Ambition is the path to success. Persistence is the vehicle you arrive in.

Bill Bradley

Mark's story

Mark was born in 1971 and went to America as a young student because he wanted to escape the high pressure to perform placed on him by his parents and their superiority. His intention was to have a relaxed year at high school and liberate himself from the expectations of others. Having a former Navy College Professor as tutor who believed in individual responsibility and acted according to it, changed the course of his life completely and sustainable. Mark got intrinsically motivated, turned into an ambitious, hard-working high achiever and strategic player. Influential mentors played a key role in his career development even though he twice rejected a promotion. Mark, as a value-driven person turned down the first offer for the benefit of his family. He rejected the second one because the task assignment would not allow him to bring his innovative strength into play. After four successful years at a different company he was offered an attractive project by his former company and returned. Mark set out to withstand the high pressure from his parents to encounter an even more challenging person: Mark himself.

Central themes

Applied strategies

There were a lot of extremely smart people at University. Mark thought they had studied beforehand and came prepared to lectures because his peers seemed to know the topics already. It made him nervous and he attended University rather seldom up to a point where he rarely attended at all. He studied at home and pushed himself to his performance limit. The feeling that others might be better than him motivated him to keep on studying hard. He finished as an A student. He had a particular experience in one of his Physics lectures which

was particularly influential for him. He remembers his first encounter with a student sitting with him on the back row and looking like a freak: long hair, plastic bag from Aldi, ripped jeans and reading fantasy stories. All of a sudden, the guy looks up at the black board in front of them and says: *That is incorrect* (p. 5) and continues reading. Then, he looks up again and says: *In the fifth column, in the sixth row is a mistake* (p.5).He was talking to himself and to Mark somehow. After half an hour or one hour the professor looked at the black board and noticed something was incorrect. It took him a while until he discovered the mistake in the fifth column, sixth row. Mark realized at that point that others would always be better in physics than him independent of how hard he studied. However, Mark perceived as well that he had better grades even though the other guy was much better in Physics. Mark took on his first role as a manager by organizing his fellow student's task areas. He structured his learning, told him when they had to do what and in return could ask questions in regard to Physics. They worked well as a team and did so even after their graduation where they both achieved best marks. Mark's strategy was to combine his expertise in Physics with his managerial skills henceforth. He did a PhD in Physics and afterwards pursued a career as manager. By 36, he was Business leader in the company. By 50, he wants to be financially independent to be able to stay true to his values and afford to leave any company if circumstances so require.

Women in top positions

There are only a few women in leading positions at Mark's company. There are some in HR, Sales and Marketing, but no women at his level, the level below or the next level down. One woman who is on the supervisory board is the daughter of the owner. Her business unit is a non-profit organisation and is sponsored 100% by the company. The company profited from her presence. Mark values women in top management positions because they view things

differently. In general, Mark considers balancing expectations between being a good mother and a project leader as the biggest challenge for women. They do not have women on a top management level because to take over a leading position as a part-time job is challenging. In one of his former companies, he has worked in a department where more women were present than in any other. These women were highly qualified, but there was much discord amongst them. They had worked full-time until they had their children and some of them started to work part-time. When their children had to be picked up from kindergarten, they left the company at a set time. Those, who had no children and stayed longer, had to do their work. Some of the men who worked full-time were annoyed because they had to work longer hours as a result and would not see their children at dinner. The situation caused tension. There was one female leader who was fully supported by the management, but experienced a real challenge balancing her project and her family. Even though her partner supported her and only worked for four days, she almost despaired. Mark put her in another leadership position with more flexible working hours.

Barriers for women on their way to top positions

In regards to barriers for women it comes down to having children Mark states. It is the role expectations of our society in regard to the up-bringing of children. Women are expected to raise children and put them first and their career second. It is extremely challenging to combine career and family. If a woman decides to stay at home for a few years to take care of the children then she loses important years. She will not regain the missed experience and development at work. Young people approach situations with youthful easiness which helps them to climb the career ladder. Mark suggests avoiding barriers means we will have to start perceiving the societal image of men differently. What needs to be done so that men receive the same appreciation for bringing up children as women? Considering the better economic

position of the parents, the person who earns less should bring up the children. The person who is strategically in a better position to make a career should work. Mark believes, there will be no power shift in the German society as long as there is little esteem for a mother who works full-time and for a father raising their children. Other societies are further ahead, Sweden for example.

Discussions at executive level about women becoming mothers

Mark agrees that men discuss the situation when a woman in a leadership position becomes pregnant. If he had two applications from women at the age of 37 and 45 and both were equally qualified, he would go for the 45 years old one. He has a colleague who employed 50% women in his department. The very person said that he is not interested in these kinds of discussions anymore and that he would recruit a man next time. Mark believes that as a result of the belief that women are more likely to take care of children than men that women at a certain age will not be offered a job because they are at a child-bearing age.

No struggle can ever succeed without women

participating side by side with men.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah

Stefan's story

Stefan was born in 1957 and inspired to follow his father's footsteps from an early age. His father, his first role model, was an engineer who often travelled abroad on business trips which took him to South Africa, USA and Japan. Stefan remembers doing a lot of repairs on the house with his father when he was with him. He would describe his father's leadership style as rather hierarchical and his mother's approach as solution-thinking and stabilising. Both parent's characteristics have left their mark on Stefan and prepared him for success as a team-oriented person living in a hierarchical business environment.

Stefan's qualifications and experiences introduced him to different schools of thoughts and strong contrasts. He started to attend a mathematical and scientific high school which emphasizes critical questioning and afterwards joined the German Federal Army for 15 months which is quite often about command and obey. He first attended a small University in the Northern part of Germany and later on a huge elite University in the Southern part of Germany. While his was studying he did an internship with a company in Israel, a country known for its socio-political context.

Stefan started to work for a prestigious company, but decided to leave owing to administrative, bureaucratic and pre-defined processes by which the company was regulated. He was quick to grasp and act, but was not given the space to play out his strengths and therefore changed his strategy. Stefan accepted an offer from an international family owned company strategizing one of his options to work abroad.

Central themes

Organisational gender aspects and different working models

In his company, they have only a few women in top positions in RandD or in the technical business units, but many more in marketing, media and controlling. Stefan feels it is not acceptable to occupy a vacancy with male applicants just because a woman could become pregnant. To him, it seems as if there is a lack of willingness for gender diversity or the execution of integration. A society consisting of men and women needs to be willing to look for models of better ways of integrating the latter. The approach and implementation might be different according to industries as in new economy, marketing or IT, but change needs to take place. His own company is conservative in this aspect. In some areas they have a 0% Gender quota owing to a decision based on merit and not gender. They are emphasizing performance and quality which he agrees with. From Stefan's vantage point, if this is the case companies need to offer different framework conditions to allow women to better combine work- and family issues. It should be made possible to leave and re-enter a company, this is something which his company offers as basic conditions, e.g. maternity leave. He recalls that the consideration of having a company kindergarten was rejected on the basis that the company was too small. Stefan personally welcomes fathers who take parental leave of up to six months which takes place more and more. To him it means that a team has to adjust to the situation which requires time, more awareness and a certain life experience which comes with age. One does not become a member of the executive board at the age of 20 years he adds. Looking at his daughters the notion of work-life- balance has a different meaning. They do not want to have a career without a good work-life balance. It means that the next generation require different working models so that people are willing to take on responsibility for a leadership position. To work day and night, to travel regularly and recurrently, whilst being under enormous time and performance pressure as it is standard for his generation, will not

work for the new millennials. In his company, work-life balance exists only in lower hierarchical levels, but not in the management.

Patriarchal leadership style vs dispersed leadership style

The successful company Stefan works for applies a top-down approach strongly influenced by the patriarchal-leading owner. The advantage of the principles underpinning the approach is a quick decision-making process which has to be well justified, but once accepted by the owner, accelerates and amplifies changes. It is sometimes challenging for Stefan being team-oriented himself to live in such an environment. He had a mentor who set an example and taught him essentials about communication between all levels. This particular experienced executive provided a bridge between the owner's direct communication style by adapting to the mechanics and engineers communication style. They would define targets and move forwards together as a united team. Stefan's mentor was responsible for sending him abroad and influential in enhancing his career. Shortly after Stefan came back from abroad his career took off and he was promoted. To him it is vital to show respect to his staff which encompasses being transparent in regard to the company's tough objectives. Foremost, he wants to win his team over to achieve common goals in agreement with everyone. As a member of the executive board, being a team- and goal-oriented person seems to be his personal secret of success within this family business. Stefan has gained an understanding of the significance of taking time and listening to his employees. Sometimes, for private reasons they may not meet performance expectations and even though Stefan cannot solve their issues, the notion of leadership implies that he listen and perhaps help to find a solution to their problems. He thinks a good leader should show empathy and listen to others, as well as being goal-oriented. He compares a good leader to the act of planting a tree or growing a new plant. Doing so adds to the growth - the performance- of the employees. After a while they will have the

capabilities to generate performance and therefore, need to be involved in understanding the existing objectives. He considers the owner of the company as a strong leader owing to the concrete setting of targets and his explanations. The owner welcomes resistance and encourages critical feedback, but always wants to be presented hard facts. On the other side, he motivates people because of his charismatic personality.

Stefan's perspective on mentoring as a key element to success

Stefan acts as mentor for women who are or have been in his team. He has actively developed them so they could move on to a higher position. They still seek him out to ask for advice and feedback on several topics. It is a key element for a successful career development that women have a supporting superior or mentor within a company. Women should be very clear about their objectives in regard to taking on a leadership role. In smaller companies it is easier to climb up a career ladder quickly whereas in large companies it takes longer owing to administration. Women will need a strong will of iron and to strategize their family planning in advance. Vital to successfully bridging the time as a working mother is a supporting partner. Generally, Stefan prefers to have women in his team because of their complementary strengths and competences. Their innovative ideas and different approaches ensure synergies and add value. He has always actively supported recruiting women when qualification was equal. In hindsight, he has never regretted it.

There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation,

hard work and learning from failure.

Colin Powell

Tom's story

Tom was born in 1967 in East Germany and has one son. His wife studied medicine and has personally found great fulfilment in her profession. Apart from a few months, she has worked throughout her life. It was culturally anchored that parents worked in East Germany and when they had their son they hired an Au-pair whilst his wife worked part time for a short period. He thinks it is vital for his wife to work and have a fulfilling life which includes a career. He considers himself happy to have been able to transfer a family model which worked for his Chaptparents and now for his own. To have success stories for oneself guarantees a strong and stable relationship. The couple views themselves as a team where one supports the other.

Mentors have had an influential and significant impact on Tom's career. He has actively supported women as mentor for many years. Even though it is unusual for a man to be a women's representative he has done so for six months and viewed it as privilege. The company has elected representatives chosen by women who advocate women's interests to the management. Tom has always been active in supporting women and was elected as interim because their own representative was promoted to the supervisory board. He noticed as interim women's representative that women tend to critically inquire whether they will be able to manage work and life issues. At such moments he would like to raise his voice and shout at them to involve their partner and their entire family. A woman does not have to do everything on her own; but Tom understands that women find this a challenging concept. He is a strong advocate of women in mixed teams and top positions. There are not many women leaving University with a technical background, yet 90% of supervisory board members have a strong

technical background. He believes the crucial question which needs to be asked is how to attract women from an early age to a technical profession.

Central themes

Strategy

Tom finished high school with an excellent grade and was at the top of his school. Whatever he did, he wanted to do it thoroughly. When he did sport, he wanted to be best and when he did something at school, a good grade was mandatory. Tom does not have an explanation for his perfectionism; this is the way he has always been. He has learned to take responsibility for his mistakes and he expects it from others too as mistakes should been viewed as a way to learn. Tom wanted to study something with a strong practical focus. He chose engineering with a main focus on European special wielding engineer. He studied hard, but had still found time to celebrate and enjoy his leisure time. His wife studied medicine and invested an enormous effort to manage her studies. Tom was willing to invest in his studies and thinks he had an excellent work-life-balance.

Cultural aspects

Tom comments that on a positive note, the gap between East and West Germany in regard to gender equality seems to have disappeared. From his vantage point, gender equality refers to the right and the chance to work for both men and women. He grew up in a culture where gender diversity prevailed, framework conditions like day care were excellent and women could choose a career in professions unthinkable in some West Germany states even today. His experience is very different since coming to West Germany where men were the breadwinner and women stayed at home and took care of the household and their children. He

strongly believes that women are just as high performers as men and that mixed teams with shared responsibility are more successful than pure men-teams.

Tom believes there are several reasons for the low number of women in top positions. He recalls that as recently as the late 70's the law in West Germany which granted men the right to their wife's income and the permission for work was repealed. From that period a solid base from women in professional careers is not available. Therefore, if restricted to cultural aspects, only 10% of women in professions had the possibility to climb the career ladder, one should not expect to suddenly see 50% on the supervisory board. Another reason for Tom is that not enough women want to have a career. They are highly intelligent and committed, but prefer taking care of their family. If 40% of women do not pursue a career, those 40% will be missed later on in the equation of equality on supervisory boards. Women and men need to change their mind-sets because the traditional distribution of roles is not what will be pioneering the future. As long as these men and women hold on to their vantage points we will never experience gender equality in its fullest even though there are enough women who demonstrate it possible to combine both a career and children. Tom regards the dependency of a man on a woman as being greater, therefore women should start to demand support from their partners and act as a team. It might be very convenient for a man to come home after a long day and have the table set, sit down and eat. He believes that when women start to demand support from their partners and view it as a positive development for them, role identity will change. He points out the different role understanding of women in Sweden, Norway and Finland. He has interviewed many women and men from East Germany and to him it seems as if they have a completely different mind-set. In East Germany girls were actively encouraged to be interested in technical professions. There was a large-scale supporting programme. Girls were encouraged to become locksmiths or study technology or work in agricultural environments and drive a tractor. The system itself could not survive due

to many factors, but the support model for women holds its own charms. Tom critically inquires what kind of support do women need in order to let go of their traditional role. He strongly believes that if all women stood up in unison and went in the same direction no man in this world could stop such a powerful force. But as long as women are at odds with each other a gender quota will not change anything.

A women and a man who stay away from their jobs for two years have ample possibilities to continue their career upon their return even though he questions whether some men are willing to accept a new world of gender diversity. Tom is aware of the fact that he has been raised in a different culture. He lived in the GDR for more than 20 years and was used to almost all women working and countless women in top positions. In some of the companies he worked for 50% had female heads of departments. Since he has experienced the strengths and high performance of mixed teams throughout his entire business life, he makes sure to recruit women where ever he can.