Discourse of Gender

*How language creates reality*

Authors: Martin Hohendorf and Alessandra Pucci Daniele

Tutor: Pr. Dr. Björn Bjerke
Examiner: Pr. Dr. Philippe Daudi
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We want to use this part to say thank you to all those people that have helped us to make our year abroad so special. We have met nice classmates, inspiring professors and many other people with whom we have become friends.

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Martin and Alessandra
An Anecdote

Once upon a time, there was an anthropologist who travelled around in order to find new gender. As it happens, he came to an island far away from any civilisation that we know. The inhabitants of this island recognised six different gender. As the anthropologist went on shore, he faced six statues representing one god for each gender. Disappointed, he turned around and left the island. He recognised only the two common gender in those statues.

(Wilchins, 2006, pp. 157-158)
Abstract

This master thesis deals with the gender perception in leadership positions. Starting from our awareness of a gendered leadership gap, this thesis aims to show our development towards our understanding of reality as socially constructed. We apply the Discourse in order to see how oppression works on women.

In the course of our master thesis, we came across poststructuralists, like Foucault, Derrida and Lacan, philosopher and psychoanalysts, like Freud, Beauvoir, Irigaray, Kristeva and Butler, as well as sociolinguists, like Cameron, Miller, Baxter and Tannen. Their ideas have enriched our gendered Discourses through which we have been able to understand how powerful words can be. Words have the power to create our identities, our reality and oppress certain groups of people. The group of people we have focused on are women. Although the category “women” is fragmented and gender is one of many features of persons, there is something that all women share – oppression through language. Thus, women are less likely to move in the corporate ladder and lead.

In two Discourse Analysis based on job advertisements for leadership positions offered in Germany and Italy, we see how language-in-use may cause a reason for a gendered leadership gap. The Discourses available to us influence how we understand the reality around us, construct our identities and negotiate our roles. With this thesis, we hope to contribute to today’s Discourses and raise people’s awareness of how our language keeps women from entering leadership positions.

**Keywords:** Leadership, gender, sex, Discourse, language, Post-structuralism, feminism, Foucault, female leadership, glass ceiling
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| AGG          | Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz  
(engl. General Act on Equal Treatment) |
| CDA          | Critical Discourse Analysis |
| CEO          | Chief executive officer |
| CoP          | Community of Practice |
| CV           | curriculum vitae |
| DAX          | Deutscher Aktienindex  
(engl. German share index) |
| HR           | Human Resources |
| OECD         | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| SWW          | Second World War |
1 About this thesis

This master thesis deals with the current situation women face in leadership positions. The following pages are neither a mere summary of challenges women face in a work environment nor a collection of theories to explain women’s experiences. It is rather supposed to show our development in the course of the thesis. Regarding the gender issues, we as authors and readers of this work get a deeper understanding of how language constructs our reality and of how language helps us understand reality.

1.1 The motivation for this thesis

The sex and gender issues are not topics that have just appeared recently. They rather have been discussed sometimes more, sometimes less throughout the human’s history. Yet, over the past 150 years gender topics have experienced a dramatic increase in attention. Especially, women have shown an interest in promoting these topics to improve their situation since they have seen themselves as oppressed in a society mainly influenced by men. Thanks to what the feminist movements and female research have achieved over time, women face a better situation today compared to the one their ancestors faced in the past.

Progress has been made in women’s legal situation, in their political situation as well as in their public and private situation (Sichtermann, 2009). Even if the situations have improved, women still struggle to be heard and appreciated in many occasions. For example, women have managed to access to many professional career paths, but they are still underrepresented in leadership positions. While writing this thesis, The Economist published its annual ‘glass-ceiling index’ (2014). The index shows again that women in senior managerial positions not even represent one third of the total leading positions in the OECD countries. The percentage of women on company boards in those countries accounts for 12.5 per cent or even less. Furthermore, in 2007 only 6 of 194 heads of state were women and only in 19 percent of those countries women held a stake of at least 30 per cent of the parliament representation (Mills & Mullany, 2011, pp. 23-24). The awareness of those leadership gaps was our starting point for this thesis. We wanted to understand why are women not considered to be leaders?
1.2 Our understanding of the topic

In the course of our master thesis, we have got an insight in a variety of theories that helped us to develop a deeper understanding of the sex and gender issues. Amongst others, we found the ideas of Post-structuralism, and especially the ideas from Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan, useful to understand the available Discourses. The ideas have been adopted and criticised by many female philosophers and psychoanalysts like Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, Kate Millett, Nancy Chodorow and Catherine MacKinnon. Moreover, our research has been highly influenced by female linguistic researchers like Robin T. Lakoff, Deborah Tannen, Penelope Eckert, Sally McConnell-Ginet, Deborah Cameron, Sara Mills, Mary Talbot, Ann Weatherall and Judith Baxter. Their ideas and theories influenced our understandings of the sex and gender issues.

We believe our perception of reality and of ourselves is socially constructed. People use language to construct und understand reality as well as their identities. Yet, in order to study language-in-use, it needs more than only focusing on language, we need to look at Discourses. Discourses include not only language, they also comprise actions, interactions, values, believes, feelings, non-linguistic symbols, clothes, tools, objects as well as time and place dimensions (Gee, 2011, p. 46). In order to simplify such complexity, we are used to refer to categories, stereotypes and norms that we transmit in our language (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, p. 593). However, these do not only help us with complexity but also seem to carry certain values. Within a range of stereotypes and norms, we negotiate our identity. Thereby we position ourselves within the Discourses available to us. Yet, people cannot choose the roles they occupy in different communities freely. It is because of our sex that men and women have access to different kinds of roles and a presupposed gender. In a male dominated society, the roles men can occupy have been regarded as superior to the roles women could choose from. Stereotypes and norms that are based on the ideal of a white, middle-aged, middle-class man have helped to keep a social hierarchy where men dominate women. Furthermore, as with the sex and gender, we are mainly thinking in dichotomies. In these dichotomies, also called binary oppositions, we associate every character, behaviour, action, and so on that we believe as superior in a binary opposition to the superior sex while the other part of the binary opposition is assigned to the inferior sex. Since we
build our identities and reality on those assumptions, we consciously or unconsciously inherit, reaffirm and transmit them. Thus, in a world that presupposes women to be inferior, women will never be regarded as being capable of leading effectively others. Such thinking, believing and valuing finds its expression in our social practices. In this thesis, we have a closer look on practices that deny women access to leadership positions. Throughout our thesis, we concentrate on the fourth dimension of gender manifestation, one dimension of the ones the European Commission refers to (Smykalla, 2006, p. 1 of 11). The fourth dimension are norms and values rooted in stereotypes, distribution of roles, language and images. The other three dimensions are women’s representation in politics and society, their living-conditions and their access to resources, for example, distribution of money, time and information. We believe them rather as an effect of the fourth dimension although they all stand in mutual relationship.

Yet, we believe that social change is more likely to happen when people question the ideal as well as a thinking in binary opposition. Instead, we should appreciate the idea to negotiate freely the roles we want to occupy without being forced into predetermined categories. Everyone should be allowed to position oneself within the available Discourses and should not fear to be judged or measured against an ideal human. Moreover, overcoming binary oppositions implies for example, a thinking approach that is not only black and white but allows all sorts of grey in between. Hence, we regard gender as one of many equally important features like ethnicity, one’s social class, age, religion and many more. Since we abandon the idea of placing sexes that are based on biological features in social hierarchies, we see men and women as equally suitable to hold leading positions.

In order to make this social change happening, people of both sexes need to get aware of how they consciously or unconsciously oppress women. Especially, we are concerned about the fact that women, despite all the progress that has been made, still lack equal access to leadership positions. Believing the reality as socially constructed, we want to see how our perception of a leader might be an obstacle to women’s career. In order to raise the awareness and make a shift in our perceptions possible, we carry out a Discourse Analysis based on job advertisements in our home countries, Italy and Germany. A shift in the conception of gender is a need in order to improve the way of
how women and men create value in the current economic world and aim to foster positive change in the overall society through their leadership practice.

We choose to focus our thesis on the “Western World”, especially Italy and Germany, because these countries determine the Discourses that are available to us. Thus, they also influence our perception of the sex and gender issues.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The first chapter of this thesis is supposed to introduce the topic and provide all necessary information that are needed to follow our argumentation. Chapter two and three contain the theoretical framework. While in chapter two we focus on the challenges women face and how language contributes to their oppression, chapter three is devoted to present different approaches to explain and overcome women’s oppression. In chapter three we first discuss the concepts of three poststructuralists. These concepts have found recognition among female researcher even though they had to adapt them for their own course. With our thesis, we do not claim to assign any of the ideas to us. The quality of our work is rather how we borrowed, matched and used existing ideas. Thus, the presentation of our methodological approach in chapter four finds its value in how we selected ideas that match our topic. These ideas help us to apply a Discourse Analysis based on job advertisements. Here, we decided to follow the approach of ‘Discourse as Text’ (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 54). We did so because we believe that job description of leading positions offer a mirror of what the society expects from a leader. Furthermore, every candidate is consciously or unconsciously influenced by the transmitted image of a leader. More often than not they need to meet this image to get access to leading positions and thereby reaffirm it. In our final chapter, we then evaluate our work and our own development. As written before, we do not want to exclude our assumptions from this thesis nor do we want to claim the ideas as our own.

We find it important for the reader to know that we follow in this work a qualitative approach and see the world as socially constructed. Therefore, we apply the “actor’s view” like it is described by Arbnor and Bjerke (1997). Thus, our aim is rather to understand current reality instead of explaining it. We wanted to make the reader aware of our research approach before we are offering the theoretical framework. However,
we will deal with it more in detail in the methodology chapter since those information are especially needed in order to follow our Discourse Analysis.

When we talk about leadership, we refer to the term “leader” as Bennis and Nanus describe it in Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge (2007). Thus, a leader is concerned with doing the right things. With a vision, the delivery of ‘meaning through communication’, ‘trust through positioning’ and ‘positive self-regard’ a leader tries to ensure followers’ commitment (Bennis & Nanus, 2007, p. 32 of 205). Yet, we will not get further into detail of leadership theory. Instead we concentrate on the relation of leadership and gender Discourses. If the reader wants to know more about leadership, we highly recommend Bennis and Nanus’ Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge (2007), Gardner and Laskin’s Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership (2011) as well as Ashby and Miles’ Leaders Talk Leadership: Top Executives Speak their Minds (2002).

1.4 A tool to understand this thesis

As business students, in the course of this thesis we entered into new ways of thinking and got insights into philosophical, psychological and sociolinguistic practices. We maybe have been not able to get into detail in every idea since we were subject to time constraints. However, this thesis shows how we took existing ideas in order to develop our own understanding of reality. In our opinion it was necessary to offer the reader our understanding of the sex and gender topic in chapter 1.2 and even before present the theoretical framework. The aim is to allow the reader of this thesis to follow our argumentation and understands our research paradigm.

In order to ease the reader’s access to the theories that we are presenting in the following chapters from the beginning on, we would like to offer a metaphorical tool. We found a similar one in James Paul Gee’s An Introduction to Discourse Analysis (2011) and adapted it to our thesis.

According to Gee a way of recognising something that we take for granted, like language, is to look at an example that makes it strange again. Thus, our example is the practice of playing a card game called “Magic: The Gathering”. This game comes with its own language and meaning of cards. For someone who does not know the game, the text ‘Destroy target nonartifact, nonblack creature. It can’t be regenerated.’ (Wizards of
the Coast, 2014) might sound strange. This person will not find the meaning by checking each word in a dictionary or by looking for further descriptions of the card. The best way to understand the meaning of the words on the card, is to watch others play the game, to be mentored by a skilled player and finally to play it oneself. Only in this way, a person recognises how language is used to play the game.

Nevertheless, there are certain rules about how cards can be played. If one follows these rules, one is more likely considered a member of the “Magic: The Gathering”-player community. One might be even considered as a “good player” or win the game. In order to do so, a player chooses out of a variety of cards those he or she wants to play with. Due to new published cards the choice a player can have from increases and so do the meaning of cards and rules. Each player will be judged by other members of the community on how he or she plays those cards in accordance with the rules. Their judgement determines how much power, status and acceptance a player gains. There exists certain combinations of cards that are really common to play with because they make more likely to be considered a “good player”. Nevertheless, there are people who do not agree with the rules that constitute one as a “good player”. Those may seek to agree on new rules or even seek to change them.

If we transfer this example back to the topic of our thesis, we aim to show how people take rules for granted that help them to consider if one is a “good leader”, a “good woman” or a “good man”. Moreover, those judgement are based on stereotypes and norms that are similar to the combinations of cards in the example. By revealing what people take for granted, we want to encourage them to freely choose their own cards, their own way of playing the cards and so on. In other words, we want them to place themselves within the available Discourses and not being subject to certain restrictions. Hence, people might reconsider their judgement of what is good and what is not.

1.5 I, We and the reader

During the development of our work and especially at the time of writing, we have questioned whether the use of personal pronouns would be “acceptable” or not according to our field of discipline. Our reflection has been helped by some readings and in particular by the research undertaken by Hardwood (2005). In the present section we do already use personal pronouns in the first person while discussing the issue itself,
which at first might seem curious. In these terms, we are already underlining our position, although we believe it is important to guide our reader to understand the reasons of our choice.

According to different studies, and as further developed by Hardwood (2005), the traditional way of writing academically is “author-evacuated”. In this sense research responds to the criteria of presenting neutral information and mere facts. This opinion, which will be discussed more, later in this work, implies the need of using the third person as a must, underlining the importance of the impersonality of the writing process (Harwood, 2005, p. 1208). Far from guiding this discussion from a discipline’s taxonomy point of view, we want to underline the aim behind choosing deliberatively to use the pronoun “we”, regarding us as researchers.

We will start by indicating what the use of we in this work is not or does not aim to be: a self-promotion of uniqueness, a marking of differences and an exclusivity of the research process and methodology.

The field of research focusing on language, gender and its social construction is vast and it is the massive number of studies conducted in this area that has inspired us in understanding the why, the how and the what of the inquiry. Different positions and critical points of view have reinforced our goal to know more and understand the way the social construction of gender happens and why. The present thesis focuses on the critical elements just mentioned and on the curiosity expressed by us as researchers in discovering to which extend their impact pervades leadership.

We decided to approach this journey by the use of the Discourse Analysis. This methodology, as we will explain in details in the following chapters, has a long history behind and has been extremely powerful in the application to our specific area of interest.

Discourse Analysis as a methodology demonstrates, and has demonstrated us as researchers, that we are all into Discourses, we are “made” out of different Discourses and we are constantly contributing to their formation. According to the singular perspective we have adopted in this study, we could not, and neither want to, avoid to be part of this text.

The use of “we” in the present study aims not to be a self-promotion or an authoritarian position towards our reader, not a remark of difference compared to other studies and
not either the promotion of an exclusive methodological discovery. It is our conscious choice of sharing with the reader our curiosity, our reflections and our findings on some phenomena we believe might be interesting for a wide audience and according to which we hope to inspire personal and different opinions from the ones we have. Our research is unique, different and exclusive, but for ourselves since it has represented a process of constant personal growth, and we hope it will be for many others too.

According to what we just said, we will be constantly referring to this study and its findings by using “we” from this time on, and we do not believe we should feel bad about it.
2 Women’s Oppression

After having mentioned women’s oppression in the introduction, we now want to show how they are actually oppressed. Hence, this chapter serves us as an introduction into the understanding of women’s oppression. We will first outline how women’s situation and the gender Discourse have changed until today. Our perception of reality in general and of the gender issue in particular is based on language as well as on our participation in the Discourses. We will explain how language is seen to shape people’s understanding of reality. We think this is necessary to discuss the obstacles that female leaders face in the business world. After having read this chapter, we and the reader are supposed to have an overview of the situation women face today, especially when they occupy leadership positions in organisations. We as authors share the same curiosity like every reader of the thesis because according to Derrida there is no moment of “truth” (Sarup, 1989, pp. 37-38). Thus, even the authors of a text will get another meaning out of their own writings at the time they reread it.

2.1 Women’s fight for appreciation

‘A husband and father, we saw rules over wife and children [...] the male is by nature fitter for command than the female [...]‘

(Aristotle, 2001, pp. 1259a. 40, 1259b. 2-4)

Aristotle wrote these statements over 2,300 years ago and yet his statements still hold power today. He saw the political community as the highest form of human communities and the household inferior to it (Stauffer, 2008, p. 929). Women were banned from the political life which is an interpretation of Aristotle’s work that many scholars shared (Levy, 1990, p. 397). Yet, according to Aristotle, it is only in the political life that one can satisfy one’s needs. Hence, women lack the freedom to find happiness and were not a human subject in some interpretation of Aristotle’s works (Femenías, 2008, pp. 169-170). These statements might sound cruel within the Discourses that are available to us today, but it had been common sense for thousands of years. However, thanks to some women that did not bend to this common sense
knowledge, some people think differently today. Those women have been later called feminists.

2.1.1 Women’s role in history

We do not know if Aristotle intended to transmit the image of an inferior woman, yet he has spoken within the Discourses at that time. Due to the context at the time the statements were made, many scholars found the meaning of women’s subordination in his texts. A general assumption in ancient Greek. Still, there existed also other opinions within the gender Discourse at his time. For example Plato believed women should be trained to rule. However, this opinion was not common in ancient Greek’s society (Haslanger, et al., 2012). With his statement Aristotle influenced following generations and thus reinforced women’s role in society. In this way, it does not matter if he intended to transmit this message or not. It is rather the interpretations of his statements that supported women’s oppression in the Western World until the end of the middle ages. People who are still believing in statements like the one above, will never consider females as being able to lead.

Not a long time ago, women were generally seen as inferior and they could only act within the boundaries of their home. They were forbidden to participate in public life. Women could join neither politics, sciences, education, church, military nor the professional life. Only in theatres, they were allowed from a certain time on because men did not want to see male playing feminine roles anymore. Except of there, their duties were restricted to the domestic areas and the family, including childcare (Sichtermann, 2009, p. 13). Many people including women still regard those areas and practices associated with them as female’s duties. A status that is also advocated by the church. It was the turning away from the church in the Age of Enlightenment and in particular the French Revolution that initiated the start of rethinking the roles attributed to men and women. Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouge were the most influential among those who requested more rights for women in the end of the 18th century (Sichtermann, 2009, p. 24). Nevertheless, it needed some time until women received some of the requested rights. Major achievements within the so-called First-wave feminism have been the access to an educational system in the late 19th century and political voting rights in many countries in the first half of the 20th century. When we talk about the wave-model, we refer to the different nuances in feminist’s fight for
appreciation as well as different nuance in language and gender research. Sometimes it is also referred to as modern and post-modern feminism instead of First-, Second- and Third-wave feminism (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 14). However, we prefer the wave-model since we believe it is more common to most of the people although we do not necessarily support this categorisation. It would be wrong to assume that outside the three waves women did not show resistance to male domination. Thus, we address female beliefs in the following chapters regardless of their belonging to a certain wave.

With the advance of the industrialisation, an increasing number of people were needed in factories. The number of males was not enough and hence, women got employed, too. Yet, only in the first half of the 20th century they started to be seen as legal entities in more and more countries. Only then they were allowed to conclude work contracts on their own and administer their earned money. Before this time, they needed a man’s, husband or father, permission to work. An employer could never be sure how long a women was allowed to work. The high risk for the employer was the reason why women earned less money than men, next to the fact that most of the females still had not the same access to education like men (Sichtermann, 2009, p. 149). Past female’s subordination to the husband or respectively the father is still visible in today’s practice of marriage. The wife’s father “hands over” the wife to her husband and the wife takes the husband’s surname. If the naming practice is culturally seen as constituting one’s identity then a women also gets absorbed by her husband’s identity (Weatherall, 2002, p. 19). Although we believe many people do not intend to undermine women’s identity today anymore and see it more as a tradition, it is still a proof of how language can construct our identity and our reality.

The beginning of the 20th century was also the age of the first women in arts, mainly in dance, sports, e.g. Suzanne Lenglen, and science, with Marie Curie (Sichtermann, 2009, p. 101). These women served as role models for many others and proved to women that females can be as successful as men in “male domains”. Parallel to these events, the fight for women’s voting rights and the rise as legal entities fostered a Discourse of equality and inequality of men and women. This gender Discourse has lasted for the whole century. Especially, Simone de Beauvoir’s work The Second Sex (orig. Le Deuxième Sex) published in 1949 fostered the debate. Furthermore, it influenced the course of the following female movement with its peak in the 70s, also called the Second-wave feminism (Hark, 2008, p. 2 of 11). Beauvoir showed how females are still
socially oppressed regardless of their suffrage and legal status. Thus, women started to move beyond the earlier request for equal rights and asked for social changes, e.g. in the workplace or at home (Haslanger, et al., 2012). This often found expression in their slogan ‘the personal is political’ (Weedon, 2008, p. 71). Also in the ‘70s, the Gender Studies were introduced in the academic field. The gender studies are not a narrowed discipline but include many other disciplines like sociology, philosophy, psychology, biology, linguistic research and women’s studies (Tannen, 1996, p. 8). As we will show, the contributors to these disciplines can rarely be assigned to only one of those disciplines. Especially, the boundaries between philosophical and psychological research are narrowed. Although we will sometimes associate one researcher more to one discipline than to the other, the reader should be aware of the fact that it is the interplay of many disciplines that determined female researcher’s understandings. Since the publication of Beauvoir’s The Second Sex many progress has been made in research as well as in women’s situation. However, the statements of the past still influence our today’s Discourses. Thus, women are far from being regarded as socially equal. If we go back to our metaphor of the beginning, we can say that we still play with many cards and rules from the past. Therefore, our understanding of reality is still influenced by languages and meanings determined by history. At the moment, it is said that the Third-wave feminism is taking place with its participants mainly active in women networks and in the World Wide Web (Ecyclopaedia Britannica, 2014). Moreover, the research paradigm has been slightly changed compared to the ‘70s.

2.1.2 Female Research

If we take Beauvoir’s The Second Sex as the starting point for describing the development in female research, it is not meant that before her female research has not taken place. As we have mentioned, there have been many others that have fought against women’s oppression, like Mary Wollstonecraft, Olympe de Gouge, George Sand, Florence Nightingale and Lucy Stone – just to mention a few of them. However, we focus on the research that has been carried out since the beginning of the second half of the 20th century. Mainly, because a broader range of researchers believed in a research paradigm that sees the reality as socially constructed. Thus, they followed the assumption that gender is not something you have, it is rather something you do (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 41). A notion that can be found in the ideas of Post-structuralism.
Many female researchers with whom we deal in chapter 3 appreciated poststructuralist’s ideas and adopted them for their own research.

The general paradigm of seeing the reality as socially constructed and the focus on language as constructing as well as being used to understand reality, led to three different approaches to the topic. We found them throughout our whole research in all of the disciplines we had a closer look at – philosophy, psychology, sociolinguistic and even biology, the latter mostly in medical research (Talbot, 2003; Baxter, 2010; Grosz, 2005; Smykalla, 2006; Papadelos, 2006; Meyers, 2011). Those approaches emerged at different times within the last 60 years of research. Yet, it would be wrong to value them as against each other and believe recent approaches as more sophisticated than the others. As Mills and Mullany state, we should see them as more or less appropriate with regard to the socio-cultural context and the issue a researcher is analysing (2011, p. 17). All of the approaches influenced our understanding as researchers of this topic, too.

The early approaches deal with men and women as being compared with each other while the masculine serves as the tool against which everyone is measured. This led to a hierarchy where men are associated more with the masculine and are valued more than females who are viewed as feminine. We find this notion in psychological works of Freud and Lacan (Meyers, 2011), in philosophical like Beauvoir’s early works (Grosz, 2005) and sociolinguistic contributions of Jespersen, Lakoff and Spencer (Cameron, 2003; Mills & Mullany, 2011). Nevertheless, especially, Beauvoir and Lakoff aimed to change this view and aimed to assign more power to the feminine.

Later contributions focused on the assumption of women and men as different. According to researchers following this approach, both, women and men, cannot be measured against an ideal based on masculinity. There is no hierarchy between both, it is rather the difference on the same level that enriches our world. Furthermore, it is the difference that leads to misunderstandings between the sexes. Researchers supporting this claim are Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva (Grosz, 2005) in the philosophical and psychological field as well as Tannen (Talbot, 2003) amongst others in the sociolinguistic field. At the same time, the opinion that sex and gender have to be regarded as being separated from each other found more supporter. Here, Sex is associated with being male or female while gender is associated with being masculine or feminine.
However, recent research concentrates more on the assumptions that gender next to age, race, ethnicity, class, religion and others is one of many features that determine one’s personality (Haslanger, et al., 2012, p. 2 of 17). Moreover, researchers abandoned the idea of gender as being something all women or men share. Thus, they abandon “big stories” and focus more locally to see how gender is constructed in interactions between people. Mills and Mullany give an overview of the current state of research in their book *Language, Gender and Feminism* (2011, p. 41) by referring to Baxter. Regarding the view on sex and gender, researchers following this approach believe both, sex and gender, as socially constructed. According to them, both cannot be separated since they are seen as constituting each other. Furthermore, researcher advocate to abandon the overall dualism and appreciate more variety. In the philosophical field, it was mainly Butler (Mikkola, 2010) and her “Queer Theory” that enriched our understanding while in the sociolinguistic field many researchers contributed to this approach. Among others, they were Mills, Cameron, Talbot, Weatherall, McElhinny, Eckert, McConnell-Ginet and Baxter. All researchers mentioned in this section will accompany us with their ideas throughout the whole thesis. In this chapter we will mainly focus on the sociolinguistic theories in order to show how women’s oppression finds expression in our language. However, when we explain how one becomes a woman or a man in chapter 3, we will mostly refer to theories out of the philosophical and psychological field.

2.1.3 Feminism

Before we go on we need to address what people understand under the term “feminism” or “feminist”. Haslanger et al. define feminism as being both ‘an intellectual commitment and a political movement that seeks justice for women and the end of sexism in all forms’ (2012, p. 1 of 17). However, they also write that feminism has many uses and that who counts as a feminist depends on the point of view. For instance, Mills and Mullany rather believe that it is the critique of gender relations what defines women and not its theories about gender (2011, p. 65). Nevertheless, many people call themselves feminist without even explaining why. Perhaps, this is partly the reason why feminism is rather seen as negative and many researcher avoid to call themselves feminist. Here again, we see the power of language. The term “feminist” induces different meanings in people’s mind which depends on the Discourses available to the person. Yet, it also constructs a feminist’s identity.
Some people may also call Plato a feminist. It always depends on the available Discourses and one’s position within the Discourses. Thus, it is important to see feminism not as a unified movement, it rather includes many different approaches. Feminists disagree with each other about what counts as sexism, about the social and political impact of gender or the meaning of being a man or woman (Haslanger, et al., 2012, p. 1 of 17). Furthermore, they disagree on how to understand patriarchy and how to change society. When talking about “patriarchy” people refer to the power relations where men’s interests dominate women’s interests. These power relations rest mainly on the biological differences (Weedon, 2008, pp. 1-2). In order to tackle them, feminists found it useful to differentiate between sex and gender whereas one’s gender might differ from one’s sex. They see sex as depending on biological features while gender depends on social factors. Believing gender as socially constructed change could be possible (Mikkola, 2010). However, as mentioned before some even believe sex as socially constructed, too. If we write about sexes that are socially constructed, we probably need to clarify it. It is not meant to deny physical differences between the sexes. They obvious exist. But it is the meaning that society attributes to different genitals. This will be further discussed in chapter 3.2.1. For now, we find it necessary to know that different believes on how to change existing power relations led to different approaches.

The different approaches are often categorised by the literature in liberal, social/marxist, radical, multicultural, global or ecological feminism (Tong & Williams, 2009; Mills, 2004, p. 13). Since a categorisation of those approaches would contradict the ideas of Post-structuralism, we will not address the ideas of female philosophers on the basis of the belonging to a certain categorisation. Moreover, most female researcher do not follow only one approach, instead they take ideas of many different approaches for their work (Mills & Mullaney, 2011, p. 65). We will only refer to the feminist approaches again when we discuss the question of power. For us it is important that all of them deal with political struggles in areas, like law, education, workplace or cultural production where women have been oppressed so far. Here, we focus on the fourth dimension of the European Commission since we believe norms and values that are transmitted in our language have caused most of the troubles women have been facing so far (Smykalla, 2006, p. 1 of 11).
2.2 The impact of language

We rely on Wilchins’ (2006, pp. 109-113) statement that the general paradigm of science had been to find similarities. Just some centuries ago, there was a shift towards finding differences and defining categories, e.g. also expressed in Linnaeus’ *binominal nomenclature*. Categorisations make it easier for people to understand the complexity of reality. Furthermore, it also may help them to deal with each other. In the case of gender, the feminine has been seen as different from the masculine and not the other way round. Nevertheless, this gender differentiation is not a scientific problem it is rather a political problem because this differentiation is embedded in our language.

2.2.1 Communities of Practice

Discourse shows us that power is nothing outside language. Language and power cannot be separated from each other (Weatherall, 2002, p. 6). Words are powerful. They influence perception, judgement and attitudes (Meyers, 2011). Since the general assumption is that language is something we do, it can be seen as an activity (Sarup, 1989, p. 59; McElhinny, 2003, p. 27; Mills, 2004, p. 79; Gee, 2011, p. 4). If we go back to our metaphor of the card game in the beginning of the thesis, we get a clearer picture of this notion. It is while playing with the cards that the words on the cards and with it the language of the card game gets its meaning. Without playing, the words on the cards would have no meaning. The same, is true for every other language that we use. When we refer to languages, we hold it like Gee (2011) and do not only think of English, French and so on, we also refer to social languages that people use in certain practices. A practice can be described as an activity that is usually a combination of actions in a socially recognised endeavour. We use language in order to build things and by saying them, we make them exist. Yet, it would be wrong to assume that it is only our spoken word that constitutes reality. We use also non-verbal words to communicate reality on a semiotic level, like body language, the way we dress up and so on. Therefore, we refer to Discourses that include more than language, also thoughts, feelings and interactions.

It is the perception of seeing languages or in a broader sense Discourses as activities that makes McElhinny state that ‘individuals have access to different activities, and thus to different cultures and different social identities, including a range of different genders’ (2003, p. 29). Hence, each time individuals move from one activity to another, they talk, interpret and negotiate the gender issue differently. It all depends on the
Discourses available to them and how they negotiate their status and power within the Discourses in an activity. People interacting in such an activity are members of what Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) call Community of Practice (CoP). They describe a CoP in the following way:

‘A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations - in short, practices - emerge in the course of their joint activity around that endeavor.’

(Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 8)

For instance, people planning an event together or going out together can be described as a CoP (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 70). Another example could be players of “Magic: The Gathering” who regularly play against each other. In order to be a member of that community, one has to be considered as a “Magic: The Gathering”-player. This depends on how one is judged by the others and how one is able to negotiate the rules with which they are playing. In CoPs the fundamental principles of sociolinguistics presented by Tannen (1996, p. 10) are effective. Roles, context and everything that occurs is not given but constituted through interactions. Words get only meaning through references to their framing. In other words, every utterance mainly gets its meaning from the context, for example, what one does when he or she is producing it (Kendall, 2003, p. 601).

Yet, the gender is also not without bias in a CoP. One is more likely member of a CoP than others due to certain characteristics like gender, age, class or religion. Furthermore, also the extent to which one is a member may vary. Although the gender is not static and given in a CoP, CoPs are still influenced by social Discourses and other CoPs (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992). Furthermore, various CoPs can come together and engage in an umbrella CoP where certain Discourses might have even more influence. For instance, this is the case when many card players come together in an international tournament. Here, some of them have to play with different rules to those that they have negotiated in their CoP.

Nevertheless, in recent years, theorist focused more on local CoPs in order to move from them to the Umbrella communities. They want to understand ‘what members do -
the practice or activities which indicate that they belong to the group, and also the extent to which they belong’ (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, p. 581).

2.2.2 The role of stereotypes and norms

Through language people internalise social norms as well as a social perception of reality and thereby become a member of the society. Additionally, with the help of language we communicate our own experiences (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1997, pp. 175-176), participate in CoPs and contribute to Discourses. Thus, language helps to produce our social reality. However, our perception of the social reality is never fixed.

Throughout our life, we are member of several CoPs where we have to negotiate our role and share experiences. Each time we face a complexity of how to interpret others acting, talking, dressing and so on while we also have to decide what acting, talking, dressing and so on might be appropriate in order to be considered as a member of society in general and a member of a CoP in particular. Thus, we use stereotypes for simplification reasons (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, p. 593). We stereotype someone against a certain characteristic, behaviour or something else that is prototypical for a whole group of people. Thereby, stereotypes informs us about what actions, talking and so on can be expected (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 53). Stereotypes develop when people interact with each other. Furthermore, they are reproduced in certain CoPs or in the whole society through a number of practices including literature, art, scholarship and television (Talbot, 2003, p. 471). For example, “Magic: The Gathering”-player might be considered as “nerds” since their cards are based on a fantasy world. Although, everyone will have a different image of a “nerd” in mind, many people in the world will attribute characteristics like shyness, cleverness and a modest appearance. However, people can reaffirm a stereotype and make visible to be a member of a certain group of people to which the stereotype refers to or they may decide to contest it (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 43). If they reaffirm it, they are more likely to be accepted as a member in certain CoPs, where this behaviour, character or to whatever the stereotype is directed, is regarded as a necessity to be a member. Talbot lists a number of stereotypes assigned to women: ‘scold, gossip, nag, termagant, virago, harpy, harridan, dragon, battleaxe, (castrating) bitch, fishwife, magpie, jay, parrot, and poll’ (2003, p. 469). The reader may recognise some and maybe some not, depending on the Discourses available to him or her.
With focus on gender, gender has been institutionalised in the way that it influences every aspect of our life - sometimes to a greater or sometimes to a lesser extent (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 45; Smykalla, 2006, p. 5 of 11). Within a society this system operates on an ideology that represents how individuals understand reality (Cameron, 2003, p. 448). This ideology influences gender stereotypes and by meeting them, people support naturalised differences in a gendered ideology (Talbot, 2003, p. 472). For example, women are raised up to meet an ideal of a woman and are constantly measured against it. The ideal determines how they should behave, talk or act. For example, Cameron sees ‘reticence, modesty, deference, politeness, empathy, supportiveness, and cooperation’ (2003, p. 450) as qualities of a linguistic ideal against which women have been measured. Such ideologies are not always the same, they may change across cultures and over time due to the circulating Discourses (Cameron, 2003). People might choose to challenge stereotypes or to not meet the norm by constituting their identity. Yet, it is how people meet the norm against which they are judged that constitutes them as a “good woman” or a “good leader” (Kendall, 2003, p. 604). Furthermore, it determines the power, the status and the acceptance they get. Most people have an interest to meet the norms available to them to get as much of these social goods as they can. Next to a way of measuring people, norms offer certain further implications. If women are said ‘to be “naturally” modest’ (Cameron, 2003, p. 450) their utterances will be interpreted by others as showing this modesty. This may lead to the general assumption that women are not good public speakers. Hence, they will get less practice and opportunities to develop their skills. In this way, the norm will reinforce itself. The same could also be said by the assumption that women are not good leaders. However, we should not overgeneralise everything. It is also true that in some contexts people’s actions or behaviours may be interpreted as gendered while in another are unmarked (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 54).

Through norms, stereotypes or other images society can transmit messages that lead to social groups regarded as inferior. Most of the time it happens unconsciously even against communicators’ good will (Meyers, 2011). However, stereotypes may also be used to subordinate certain groups (Talbot, 2003, p. 471).

In conclusion, we can say that people are aware of their sexes and that this aspect may influence people’s interactions to a different degree. Often it depends on the context what sort of being a girl, boy, woman or man is appropriate and then by repeating
gendered acts one’s gender is constructed (Mills & Mullany, 2011, pp. 42-43). Thus, there is no fixed meaning of who is a real women, feminist or humanist. We enact those categories in practice (Gee, 2011, p. 33). Therefore, studies should be directed on revealing how power and privileges are based on gendered norms that got the status of being natural (Mills & Mullany, 2011, pp. 3-4).

2.2.3 Gender Stereotypes and Norms

‘With all other animals the female is softer in disposition than the male, is more mischievous, less simple, more impulsive, and more attentive to the nurture of the young; the male, on the other hand, is more spirited than the female, more savage, more simple and less cunning [...] Hence, the women is more compassionate than man, more easily moved to tears, at the same time is more jealous, more querulous, more apt to scold and to strike.’

(Aristotle, 2001, pp. 608b.1-4, 608b. 8-10)

Again, this statement of Aristotle was made a long time ago and yet it matches our today’s perceptions of gender. We described in chapter 2.1 the progress that has been made within the last hundred years. However, comparing this statement to our today’s general opinion, one might question if this progress has also taken place in our language. Stereotypical men are still described as aggressive, hiding emotions, adventurous, decisive, dominant, independent and self-confident. Women, on the other hand, are stereotypically seen as being more passive, sympathetic, creative, helpful, grateful, talkative and tactful (Ryan, et al., 2011, p. 473). These stereotypes are based on binary oppositions that also have an impact on how gendered talk is perceived. Talbot lists common communication stereotypes:

‘Sympathy [↔] Problem-solving

Rapport [↔] Report

Listening [↔] Lecturing

Private [↔] Public
Obviously, from the time on where Aristotle made his statements until today, more than 2,000 years later, women have been constantly reminded to be nurturers. This is expressed in the stereotypical speech acts on the left-hand side. Those stereotypes strengthen the traditional ideology of womanhood and mother in general. On the other hand, the stereotypes on the right-hand side support the power and the privilege of men. Their claim for power and privilege is also often expressed in warfare and sport metaphors (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 51). It becomes obvious that gender is often explained in complementarities. Whatever men is, women is not and not the other way around (Cameron, 2003, p. 452). At this point in the thesis, it is not a surprise anymore why women are associated with the less favoured stereotype in binary oppositions. The less favoured stereotype is associated with “bad” and is supposed to present how not to behave. While men personify the other part of the binary opposition, the “good”, the way how one should behave (Talbot, 2003, p. 473).

As we will show in the course of our thesis, many poststructuralists and female philosophers have shown in their work that those gender biases are rooted deep in our language. If language is something that we do and that constitutes our identities, then social change can only happen when we become aware of those hidden meanings, which lead to the oppression of a particular social group. Furthermore, throughout our whole life, people are continuously taught to conform to norms and standards. Our behaviour, our sexuality, our body and our language are always subject to judgement and regulation. So, it is in school, at the university, at the workplace or in hospitals (Miller & Büsges, 1995, p. 325). Those members of society, that do not conform and function, are regarded as outsiders. Thus, people fear to be different and consequently being excluded from social life (Wilchins, 2006, p. 84).

As a result, people behave according to gendered stereotypes and aim to meet the norm. For example, boys are not allowed to cry like a “little girl”, men feel ashamed when they throw the ball like “a girl” or feel embarrassed when they carry the bag of their
girlfriend (Wilchins, 2006, pp. 32-33). As we have suggested above, people have an interest to meet society’s expectations. Thus, statements like the one we have just mentioned are more often than not self-fulfilling prophecies.

Therefore, we can only stress again that a change is more likely to happen as soon as we become aware of our gender-biases and leave room for more interpretations. As many studies reveal, the language one is using often matches the stereotypes attributed to a person (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, pp. 90-91; McElhinny, 2003, p. 35). In order to promote change and leave room for having a different perspective, many philosophers apply Discourse as we will see later.

As Weatherall argues, a social and moral order does exist and language provides evidence of this order. Exposing the dominant order requires to question language norms and standards of speech. It is then that we become aware of the fact that people conscious or unconscious maintain a social order that values masculinity associated with men more than femininity, which is associated with women (Weatherall, 2002, pp. 6,23). Social change means to abandon the idea that roles for men and women are naturally given (Smykalla, 2006, p. 9 of 11). Cameron suggests that if more people question the status quo, opponents cannot easily hinder social change (2003, p. 453). Additionally, the language of signs has contributed to maintain the social and moral order. For example, many psychological research papers were read in the way they preserve the status-quo (Henley, 1977). However, we agree with Mills and Mullany when they demand researchers should focus on the different treatment of men and women instead of showing their differences in speech styles and so on (2011, p. 15). If today’s dominant belief still matches the interpretations of Aristotle’s statements, women’s ability to be “good leader” might be questioned. Some might see them as being unable to lead by nature and refuse to even give them a chance to develop their leadership skills.

2.3 Women’s professional experiences

As we have shown at the beginning of this chapter, the general opinion has seen women’s place in the domestic area where they have to care about family and household. Just about 150 years ago this assumptions have been increasingly questioned. However, women are still not equally valued in professional life compared
to men. Historic perceptions and religious beliefs that have still an impact on today’s Discourses see men involved in work and politics while women should be concerned with domestic labour and childcare. The former is seen as having more power than the latter (Weedon, 2008, p. 37).

2.3.1 Inequalities in the work environment

Even if women are working, their work is still valued less on average than the work of men. This proves the ‘Global Gender Pay Map’ (MoveHub, 2014) published at the same time this thesis has been developed. According to this research, even countries that are regarded as sophisticated rank on top when it comes to payment inequality, e.g. Germany (8/40 with 20.8 per cent), Finland (12/40 with 18.9 per cent) and Switzerland (13/40 with 18.5 per cent). Moreover, it is not an issue in only a few countries since every country included in this research shows this inequality with a disadvantage for females.

Payment inequality is not the only problem women face in their career. Especially, when it comes to our basic concern, women in leadership positions, they face the so-called “Glass Ceiling” problem. The Glass Ceiling phenomenon was first introduced by Hymowitz and Schellhardt in 1986. A term that generally refers to barriers women and minorities face when they aim to advance in senior positions (Lockwood, 2004, p. 2). They face those problems because of certain characteristics like sex or race. This leads to a gender-based leadership gap in corporations. It is shown in the annual ‘Glass-Ceiling-Index’ by The Economist (2014). Although the access to education is almost equal in the average of the OECD countries for men and women, there are differences in labour force participation where men outnumber women by 17.4 per cent points. The same differences appear when it comes to leading positions. For example, in company boards, only 12.5 per cent are women, and in senior management positions women hold a stake of 31.6 per cent of the total in the OECD countries. Even the countries that range among the Top 3, Norway, Sweden and Finland, show almost the same female participation in senior management positions but a higher participation in company boards - between 26 per cent and 37 per cent (The Economist, 2014). Statistics like the one from The Economist reveal the gender imbalance in companies’ top positions. Although a lot of progress has been made, our societies are far from being fair. Sometimes, it seems as if statements like the one from Aristotle still hold power and
block women’s career. People need to become aware of those barriers before change can happen.

2.3.2 Gendered work environments

Since one’s understanding and perception of reality as well as one’s self are constructed through language, it is here that we need to start looking. Also in organisations, we find many CoPs - within departments, project teams or people going to lunch together. They meet all the three requirements for a CoP defined by Wenger, being a ‘mutual engagement’, a ‘joint negotiated enterprise’ and a ‘shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time’ (1998, pp. 78-80) - resources like power, status and information. The CoPs within an organisation are all influenced by the corporate culture that members have negotiated due to the Discourses they are in. Moreover, the corporate culture has also influence on the perception of gender within a company. Baxter (2010) devoted her research to the impact of language on female leadership. She differentiates three types of gendered organisations that are influenced by gender Discourse and member’s interests in maintaining them. This leads to different experiences for women in male-dominated, gender-divided and gender-multiple organisations. Here again, we see the three different approaches within the research paradigm that we have discussed in chapter 2.1.2. As the naming indicates, in male-dominated, which are sometimes also masked as gender-neutral companies, men hold more power while in gender-divided companies both, male and female, are seen as different but equal. Although they are seen as equal and they negotiate different roles, those roles are limited and not free from comparison. In gender-multiple organisations, gender is only seen as one of many features. The barriers discussed by Oakley (2000) for preventing women to climb the corporate ladder vary in their impact in those three gendered organisations. We will deal with these barriers later more in detail.

Baxter analysed mainly how gender influences the leadership practice of women and colleagues’ perception of female leaders. This perception of gender also depends on the stereotypes associated with the nature of the work, the ratio of men and women as well as people’s personal experiences (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, p. 581). The nature of the work can have an impact in two ways. On the one hand, the business a company is in can be considered as feminine or masculine and, on the other hand, the activities a person is dealing with within the company can be considered as feminine or masculine.
Thus, even within a company, we may find different gendered CoPs. Yet, it may be difficult for one to perform in an environment that is more related to the opposite gender (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 54). Although Holmes and Stubbe do not find evidence that gendered stereotypes are much at work in organisations, both, Baxter (2010) as well as Mills and Mullany (2011, p. 55) experienced that the gendered context has an impact on people’s behaviour, acting and speech style. According to the knowledge, we have got so far, we would agree more with the latter that gender has certain influences on a work environment. Yet, we also believe that the impact is not the same in every organisation. While in gender-multiple organisations it has less impact, it has a huge impact in male dominated organisation. If the general image of a leader has been a masculine one, it might be difficult for a female to move up the corporate ladder. Because of this image, women face many barriers blocking their career. We want to discuss those barriers more in detail in the next section. Yet, the reader should be aware that not every woman in every organisation will face these barriers to the same extent. It mainly depends on the context whether a certain barrier occurs or not.

2.3.3 Barriers blocking woman’s career

Oakley sees the first group of barriers in corporate practices. These barriers are challenges in training and career development, promotion policies and compensation practices. While many women work in departments like Human Resources (HR) or Public Relations, other areas like manufacturing, marketing or operations are regarded as prerequisite for being a chief executive officer (CEO). Nevertheless, this cannot be the only reason why women do not make it to top-positions since many CEOs in the book Leaders talk Leadership (Ashby & Miles, 2002) emphasise the importance of staff related departments like HR. Furthermore, they even recommend to have HR directors in the board. Yet, Oakley mentions more barriers like a lack of feedback women receive, a fear of diversity in company boards and the payment inequality, which also exists among people of different sexes in top positions. Inequalities like this might be easier to change since they are objective. In order to tackle those, people only have to deal with the effects of gender imbalance (Oakley, 2000, p. 322).

However, the causes for this imbalance are rooted deeper, they have behavioural and cultural reasons. Thus, to tackle those, people have to change their general assumptions. Otherwise women will always face certain barriers blocking their path towards top-
positions. Here, Oakley lists the barriers like behavioural double binds, gender and communication styles, stereotypes, preferred leadership styles, power, “old boy networks” and “tokenism”. They not only block women’s career chances but also make them feel uncomfortable in such positions. Furthermore, in many cases barriers like those are less obvious and thus difficult to tackle.

Behavioural double binds mainly occur in gender-divided companies and male-dominated companies. If women act and speak like women they might not be taken seriously (Baxter, 2010, p. 55; Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 39; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, p. 588). However, when they act and speak like men, for example, when they show dominance or promote themselves, they are more likely to be criticised for being unfeminine and aggressive (Eagly & Carli, 2003, p. 820). Moreover, women behaving in this way prove in the eyes of some others that one has to be unfeminine to be regarded as competent and thereby, end with strengthening the stereotype. Double-binds are a method for those with power to oppress those people without power - as it is the case with stereotyping. Hence, the oppressed ones drain energy away from tasks at hand and concentrate more on their appearance or on how they are perceived. Still, many advices women receive tell them to adapt and blend in. Thereby, they reinforce problems instead of tackling them (Oakley, 2000). However, Holmes and Stubbe argue that a leader does not only resort to solely masculine or feminine discursive practices. It is rather the mix of strategies that vary (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, p. 593).

Leaders carry out a certain leadership style and their language is always judged by others (Baxter, 2010, pp. 12-13). Baxter refers to the difference theory and to Discourses when she explains the language use of leaders. The former theory sees the speech styles as different but equal while the latter sees gender as one of many characteristics that lead to a person’s identity. A person’s identity influences that person’s language use in a CoP. Nevertheless, Tannen (1996) supports the difference theory in arguing that people learn their language patterns by different behaviours in their childhood. Thereby, women engage more in relationships with others. This is said to lead to speech styles that build up relations, show feelings and serve to co-operate. Men, on the other hand, are said to compete with others in a speech style that shows authority, control and goal-orientation (Baxter, 2010, p. 60). Irigaray assigns men a more subject-object relation and women a more subject-subject relation (Irigaray & Guynn, 1995, pp. 15-16).
Yet, the ability to express authority is regarded to be a key factor for leaders and is connected more to being male. Thus, the double binds show their effect again. Men devalue or misinterpret women’s language, they see it in some occasions even as a failure to exercise authority. Contrary, if women adopt men’s language there is a risk of being perceived as too aggressive. This leads to a “catch-22”-situation from which women might not escape as long as the society does not rethink its perception (Oakley, 2000, p. 325). In a “catch-22”-situation, everything they do is perceived negatively – no matter what they do. Therefore, Baxter (2010) appreciates female leaders that do not blend in and adapt men’s language. She attributes such female leaders a status of being linguistic role models for other women. Furthermore, raising the awareness of gendered stereotypes and Discourses as well as replacing business metaphors based on sport and war might help to foster a rethinking (Baxter, 2010, pp. 154-155).

Nevertheless, we also have to point out that social change in valuing the different speech styles has already happened. Today, feminine speech styles are regarded as superior to masculine speech styles (Cameron, 2003; Talbot, 2003). This leads to the assumptions that women have better communication skills than men. Yet, we should be careful with such statements since they just reinforce common stereotypes. Furthermore, the shift in valuing women’s verbal skills may not necessarily help them to move up the corporate ladder. While such skills are regarded as “natural” in women, they are regarded as “exceptional” if men show them. Thus, the power relation between men and women is not threatened. Organisations instead value men more if they show masculine leadership qualities and authorities together with a feminine speech style (Cameron, 2003, p. 463). However, this development shows us also another effect of Discourses. The appreciation of some feminine characteristics in a still more masculine man led to new identities – like the “lad” in Britain and the “metrosexual” in the Western World (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 51).

Schein, Eagly, Broveman, Heilman and Vecchio among many others have carried out research to see the impact of gendered stereotypes on leaders and managers (Oakley, 2000, p. 326; Ryan, et al., 2011, p. 470). Thereby, they saw the stereotypical male characteristics that we discussed above more aligned with the stereotypical management role (Vecchio, 2002, p. 652). Also, the leadership styles match the gendered use of language. Stereotypically, female leaders are said to care about interpersonal relationships and to be democratic while their male counterparts follow autocratic and
task-oriented styles (Eagly & Carli, 2003, p. 813). Since many people expect them to be so, leaders stick to their roles which are offered by current gender Discourse (Eagly & Carli, 2003, p. 818). Especially, in male dominated companies, women can often draw only from a limited number for such roles in order to be accepted by their colleagues, like seductress, pet, mother, Iron Maiden, (Baxter, 2010, pp. 31-32). However, companies rather resort to male leader since male traits still imply to be more likely an effective and successful leader (Oakley, 2000, p. 326). Women that adapt male traits to prove their worthiness are caught again in a catch-22 situation - whatever they do, they do it wrong in the eyes of others. However, many female researcher, question studies that are dealing with traits. They would blame them for reinforcing gender differences.

Talbot argues that if researchers base their approach on finding male and female differences, they reproduce common stereotypes (2003, p. 475). According to Holmes and Stubbe researchers should rather acknowledge diversity in age, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and so on, instead of focusing solely on the gender dichotomy (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, p. 575). We agree in those points and see the value of researches based on traits in the way that they make us aware of our biases. Then, we can tackle them easier. We have those assumptions because historic statements and practices still have a huge impact on our today’s gender perception.

A male dominated society desires traits in leaders that are more masculine and less feminine (Oakley, 2000, p. 326). Masculine stereotypes also work against female leaders in non-verbal communication. Feminine dressing, a high-pitched voice or physical attractiveness may undermine female’s credibility in the eyes of others. Since less attractive women are rated as more capable than attractive ones, some downplay their female appearance by wearing men’s cloths styles and short hair. Again, this does not necessarily lead to be perceived as more capable by their followers. It sometimes rather helps to be regarded as inauthentic as someone who blends in (Oakley, 2000, p. 326). We want to remind the reader that those barriers do not apply to every CoP to the same extent. There is a chance that in gender-multiple organisations the followers get used to female leaders and see them as individuals who are not solely representing their sex. However, statistics mentioned above prove that it cannot be the case everywhere. There exist male-dominated companies and gender-divided organisations where female leaders are evaluated less favourable compared with men (Ryan, et al., 2011, p. 471).
Despite cultural prejudices that assume men being better leaders, new emerging leadership styles may help to increase the awareness of women being suitable for leadership positions, too (Ryan, et al., 2011, p. 481). One of those is transformational leadership as it was first described by Burns and later defined by Bass. This leadership style that some leaders exercise includes also behaviours that are stereotypically seen as feminine (Ryan, et al., 2011, p. 471). Here, we can draw connections to what we have discussed above with the acknowledgement of feminine linguistic styles. As we have argued this development does not necessarily challenge male dominance in leadership positions. While Ryan et al. and Smith et al. (2004, p. 62) find evidence that transformational leadership is an effective leadership style for both, male and female, Brandt and Laiho (2013, p. 45) see studies based on only sex as controversial. With reference to studies from Eagly et al. (1992) that examined the impact of the sex of leaders on the evaluation of leadership styles, they prefer to include other variables in their research. Thus, they support the social-role theory when it comes to gendered leadership (Brandt & Laiho, 2013, p. 55). This means, female leaders are seen as being more communal (helpful, gentle, enabling) and male leaders as being more agentic (confident, challenging) since society expects them to be so. However, Eagly and Carli (2003) could not find evidence for female leaders being more transformational. And yet, they see an advantage in the change because female leaders may become symbols for an effective leadership style. On the other hand, Oakley (2000) disagrees and sees in this point of view rather a danger of creating a new stereotype for female leaders. And this stereotypical thinking is what we want to contest. Next to exclusion of women that do not meet the stereotype, there is the risk of female leaders being only hired in times of crises (Ryan, et al., 2011, p. 481). In such situations, they cannot win but only lose because if they fail, they support the stereotype of females being not qualified to lead. On the other hand, if they succeed, people may assume that a male leader could have achieved the same. In summary, men have more freedom in terms of leadership styles and they are less likely to be judged negatively by their peers (Smith, et al., 2004, p. 60). Still, Oakley sees hope in moving ‘both sexes towards a more androgynous style’ (2000, p. 328).

Another barrier addressed by Oakley is power. We will discuss the question of power more in detail when we present Foucault’s Discourse. Nevertheless, in this chapter we will only argue how men might show resistance against women with power. Reasons
can be that female leaders remind them of early childhood experiences. These may be rooted in unresolved issues with a powerful mother. Consequently, men feel uncomfortable with the presence of powerful female leaders. Another explanation Oakley offers is that men due to traditional values feel ashamed about losing in a promotion against a woman (2000, p. 328). It is safe to claim that this fear is especially strong in male-dominated organisations. The fear of losing against women is one reason why “old-boy networks” try to maintain the status quo by excluding women from top positions – and this does not only happen in male-dominated organisations. Male at the top of organisations may also fear that their status and their salary might be questioned once a large number of women make it to the top and receive a lower salary. Therefore, they try to exclude them beforehand with the behavioural double binds effect, with emphasis on subliminally masculine sport and war metaphors or testing women’s competencies much more often than the one from male counterparts (Oakley, 2000, pp. 328-329).

In order to counter old-boy networks, many female leaders gather in female networks today. Since there exist so many of them, we just mention some of them. The women’s forum for the Economy and Sciences belongs to the five most important ones worldwide. Then, there is also the Zonta club which is the female equivalent of the male-dominated Rotary-Club. A famous one in Germany is GenerationCEO founded by a man, and another one in Europe is European Women’s Management Development (Freitag, 2013, pp. 98-99). Such networks may help women to support each other and bring more women in leading positions. However, they do not lead to the desired social change since the number of female leaders is still relatively low due to society’s gender perceptions.

As long as the number of female leaders are relatively low, what Oakley (2000, p. 329) calls ‘tokenism’ shows effect. Since women are not equally present in top management positions they are more visible to others. If people want to exclude minorities, it is easier if they can concentrate on few than on many. In companies, they might exercise activities like those mentioned before or they simply retain information. If female leaders have less access to information, they are more likely to fail. Thus, women have to prove to be exceptionally or respectively atypical for their sex to get access to valuable informal sources of information and networks. Yet, this reinforces the assumptions that one has to be unfeminine to be considered as a “good leader”. Furthermore, being subject to tokenism might also have a psychological effect to
women in the long-term, so that it affects their feelings and attitudes negatively. While male executives that show deferential behaviour may be valued more by their colleagues, women are more likely to be regarded as weak for showing the same behaviour (Oakley, 2000, p. 330). Moreover, there is a danger that they trigger association with other women in the life of the CEO or being misinterpreted as showing affection.

These are some explanations why the gender gap in leadership positions still exists. The impact of every barrier depends on the organisation and does not necessarily have to be an experience every woman faces in her career. However, Oakley does see social changes rather happening by women opening their own business instead of women making it to the top in large organisations (2000, p. 330).

2.3.4 Female entrepreneurship

The topic of female entrepreneurship is a broad topic and requires much more attention than we can afford in this master thesis. Thus, we can give only some insights into this topic and recommend the reader to engage in further researches.

Nevertheless, women also face more barriers by becoming or being entrepreneurs than men do. Often, they perceive their environment as more challenging which makes it hard for them to succeed in business (Shinnar, et al., 2012, p. 484). Worldwide one third of the entrepreneurs are female and in the United States almost 50 per cent of the businesses are owned by women (Go4Founding.com, 2010). Although the numbers seem to be relatively high, the recognition or success is not the same compared to male entrepreneurs. Only 3 per cent of the businesses founded by women have revenues over one million dollars (men 6 per cent) and only 4.2 per cent of the CEOs in the Fortune 500 list are female (Falzone, 2013). Furthermore, seven out of 67 countries in the GEM Women Report inhabit more female entrepreneurs than male (Clifford, 2013). All those indicates that the general perception of the gender roles makes it hard for women to leave the security of the domestic area or respectively the security of being an employee. It seems as if traditional values lead men to not support female entrepreneurs and women to show less eagerness to compete in a business world. This might be a consequence of the social construction of the man as an “aggressive player” and the woman as a “supportive team-player”.
Some mention also fear of failure and perceived lack of competencies as reasons for having a negative effect on entrepreneurial intentions and being extra strong in many women (Shinnar, et al., 2012, p. 486; Clifford, 2013). In order to overcome such fear, confidence may arise if women have more female role models. For example, this can be recognised in Africa where many women are successful entrepreneurs (Clifford, 2013). However, it is reported that in less developed countries women start a business with different intentions than in developed countries. They do it out of necessity, to support their family and do not do it only because they saw an opportunity like it is more the case in developed countries (Brush & Cooper, 2012, p. 1). Furthermore, the businesses women start are more likely to be in consumer-oriented areas. This might be caused by circulating stereotypes that ascribe women a focus on relationships. Stereotypes are also a reason why women are less involved in areas considered to be male dominated, like engineering. Instead, they are expected to care more about the relationship to customers (Clifford, 2013). Additionally, society still assigns women rather to the domestic area than to the business world. Thus, they earn less recognition and support from some male counterparts (Shinnar, et al., 2012, p. 482). Brush and Cooper argue that ‘men and women may not engage in entrepreneurship to the same extent because of differential access to (various forms of) capital’ (2012, p. 2). Moreover, most of the angel investors are said to be men and they tend to give money to members of the same sex (Falzone, 2013).

It is safe to claim that this is due to the same reasons why women are not perceived as “good leaders”. Such assumptions are rooted in our language and have an impact on people’s perceptions. Women who engage in networks and offer other women financial or non-financial support, may help other women and serve as role-models to them. However, this does only serve to tackle the inequality in resource allocation and does not tackle the causes rooted in language. For example, the term “entrepreneur” has its origin in French where it has a masculine connotation. Also, the terms “leader” and “manager”, which are much more often used when talking or writing in general about people involved in management or leadership, have a masculine connotation. In German, we use such terms as generic masculine terms that can be used for both gender. However, its origin cannot be denied.
2.4 Chapter Summary

We have seen that the statements of the past have found their way in our today’s gender Discourse and influence our behaviour as well as our thinking. Although a lot of progress has been made in terms of gender perception and women have received the status of a legal entity, our societies are far from offering equal recognition to both sexes. For example, evidence can be found in women’s career and most of all in leadership positions. Leaders are historically seen as having male characteristics. Although there is a recognisable shift towards more relationship oriented leadership styles and language use, stereotypes and a business language based on sports and military favour still male leaders. Generalisations we make do not only affect women but also men and exclude individuals that do not meet them (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 94).

Oakley mentions two approaches that have to be considered in order to promote change (Oakley, 2000, p. 322). First, people should become aware of the fact that knowledge is socially constructed. Second, the society has to be open to new and various kinds of knowledge, especially from those that have been excluded in the process of knowledge creation so far. Thus, these are the approaches we will follow throughout the whole thesis. With our contribution we do not aim to offer a list of steps that leads to changes. Instead we just want to raise our and the reader’s awareness of how the world is constructed through language that has a negative impact on the perception of women. Therefore, we need to know who holds power to maintain or change the status quo. Moreover, it is necessary to understand the forces causing women’s experiences (Oakley, 2000, p. 322). Until now, we got an overview of how language oppresses women. Yet, we have not discussed how one becomes a women or a men. As Cameron summarises ‘gender is a problem, not a solution … “Men do this, women do that” is not only overgeneralized and stereotypical, it fails utterly to address the question of where “men” and “women” come from’ (Cameron, 1995, p. 42). Thus, in the next chapter we will address exactly this topic. After having discussed the concepts of some male poststructuralists, we will mainly focus on theories of female researchers since they have a special interest in gender issues and thus enrich our Discourses.
3 Rethinking Gender

The aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework based on explanations for women’s experiences. Many of the theories are influenced by the ideas of Post-structuralism, especially of the ideas from Foucault, Derrida and Lacan. After giving an overview of poststructuralist's theories, we discuss the ideas that explain how a person becomes gendered. Furthermore, these theories encourage us to rethink the gender topic. In the manner of Foucault’s Discourse, we concentrated our research on opinions that have been long excluded throughout history, namely opinions of women. Furthermore, like Discourse is determined by the circulation of statements (Mills, 2004, p. 60), we concentrate our research not on the origins of the texts but on those people who pick statements up. On the one hand, we do this because the original texts had to be interpreted by others. On the other hand, thereby we make sure to grab only those ideas that promoted the Discourse of gender.

3.1 Post-structuralism

The term Post-structuralism refers to a series of works from the middle of the 20th century on that were published by mainly French philosophers or psychoanalyst, like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan (Aylesworth, 2005).

Poststructuralist see our understanding of reality and of ourselves determined by language (Clegg, 1989, p. 151). Yet, they question prior assumptions of reality, truth and knowledge. According to them, the meaning in words is never fixed and so is our understanding of ourselves, reality, truth and knowledge. Instead of having a fixed subjectivity, we are constituted by a play of several selves (Sarup, 1989, pp. 104-105). Poststructuralists do accept neither the unity of subjectivity nor general ideologies, like Marxism and Humanism. Thus, supporter of Post-structuralism object general ideas of the feminine psyche, biological definitions of gender and feminine as well as masculine stereotypes (Weedon, 2008, p. 162). It does not matter if most of the theories of Post-structuralism were published by men, since those theories were useful for women’s political course (Weedon, 2008, p. 13). Poststructuralist’s ideas fostered women’s understanding of their own experiences that are different from those of men. This is caused by a different access to discursive practices as we have seen in the prior
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chapters. For example, it is manifested in talking, writing and public representation in
general that ‘constitutes gender, gendered experiences and gender relations of power in
society’ (Weedon, 2008, p. 162). We agree with Weedon when she sees
Poststructuralist’s ideas as a way to position women’s interests in the field of power
relations (2008, p. 71). Yet, in order to understand her argument, we need to have a
deeper understanding of Foucault’s Discourse that includes an interplay of power and
resistance.

3.1.1 Foucault and his Discourse

The literature offers many definitions for Discourses (Mills, 2004, pp. 1-2). However, in
this section, we concentrate on Foucault’s understanding of Discourse since this is the
one most female philosophers refer to and it is also essential for the Discourse Analysis
that we conduct later. Foucault sees Discourses as determined by social practices that
consist of statements, which count as knowledge and which’s production is determined
by certain rules (Wilchins, 2006, p. 75). Wilchins’ interpretation of Foucault’s
definition of Discourses equals the one discussed by Mills (2004). For the Discourse
Analysis that we will carry out later in this thesis, we will use a mixture of how
Bucholtz defines the Foucauldian framework and the linguistic framework for
Discourse Analysis (2003, pp. 44-45). We pay attention to both, how language is used
to create knowledge systems and how language is applied in discursive practice.

We want to remind the reader that an opinion many authors share, is that Discourse is
something you “do” and not something you are only subject to (Mills, 2004, p. 79;
Sarup, 1989, p. 59). Certain topics or Discourses have been discussed in the society
more widely than others and individuals are not only influenced by the existing
statements but they can also contribute to the discussions. For example, this chapter
deals mainly with the Discourses of gender and the Discourse of power. Nevertheless,
Discourses influence how we talk or write about topics. Thereby, they offer the
framework within which people understand and act (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000, p.
1131). As a consequence, one’s understanding of reality, one’s life, experiences and
feelings depend always on the range and the influence of Discourses available to a
person (Weedon, 2008, p. 26). That leads to a plurality of interpretations of experiences.
Therefore, many authors agree that Discourses constitute subjects as well as objects
(Daudi, 1986, p. 143; Alvesson & Karreman, 2000, p. 1131). If we go back to our initial
example of the card player, we can say that each player is not only member of the card-player community. So to say, their identity as card-player is not only influenced by the discursive practice of “Magic: The Gathering” but also of their family life, their perception of gender and other Discourses. Furthermore, if we meet a “Magic: The Gathering”-player we might not recognise this person as such since we are not part of the same Discourses. We do not know how to recognise such a person because we know neither the behaviour nor the objects that indicates a “Magic: The Gathering”-player. Yet, we know if this person is a masculine or a feminine men or women since we may recognise the behaviour, acting, talking or the objects that constitute one as such.

Although Discourses constitute people as subjects, not everyone can contribute equally to those Discourses. For example, Mills states that women have had less speaking rights compared to men (Mills, 2004, p. 87). The production of Discourses is subject to exclusion. Daudi recognises three types of rules in Foucault’s Discourse that interact with each other – ‘Surfaces of emergence’, ‘Authorities of delimitation’ and ‘Grids of specification’ (1986, p. 147). We mostly refer to them, when we write about the “who”, the “what” and the “where” or “how”. The three rules interact with each other and determine “who” can contribute “what”, “where” or “how”. The “who” depends on the status of the person who is writing or talking, the context at the time the statement is made and if others pick this statement up. Nowadays, Discourses are highly influenced by particular institutions and practices, e.g. law, politics, religion, family, educational system and media (Weedon, 2008, p. 34). It is always important to recognise the context where statements are made. For example, a female activist who destroys a sex-shop might be onetime called terrorist or at another time called freedom fighter. Thus, the context stands in connection to the “what”. Certain statements are taboo, like sex or death, others count as insane respectively not rational or false knowledge (Mills, 2004, p. 58). Sometimes it seems that what we are saying is self-evident or natural because of this exclusion. In the case of menstruation, it is only seen as negatively, something women have to hide and it seems as if positive statements towards menstruation have been excluded in the Western World (Mills, 2004, p. 11). The “where” and “how” stands in relation to the “who” and “what”. As an example may serve the academic field. Here, each discipline has its own understanding of which arguments can be used, which methodology can be applied and which objects can be explored (Mills, 2004, p. 62). If we consider the discursive practice of “Magic: The Gathering”, we might be able
to illustrate it more clearly. It is more likely that card-player in such a CoP will accept an interpretation of certain rules rather from a player that they consider as a “good player” than from a person who has never played this game (“who”). Yet, they will only accept this interpretation if it does not violate other rules and sounds reasonable (“what”). Furthermore, while they maybe will consider this new interpretation within their CoP because it is not only in the interest of one person, this interpretation might be rejected in an official tournament (“where and how”). With our statements, one can only contribute to Discourses. Once a statement is made, it shows a force in the way, it is taken up by others and is circulating (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 59). So to say, the rule interpretation of the card-player may be taken up by more “Magic: The Gathering”-communities, may count as knowledge or even later as common sense. The Discourses itself existed before we got aware of them and most of them will outlive us (Gee, 2011, p. 35). Moreover, as we have seen in the example of the gendered card-gamer the Discourses even are interwoven.

At this point, we are able to understand why Foucault sees the process of exclusion as limiting knowledge (Mills, 2004, p. 57) and that we are not the authors of how we understand our life (Weedon, 2008, p. 31). It is rather someone/something else, Foucault calls this something power.

Daudi states that ‘[Foucault’s] power is not something concrete in itself, but is rather more like a quality of relationship.’ (1986, p. 127) Here he is in accordance with Sarup and Mills. The former interprets Foucault’s power as being everywhere, not only regulated from above but in social relationships (Sarup, 1989, p. 92). Mills adds that the power negotiated in relationships is never fixed and stable (2004, p. 34). A “Magic: The Gathering”-player may negotiate or respectively gets attributed power due to the judgment of other players. One’s power may find some expression in how others listens to his interpretations of rules. Yet, we cannot say who decides how much power one gets, why other have the power to judge someone and how is one’s power influenced by the power of others subjects and objects. For this reasons, Sarup agrees with Foucault that power is everywhere, it shows itself often as micro-powers and needs to be negotiated in relationships. Mills supports the theory that people negotiate with an institutional status and a local status (Mills, 2004, p. 84; Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 57). The institutional status is the status assigned to you because of certain characteristics like gender, profession or age while the local status is the position you get because of
the language, the confidence and so on with that you negotiate. It is the local status that makes it possible for women to escape, for example, the stereotype of powerless speaker. Also, power is nothing one possesses, it is rather inconsistent and may change over time (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 57).

However, there exist different understandings of how this power is exercised (Allen, 2011). Contrary to Marxist and Freudian opinions that see it as a repressive force, Foucault sees it as productive since it produces our reality, the objects within it and what people call “truth”. While some define it as individual’s capacity to act, a so-called ‘power-to do’, others support Weber’s classical definition of power as getting someone to do something, called ‘power-over’ (Allen, 2011, pp. 1-2 of 17). Allen (2011, p. 2 of 17) understands Foucault’s power in the power-over category. Sarup (1989, p. 73) and Miller (2004, p. 17) agree and see it in connection with knowledge as a way to define people, to cause certain behaviours and restrict others. Although power is everywhere, Foucault identifies disciplinary power in prisons, barracks, factories, schools and hospitals. The disciplinary power finds expression in regulating time (e.g. absence, delay), and labelling practice (e.g. inattention, laziness), body (e.g. wrong postures, gestures), sexuality (naughtiness, shamelessness) and language (e.g. rebellious, gossip), (Miller & Büsges, 1995, p. 325). Since each person internalises those labels, everyone becomes one’s own supervisor by sticking to them. Power constitutes individuals and thus social reality (Sarup, 1989, p. 81). People speak and act according to what knowledge and power of Discourses provide them. Like in the fashion industry with cloths we can choose our own style out of a range of statements in Discourses at a particular time (Mills, 2004, pp. 63-64). Nevertheless, Foucault also points out that where power is, is also resistance, thus power is always unstable (Mills, 2004, p. 37). Feminists base their actions on this notion.

Although Foucault’s Discourse is useful for women’s course (Mills, 2004, p. 69), they have to adjust his ideas to it. One problem in the eyes of some female philosophers is that Discourse points to problems but does not provide solutions. People are still caught in Discourses and in the categories provided by them, like woman, man, homosexual (Wilchins, 2006, pp. 120-122). Sarup lists more critics made towards Foucault’s Discourse (1989, pp. 89-90). However, an important critic among them is that Foucault does not explain where resistance to power or respectively domination comes from.
Besides those critics an advantage of Discourse is that none of the variables gender, race or class is seen as dominant for explaining oppression – not like in Marxism where class was the dominant variable (Mills, 2004, p. 70). Women’s resistance to oppression starts with recognising how a patriarchal society has produced knowledge and has determined what counts as knowledge. As a result, they are able to reveal the categories that have been attributed to women, like housewife, caretaking mother or men’s desire (Weedon, 2008, p. 1). Furthermore, they are able to challenge what people believe as “truth” or common sense and thereby foster the acceptance for alternative interpretations of experiences (Weedon, 2008, p. 108). As Weedon points out, change in Discourses and social structures is possible even with radical demands if they do not affect dominant interests too much (2008, p. 108). Support finds this statement in the radical course of the Souffragettes in the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century. Finally, women got voting rights in more and more countries although men still dominated politics (Sichtermann, 2009, pp. 83,88). Also, women’s success in getting access to the educational system was accompanied with the ban of attending exams first and with men still dominating education. Consequently, women’s professional situation did not change (Sichtermann, 2009, pp. 70-71). Nevertheless, Mills (2004, p. 84) and Weedon (2008, p. 83) also argue that women are a heterogeneous group. Women can be compliant or resistant and their actions can be interpreted differently, sometimes as compliance, sometimes as resistance. This is apparent in female’s contribution in Discourse of power that we want to discuss now.

Weatherall sees a shift in feminine research from a main gendered language focus to Discourse of gender with a focus on power (2002, p. 75). Feminists try to understand domination and subordination in gender-based relations to figure out how resistance might transform such relation. According to some it starts by defining power as power-over because they believe this definition as being masculine. Instead researchers like Irigaray or Cixous prefer a redefinition of power as empowering or transforming oneself respectively others (Allen, 2011, p. 13 of 17). It was female’s referring to the personal, e.g. reproduction and childcare, and turning it into a political problem that fostered the debate of power (Hark, 2008). Nevertheless, as written before the feminist were at odds how to approach the power disequilibrium.

In this section, we will only discuss those feminist approaches that we found most reoccurring in the literature. Besides liberals feminist critique, these were socialist and
radical feminist as well as poststructuralist feminist, especially, the latter engage mainly in those ideas discussed in this chapter. Liberal feminist critique concentrates changing power relations from within existing structures and policies. Hence, they advocate gender equality. They are interested in changing or respectively abolishing sex segregation, percentages of women in leading position, barriers to job entry and equal opportunities in general in organisations. Nevertheless, Oakley does not see the liberal feminist tackle the root causes of power and gender inequalities in organisations (2000, p. 331). Liberal feminist see power as a social good that in every interaction is not presupposed to be equal distributed and thus they aim to redistribute it equally.

Other approaches see power as relation of domination sometimes also described as oppression, patriarchy or subjection (Allen, 2011, p. 4 of 17). Radical feminist see patriarchy as the main source of oppression. They blame a patriarchal society for declaring females as powerless and males as powerful. They want to change the relation by a radical reorganisation of the access to power (Allen, 2011, pp. 5-6 of 17). For example, according to them, current forms of organisation do not meet women’s needs nor do they lead to equal power distribution. Reasons are their military roots. Those roots are still visible in the hierarchy and bureaucracy. Thus, radical feminist do not assume that gender neutrality is possible in existing structures and cultural norms of large organisations (Oakley, 2000, p. 331). Contrary, socialist focus on the class exploitation as main source for oppression. According to them change is possible by revaluing domestic work and childcare. Poststructuralist feminist see power exercised as disciplinary practice that leads to women having diets, avoiding too much space by restricting their movements or aligning their appearance with common practice. Moreover, they see female’s submission also ensured with physical force or emotional manipulation (Allen, 2011, p. 9 of 17). In conclusion, ‘feminist post-structuralism criticism can show how power is exercised through Discourses, how oppression works and where and how resistance might be possible’ (Weedon, 2008, p. 167).

We appreciate Foucault’s Discourse since it offers us a way to understand how we see reality. It is the interplay of knowledge, power, language, feelings, believes and so on that constitute us as a subject and determine our reality. Furthermore, he helps us to realise that people have different access to Discourses and this can be seen as the root source of inequality. In the case of our thesis, for example, women’s access to the Discourse of power is limited. The statements people do are based on a language system
that supports patriarchal systems. Sometimes the oppression of people is obvious, sometimes it is hidden within our language. As Talbot further describes: ‘The trouble is that traditional sexist stereotypes are so resilient and so well entrenched that they may be contested repeatedly without undermining their common sensual status’ (2003, p. 480). Derrida’s deconstruction helps to reveal those oppression and shows that what people transmit as being truth contradicts often itself.

3.1.2 Derrida and deconstruction

Seeing the reality and people’s understanding of their selves constructed through language, Derrida’s deconstruction helps to disclose gender oppression expressed through language. In this aspect, Wilchins stresses gender as being a language that helps to regulate power and sexuality with a system of meanings and symbols (Wilchins, 2006, p. 49). Yet, the oppression is not always obvious and this is what Derrida’s deconstruction can reveal.

Derrida rethought structuralist’s understanding of language, especially the one from Saussure. According to Saussure signs consist of two parts, the signifier and the signified. The former represents the word while the latter represents the corresponding concept respectively the meaning. Together they build a sign. Saussure understands signs as being arbitrary, because the connection of signifier and signified is not natural, and as being relational because they only make sense in a system of signs (Drimmer, 2007). Hence, this implies that the meaning assigned to the word “woman” is socially constructed and thus changeable. Furthermore, signs are differential since they are defined by what they are not. For example, our understanding of a “whore” results from differences on the level of signifiers and signifieds. It is neither a “mother” or a “virgin” on the level of concepts nor a whorl or a horse on the sound level of the word (Weedon, 2008, p. 23).

Nevertheless, Derrida questions the close connection of signifier and signified. According to him signifiers can have a plurality of meanings which is never fixed. For example, Gee finds in the sentence ‘Lung cancer death rates are clearly associated with an increase in smoking’ (2011, p. 51) at least 112 different meanings. It is because of the Discourses available to us that some would say, it can only mean “people die on lung cancer because of smoking” and not “people smoke because others die of lung cancer”. Derrida and Lacan agree that the meaning of a signifier is dispersed along a
chain of signifiers. Thus, the meaning of a word is unstable, it changes with every new word. Sense is always made retrospectively and still is not fixed (Sarup, 1989, p. 13). How else can be explained that “Magic: The Gathering”-player still argue about certain rules?

For example, the reader of this thesis, including us as authors, will attribute a different meaning to the word “womanhood” at this point than when he or she has finished this chapter and even another meaning when he or she has read the whole thesis.

Derrida’s deconstruction is a way of reading a text. In deconstruction, one traces back the meaning of a word to the metaphysics, to the fundamental of how people understand the word (Sarup, 1989, p. 40). According to Derrida, words are defined by exclusion in binary oppositions, like women/men, nature/culture and body/mind. In those binary oppositions one word is always seen as superior to the other since it can be traced back to the logos and presence. This is something we have already seen in chapter 2 when we discussed the gender stereotypes. However, according to Derrida, it is misleading to regard the superior term as “truth”. Also, Sarup states that in history the inferior term has served to define the superiority of the other word (1989, p. 41). However, deconstruction shows that the superiority actually depends on the excluded word which gives this word primacy in turn (1989, p. 56). Derrida proves it in his work with questioning speech as superior to writing and thereby contradicts Saussure, too (Norris, 2004, pp. 27-28). Nevertheless, as it is discussed by Derrida and McDonald a reversal of the binary opposition man/woman cannot be the end since it would lead to a “‘war between the sexes’” (1982, p. 72). Recognising the rigid boundaries in binary oppositions, Derrida’s way of reading a text helps to break those boundaries. Recognising these boundaries, one may be able to bypass the dualism and deconstruct the favoured term. As an example might serve the binary opposition life/death. A new term like “ghost” breaks the hierarchy with the favoured term “life” and thereby merges the opposed poles. Derrida’s ideas could be summarised in what he calls “différance”, a neologism based on the words differ and defer. Words differ from each other in binary opposition. Yet, their hierarchy is arbitrary and does not represent “truth”. The meaning of a word is never stable and thus is only deferred (Guillemette & Cossette, 2006). One word alone has no meaning, its meaning is only possible in a relationship to other words. Hence, there is no stable connection between the word red and the colour red or related to gender: masculine symbols do not necessarily have to present the masculine
Furthermore, since people are made of language with unstable meaning our identity is never stable, too (Sarup, 1989, p. 17).

The question now would be of how female researchers can apply deconstruction for their course. First of all, this method shows that language is not neutral and thus can produce sexual differences. Some of them can be discovered easily, others can be revealed by applying deconstruction (Papadelos, 2006, pp. 73-74). A sign’s meaning is not immediately present (Sarup, 1989, p. 35). Feminist use deconstruction to bypass the binary opposition feminine/masculine which can be traced back to pathos/logos and other/self (Guillemette & Cossette, 2006). In order to illustrate the problem, Wilchins mentioned that it is difficult for women to be feminine and strong at the same time (2006, p. 52). The category “woman” is maintained by excluding everyone who is not a woman. The same happens with the category “man”. This leads to idealised categories of feminine and masculine. Thus, to be considered a woman one has to be in contrast to a man who is seen as the universally-strong being, sincere and independent. In conclusion, a woman serves as the other who has to be weak, mysterious and submissive. He hunts the object of desire for sex and propagation. Hence, the woman is seen as the inferior (Wilchins, 2006, pp. 55-56).

As it is discussed in the works of Papadelos (2006, pp. 75-79) and Wilchins (2006, pp. 141-142) deconstruction on the term “women” would erase sexual difference and neglect women’s experiences. This would contradict female’s political activities. This is why some feminist fear deconstruction to devalue people in general and women in particular. Yet, Derrida’s différences makes it possible to rethink sexual differences without denying differences or creating hierarchies. Thus, female researcher even argue to abandon the term “woman” as representing their subjecthood. This is an issue that we will discuss further in chapter 3.2.4. Foucault’s Discourse helps us to understand how we construct ourselves and reality. Derrida’s deconstruction serves to understand how we transmit certain assumptions of “truth” and knowledge in our language and yet meaning is not as fixed as we think it is. However, we have not dealt with how one becomes a gendered identity. Therefore, we need to have a look at Lacan and his psychoanalysis. He offers us a theory about how we become gendered, a theory that has been appreciated, contested and adapted by many female researcher.
3.1.3 Lacan and psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is important for this thesis to understand the differences in the experiences that constitute a person as male or female or respectively as masculine or feminine. Theories in the field of psychoanalysis offer various explanations for how people develop gendered identities and internalise certain norms and behaviours (Weedon, 2008, p. 42). Lacan takes up Freud’s theories and connects them to language. Thereby, he fosters the way of thinking about the self as a social construction through language. Many female researchers like Irigaray, Kristeva and Cicoux refer to, criticise and rethink Lacan’s psychoanalysis. Before we discuss Lacan’s description of the self we need to have a general idea about Freud’s psychoanalysis. Otherwise, it might be difficult to understand how Lacan developed his theory.

Lacan as well as many feminists acknowledge Freud’s shift from a biological structuring to a rather psycho-sexual understanding of gender. In his opinion, all children are first bisexual. Yet, as Zakin (2011, p. 4 of 28) states, Freud sees them rather as ‘little men’ since in his opinion only the masculine libido exists. In children’s infancy, the mother cares about her children and satisfies their desires. Hence, she also becomes the child’s desire. Freud calls this stage the Oedipus complex. However, it is the moment in which children realise anatomic differences between men and women and the fear of castration that they start to develop their gendered identity. Boys realise the absence of the penis in their mother. As a result, they develop a fear of castration. They fear that this castration will be done by the father when he recognises that both, son and father, desire the mother (Weedon, 2008, p. 47). This fear makes a boy turn towards other women with the promise that he will possess one time a similar object of desire. Girls, on the other hand, react, according to Freud, differently when they realise theirs and their mother’s lack of the penis. They recognise to be inferior and turn towards the father (Zakin, 2011, p. 4 of 28). Their further life is determined by the hope to be men’s desire, to get a penis by having a boy or to pretend to have a penis and act like a men (Weedon, 2008, p. 47). Arguably, the penis for being the centre of desire favours males and therefore is open to criticism. Furthermore, the “castration” as single cause for femininity and masculinity has been criticised, too (Weedon, 2008, p. 60). Thus, Freud’s theory sets the gendered identity in relationship to anatomic differences between men and women. This makes the sex/gender distinction advocated by feminist
more complicated which may be another reason why some female researcher refer rather to Lacan’s psychoanalysis (Zakin, 2011).

Fundamental to Lacan’s work is the differentiation between the imaginary and the symbolic order. The symbolic, also represented by the big Other, can be related to signifiers and the language system. It represents the otherness, something one is not. Weedon describes the Other as ‘the position of control of desire, power and meaning’ (Weedon, 2008, pp. 49-53). The imaginary, or small other, is tied to the signified and according to Lacan the reflection and projection of the ego. It is first formed when the infant sees an image from itself and thus differentiates itself from an object. This stage is called the “Mirror Stage” (Zakin, 2011, p. 10 of 28). The child recognises the mother’s incompleteness because she also desires something else. However, this something else cannot be the child which is expressed by the father’s “No”, the incest taboo. Thereby, the mother is the first Other and introduces the child to the system of language and thus a system of shared cultural meanings represented by the father. By submitting to the father’s law, the child assumes to ‘become a subject, bound by law and bearer of language’ (Zakin, 2011, p. 9 of 28). This represents the child’s positioning within the society where it is always subject to society’s laws and Discourses. Nevertheless, Lacan’s theory differs from Freud’s theory in the way that he does not see the lack of the penis as reason why infants turn from the mother to the father who is representing the big Other. Instead he replaces the anatomic penis with the symbolic “phallus” for power, a symbol for completion, which neither women nor men possess (Sarup, 1989, p. 19). Hence, both, mother and father, are castrated and cannot fulfil the child’s desires. Therefore, one is driven by one’s desire. Hence, one’s life becomes determined by finding the lost objects that satisfy those desires and lead to completion. Yet, the big Other is incomplete. Since it is language that describes the absence, something one is not, one has to become the source of language to be in control. However, no one can become the source of language and in control of meaning (Weedon, 2008, pp. 49-53). It is not the first time that we refer to the notion that meaning is never fixed. It is a basic concern of Post-structuralism and also for women’s course. Supporting this notion, one believes in one’s own development and in one’s plurality of identities that are continuously open to interpretations. Finally, this assumption may also leads to a questioning of categories, stereotypes, norms and
ideologies. Yet, Lacan’s theory does not fully support such a development since he sees the centre of meaning still in the phallus.

In conclusion, Lacan shifts the power from an anatomic level into the symbolic and states language as constituting people as a subject (Sarup, 1989, p. 8). Thus, many feminist used his model to explain the social construction of gender. Yet, Zakin states that Lacan does not necessarily support this assumptions since he sees humans neither only as naturally nor as culturally determined (2011, p. 11 of 28). If this is the case, Sarups interpretation of Lacan’s work sees the connection between nature and culture in the way that humans interpret biology and impose meaning on anatomical parts (1989, p. 8). With replacing Freud’s symbol of the penis with the symbol of the phallus, he achieves the shift from an anatomical level to a symbolic order. Among others, it is Irigaray who criticises Lacan’s psychoanalysis. Irigaray as well as Derrida see women excluded from the symbolic order. Derrida questions the unity of the symbolic order with the phallus in the centre that symbolises the origin of meaning what Derrida also calls “phallogocentrism” (Thierfelder, 2009, p. 76). Irigaray blames the phallus from representing the masculine. Thereby, Derrida and Irigaray conclude that in Lacan’s theory the masculine in the form of the phallus as the centre of meaning represents the logos and thereby the superior to the feminine or respectively the imaginary (Papadelos, 2006, p. 78). Besides this critics, Sarup lists some further critics made by other researcher like the one that some miss practical proof in Lacan’s theoretical framework (Sarup, 1989, p. 32). Despite all this criticism, female researcher acknowledge his idea that people cannot become master of themselves or others and that we can control neither nature nor culture (Zakin, 2011). Hence, psychoanalysis may provide an understanding of the development of sexual differences and of our subjectivity. Lacan’s idea has been picked up by many female researcher that we discuss in the course of this thesis.

3.2 Theories of female researcher

In this part of the thesis, we refer to those female researcher that promoted the Discourse of gender and extended our understanding of the gender issue. We will concentrate on those theories that we found most reoccurring in our literature review. Among those theories are ideas from Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, Nancy Chodorow, Hélène Cixous, Kate Millet and Catherine MacKinnon.
We will not only discuss their understanding of the gender issue but also critically present how they refer to each other. Since some of those female researchers, like Kristeva and Butler among many others, do not believe in a unified womanhood, we also need to see how women still can act politically without losing their power by being too fragmented. Works of Iris Young, Natalie Stoljar, Charlotte Witt and Linda Alcoff have contributed to this topic. After having read this chapter, we will have a better understanding of the different ideas how people develop a gendered identity, why women share the experience of oppression and why we still can talk from womanhood although the category women is in itself fragmented. We will not go too much into detail of each of the theories since each of those could fill many theses alone. Therefore, we will only present some of their major statements.

3.2.1 Different perspectives on sex and gender
Weedon differentiates between three different approaches that researchers use to explain ‘the relationship between language, subjectivity and difference’ (2008, p. 91). Some supporters of the biological theory see the relationship determined by biological features, others refer to the psyche and the symbolic order as universally structured, like in psychoanalysis, and the third group believes in a cultural theory that sees it as culturally and historically constructed. Besides those three approaches, many feminists differentiate only between biological determinism and social constructionism (Mikkola, 2010). The former equals the biological theory which distinguish men as human males and women as human females. Some scholars in this field follow the opinion that differences between the sexes are caused by different metabolic states. A more recent approach is the assumption that differences in the male and female brain cause different behaviours (Mikkola, 2010, pp. 1-2 of 23). Also, Richard Dawkins’ influential theory of the selfish-gene supports the biological determinism and sets the behaviour of men and women as fixed (Weedon, 2008, p. 124). Furthermore, there are also some works that present the gender issue as biological essentialism but are said to be just a reproduction of common stereotypes that they present as scientific evidence. Talbot blames Allan and Barbara Pease’s Why Men Don’t Listen and Women Can’t Read Maps to be such a book (2003, p. 481). While in the concept of psychoanalysis and the cultural theory a change in people’s perception of gender is possible, biological determinism sees differences in sexes as naturally given and thus as inevitable (Weedon, 2008, p. 91). Hence, supporters of the biological theory come to the same conclusion like essentialist, namely that
gender is pre-given. The latter sees femininity and masculinity presupposed by a universal essence, here the feminine respectively masculine (Allen, 2011).

Since feminists aim to change current power relations between men and women, they more often than not oppose opinions that see gender as pre-given. Thus, they differentiate between sex as naturally given and gender as socially constructed. Thereby, sex and gender may differ what may lead to masculine women or feminine men. While one’s sex is not changeable, one’s gender is (Mikkola, 2010, p. 2 of 23). An assumption that was promoted in Beauvoir’s often cited statement: ‘One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.’ (Mikkola, 2010, p. 2 of 23). This statement is visible in both disciplines, psychoanalysis and cultural theory. Yet, in female’s theories of psychoanalysis that is based on ideas from Freud and Lacan people develop in a certain stadium in their life a gendered identity. This gendered identity is then hardly changeable since it is also determined by one’s sex. Contrary, in cultural theory the social meaning to sexual difference is historically influenced and maintained by society (Weedon, 2008, pp. 122-123). Thus, the distinction between sex and gender with sex being the basis for gender has been questioned recently. Some researchers see sex also as socially constructed and ‘viewed through a gendered lens’ (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 41). Poststructuralists believe in a positioning within the available Discourses. In general, the meaning people attribute to sexual differences determines social practices, social organisation as well as it influences the desired and appropriate type of society (Weedon, 2008, p. 91). Female researchers tackle the meaning patriarchy attributes to biological sexes and offer theories that broaden the available Discourses and may lead to a social repositioning (Weedon, 2008, p. 123). In order to be respected as speakers in this sense, women need to be recognised as subjects.

### 3.2.2 Women’s subjectivity

Many attempts have been made to declare women’s selfhood. Female researchers address questions about women’s personhood, their identity, their body and their agency in order to get to women’s subjectivity (Meyers, 2011, p. 1 of 16). Meyers differentiates here between three different approaches: a ‘critique of established views of the self’, a ‘reclamation of women’s selfhood’ and a ‘reconceptualization of the self to incorporate women’s experiences’ (2011, p. 1 of 16). While we discuss the first two approaches only in general, we devote more time for the third approach. The reason is that the third
approach may offer a way out of the current social structure where women are dominated by men. The other two approaches are rather concerned with claiming women’s self within current systems.

In the approach that was mentioned first, feminists criticise the concepts of the Kantian ethical self and the homo economicus. Although both see the ‘individual as a free and rational chooser and actor’ (Meyers, 2011, p. 1 of 16), the Kantian ethical subject uses reason to come to moral truth and the homo economic uses reason to maximise satisfaction by ranking desires. In both views, mind and reason are coded masculine while the opposites, body and emotion, are coded feminine. This leads to a hierarchical thinking where the assumption that only men are able to make moral judgements without discriminating others is a contradiction in its own (Meyers, 2011, p. 3 of 16). In a homo economicus point of view, it is the man who has the plan to satisfy desires while women accommodate his plan as caregivers and wives. Scholars criticise the concepts as only attributing a self to men that are seen as acting independently while in this way women, poor ones and affluent elderly men are excluded. Yet, oppressed women internalise norms and values attributed by patriarchy and those condition the desires they also plan to satisfy. This argument could lead to women’s selfhood. However, both concepts maintain men’s dominance because they favour masculine ideals and stereotypes by demeaning the feminine (Meyers, 2011, p. 4 of 16).

The second approach comprises strategies to reclaim women’s selfhood. Those strategies are supposed to tackle general opinions that regard certain aspects in a woman’s life as symbolising selflessness. For example, a married women is regarded to be absorbed by her husband’s identity with the wedding and a pregnant women loses her bodily integrity (Meyers, 2011, p. 4 of 16). Furthermore, females are seen as selfish when they do not behave according to gender norms or devote themselves to their children. Thus, the strategies aim to cause a rethinking of mothering, an establishing of ethics of care, counter movements or a reconceiving of autonomy (Meyers, 2011, p. 5 of 16). These strategies may lead to view women as agents since they are responsible for their actions, which they carry out during marriage, pregnancy and mothering. Hence, they see autonomy even maintained in a supportive relationship since a women decides to be in such a relationship. Still, as Meyer points out, such strategies are useful but do not change the patriarchal social structures that subordinate women and undermines their autonomy. It rather needs a legal and cultural affirmation of women’s agency and
selfhood (Meyers, 2011, p. 8 of 16). A rethinking of the self may serve to ensure the requested affirmation. Generally, selves are regarded as ‘sorts of things that can achieve (or fail to achieve) ideals of selfhood’ (Meyers, 2011, p. 8 of 16). If meeting the ideal is requested to be considered a full member of the society and be respected as such, only the masculine men as the norm have been able to achieve this status so far. Thus, feminist philosophers come up with alternative theories.

3.2.3 Theories of the development of gendered identities

In the following part we want to concentrate on theories from Kate Millett, Nancy Chodorow and Catherine MacKinnon in order to discuss how people may develop a gendered identity. They give different reasons for how gender is socially constructed. By tracing the development of a gendered self to its origin, change might be possible.

According to Kate Millett and the social learning theory, people learn how they have to behave through stereotypes and norms (Mikkola, 2010, p. 4 of 23). They face influences of the family, peers and society throughout their whole life. It starts with parents’ first description of the infants and how they treat them consciously or unconsciously. It is shown in the way they dress their children, the colours they attribute to them, the toys they buy and for which sport club they register their children. Furthermore, parents and society force children to show a certain behaviour, like boys are not allowed to cry like a “little girl” and girls are supposed to behave like a “princess”. Yet, it is also the society that shapes children into gendered persons. It happens through reinforcing stereotypes in books and movies although there is a shift towards gender-neutral characters like it can be seen in the examples of Teletubbies and Pokemon (Mikkola, 2010, p. 4 of 23). Yet, people even tend to attribute a gender to them according to certain characteristics, behaviours and so on. However, these examples show that if people know the influences leading to gendered stereotypes, people might be able to tackle them. Since the influences Millett mentions are so many, it may take a while until a change in people’s understanding and behaviour happens.

However, the social learning theory has been criticised by Chodorow as being too simple for explaining gender differences (Mikkola, 2010, p. 4 of 23). She shares with Millett the opinion that children internalise and develop characteristic traits and dispositions by dealing with other people. However, she assigns the major stake in the development of a child’s gendered identity to the relationship with their parents.
Discourse of Gender
Rethinking Gender

(Meyers, 2011, pp. 9-16). Supporting Freud’s theory of a pre-Ödipal bisexuality, she focuses especially on the mother-daughter relationship for explaining differences between the two gender (Weedon, 2008, p. 56). Since mothers primarily take care of children, Chodorow holds the mother’s identification with her daughter responsible for unconsciously discouraging her daughter to individuate herself. Instead the girl stays psychologically attached to the mother. This leads to girls developing the stereotypically feminine traits like being emotionally dependent upon others and not being able to distinguish own needs from those of other persons. A boy, on the other hand, is treated differently by his mother. He is able to individuate himself and develop well-defined ego boundaries what leads to stereotypically male traits like being independent, emotionally detached and concentrating on own needs. (Mikkola, 2010, p. 5 of 23). This development is supported by the father, the role model for the boy, since he is said to be not as present as the mother during a kid’s childhood. Furthermore, it is how a mother treats her children that has an impact on how children view their worthiness and on how they respond or respect other persons. Chodorow’s theory also offers an explanation why men and women follow different professions. One may assume that men follow ‘a career where dispassionate and distanced thinking are virtues’ (Mikkola, 2010, p. 5 of 23). Nevertheless, feminist criticise her for attributing girls a lack of self-assertiveness and independence what might stand against the course of feminism. Yet, it supports feminist’s course since it offers a way for social change. A change is likely to happen if both parents are equally involved in childcare (Meyers, 2011, p. 10 of 16).

While Millett and Chodorow focus on child-parents relationships, relationship with peers and the society as a whole, MacKinnon mainly focus in her theory of sexuality on the relationship between the sexes. She blames men’s objectification of women to satisfy their own desires as reason for the social meaning attributed to sex and gender (Mikkola, 2010, p. 5 of 23). Thus, following MacKinnon the gendered hierarchy is a result of sexualised power relations where the masculine holds the sexual dominance and the feminine is sexual submissive. She believes this hierarchy is socially constructed and not caused by nature. Yet, men and women have been conditioned by a patriarchal society to find women’s submission sexy. She finds support for her theory in pornography that portraits women as desiring to be submissive. Consequently, it is not difference in traits, behaviour or role that causes the social construction of gender, it is primarily the power inequality in a male dominated society. In her point of view, an end
to women’s submissive role can be set by legally restricting pornography (Mikkola, 2010, p. 6 of 23).

In our point of view, all the three theories give reasonable explanations for the development of gendered identities. Moreover, Millett, Chodorow and MacKinnon offer ways out of women’s oppression. Although Millett and MacKinnon include the role of language in their theories indirectly, they fail to explicitly emphasise language’s role. Most of all, Chodorow contradicts poststructuralist’s understanding of gender in the way that she sees gender as something you have instead of something you do through language (Mikkola, 2010, p. 4 of 23). A point that might be shared by the other two researchers. Millett’s theory implies a social learning towards a fixed gender and MacKinnon seems to believe in a fixed sexuality. Yet, in a poststructuralist’s point of view, none of those theories can be taken as a universal concept for understanding gendered experiences. Furthermore, they do not take the plurality and changing of people’s identity into account. Yet, it is rather their contribution to the overall Discourse of gender that should be acknowledged. Millett and Chodorow offer insights in how the verbal and non-verbal treatment of children influences their gendered development. MacKinnon contributes with her understanding of how power inequality causes a sexual hierarchy which is adapted by both gender. Thereby, the three female researcher show that the positions and roles that people can occupy within the Discourse of gender are always limited by the social meaning attributed to the sex. These limitations are set by a male dominated society. This society determines the evaluation of gender and leads to a hierarchy where femininity is seen as inferior to masculinity. The relation of men and women respectively their differences has been tackled by researchers like Beauvoir, Irigaray, Kristeva as well as Butler.

3.2.4 Theories regarding differences of men and women

‘She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other.’

(De Beauvoir, 2011, p. 6)

It were Simone de Beauvoir’s words in the ‘Second Sex’ that reinforced the Discourse of difference and equality between men and women. Grosz sees two ways of how things
are differentiated from each other (Grosz, 2005, p. 89). The first way, is a comparative view where two things are measured against a third. In terms of men and women, the third thing is the universal, the ideal human. A male dominated society assigns masculine characteristics to the ideal human. For example, Beauvoir and many feminist refer to this method when they follow an egalitarian position. They do so in comparing male and female differences for their equivalence or sameness to men. Another way to deal with two things, is according to Grosz an internal relation whereby one term is seen as negation of the other. In the case of gender, it can be understood as that man and women require each other while the woman is a “not-man”. Irigaray and Cixous see the gender topic in this way. However, they also see a political problem here since a women is defined as the negation of the man and not the other way round (Grosz, 2005, p. 90).

Understanding those differences, gives us a better insight into the theories of the researcher mentioned above. Nevertheless, we recognise that both ways of differentiating things deal only with the dualism, here men and women. This dualism has been criticised by poststructuralists, especially by Derrida (Grosz, 2005, p. 90). As we will show in the progress of our thesis, Butler is a researcher who does not believe in this dichotomy, too.

Simone de Beauvoir refers to Freud’s psychoanalysis and partly criticises it. She sees a woman in her current situation damned to be the other, the non-subject, the non-person and the non-agent, only a body (Meyers, 2011, p. 1 of 16). There are some points where Beauvoir agrees with Freud. For example, that one becomes a women and is not born as one, that no human being is non-sexed respectively disembodied and that the treatment in one’s family influences the relation to others (Zakin, 2011, pp. 7-8). Furthermore, both, Beauvoir and Freud, are interested in how one becomes a women. Yet, Beauvoir blames Freud that in his view females only become a subject when they abandon their femininity. As it is described above, this happens when they pretend to have a penis and act like a man. Zakin writes by referring to Freud’s lecture on ‘Feminity’: ‘Freud's rhetoric impeaches women as “the problem” (113) and excuses members of his audience from this indictment by offering the hope that they are “more masculine than feminine” (117)’ (2011, p. 1 of 28). It might sound cruel today and yet it was still the general belief at his time, in the beginning of the 20th century. Not without reason did women wear Eton crop and pageboy haircut in the 1920s and thereby cited masculinity in female dresses. It was body policy on a symbolic level (Sichtermann, 2009, p. 110).
However, Freud’s psychoanalysis describes indirectly women as the other to a subject. Thus, only men get the status of a transcendent being while women are reduced to an immanent otherness. Yet, Beauvoir argues that women can have the transcendence, they only live in immanence in a society that denies them the status of transcendence (Allen, 2011, pp. 4-5 of 17). By believing women as being capable to have the same status like men, Beauvoir applies the first category of differentiating things. She regards women’s choices and responsibilities within the current social situation as an indicator for women acting as agents. They are even no victims of a determined fate when they abdicate their freedom (Zakin, 2011, p. 7 of 28). Zakin sees Beauvoir and Freud mainly disagreeing in where the constraints are being located whether they are located internally, in the psyche according to Freud, or externally, in the culture what Beauvoir proposes (2011, p. 7 of 28).

Beauvoir may have reinforced the Discourse of differences between men and women, but her opinions have not been without criticism. One who criticises her is Irigaray who sees the issue differently. In her and Guynn’s article ‘The Question of the Other’ she writes explicitly that the others have always been ‘defined in terms of an ideal subjectivity and as a function of their inadequacies with respect to that ideal’ (1995, p. 7). This caused the belief that females are not capable of leadership. Since they are excluded from the ideal human in advance due to their sex, they can never fulfil the characteristics needed to be a good leader (Irigaray & Guynn, 1995, pp. 7-8). Therefore, Irigaray may see Beauvoir’s fight for equality with respect to the masculine ideal as inappropriate. She holds the position that she does not want to be ‘the other of the same, the other of the subject itself’ because she prefers to be ‘an/other subject’ (Irigaray & Guynn, 1995, p. 8). In other words, she wants to be regarded as an autonomous, different subject without being first or second. In her course she criticises Freud’s and Lacan’s psychoanalysis for denying the sexual difference in the pre-Ödipal phase of the child and thus ignoring the mother-daughter relationship in this stage. Moreover, the mother is reduced to her role as mother and as reflecting men’s desires. Through language, a woman is constituted to be the negation of a man and to meet patriarchal expectations, expressed in norms, stereotypes and so on (Zakin, 2011, p. 13 of 28). She sees the origin of these assumptions in the masculine belief that women represent a complementary and reciprocal identity to men (Zakin, 2011, p. 14 of 28). Hélène Cixous agrees with her. Furthermore, she perceives the female libido as defined by a
patriarchal society. Since Cixous bases her research on literature, she blames male writings to be regarded as the norm. Yet, she appreciates female writings for giving a voice to the female sexuality (Weedon, 2008, pp. 63-64). According to Irigaray, not only female’s sexuality and desire for satisfaction are different but also their language (Weedon, 2008, pp. 61-62). In this regard, Irigaray as well as Cixous question women’s inferiority that has been expressed by Freud with the lack of the penis and by Lacan with the symbol of the phallus. This patriarchal order is reinforced in the roles Lacan assigns to maternity and paternity. The mother giving natural birth to the child is reduced to her body while the father through language and laws causes the cultural birth of a child (Zakin, 2011, p. 15 of 28). Thus, the human nature is represented by the two sexes and a culture where the masculine is dominating. The differentiation in human nature makes Irigaray request the differentiation in human culture, too. Therefore, she supports the idea to double and split the universal. This helps to accept sexual differences and to overcome cultural sexual indifference. Although she calls for the division into two, Zakin stresses that Irigaray does not necessarily believe in two fixed sexes (2011, p. 15 of 28). However, without being measured against the masculine ideal and masculine norms, women might get more access to leadership positions. It is because then they do not have to overcome the barriers of not meeting the general male stereotype of a good leader.

Irigaray’s call for differentiation may tackle the hierarchy of female and male stereotypes that have been determined by a patriarchal order. However, human beings will then be measured against the norms in the dualism of men and women. This leads still to an exclusion of people that meet neither the male definition of a male norm nor the female definition of a female norm. This is a concern of other poststructuralists like Kristeva, Derrida, Butler, Grozs and Wilchins.

While Irigaray does not believe herself in the position to explain what a woman or femininity is (Zakin, 2011, p. 16 of 28), Kristeva denies an essential womanhood. For her, women can only be defined by what they are not. The term woman as it is described by patriarchy now is only useful in the short-term for political campaigns. Subjectivity as she sees it is a matter of language with feminine and masculine aspects instead of biological sexual differences (Weedon, 2008, p. 66). By accepting Lacan’s symbolic order, she also accepts the women’s exclusion from language. Yet, she places next to the symbolic order of language associated with consciousness and control, a
semiotic dimension. Unlike the words and logic of the symbolic which are culturally coded as masculine, the semiotic aspect of language is tied to the rhythmic qualities, intonation and stress of speech. The semiotic is culturally coded as feminine because it is associated with the unconscious and emotions (Meyers, 2011, p. 9 of 16). It cannot be contained by the symbolic order since it has not the same structure as words have. Yet, Kelly explains ‘without the semiotic, all signification would be empty and have no importance for our lives’ (Oliver, 1998, p. 2 of 8). Both, symbolic and semiotic are interwoven in language and Discourses (Zakin, 2011, p. 21 of 28). Thus, Kristeva concludes that no one can be a pure feminine or masculine self. With her theory, Kristeva rewrites Freud’s pre-Ödipal respectively Lacan’s pre-Mirror stage. Furthermore, she does not see fear as reason for turning away from the mother, rather as a condition to develop an identity (Zakin, 2011, p. 21 of 28). According to her, the infant is first introduced to the semiotic in the maternal body. Yet, in order to become a subject and get an identity it has to turn away from the mother who is connected to the semiotic. It has to turn towards the society and the symbolic. Kristeva names this process abjection (Oliver, 1998, p. 3 of 8). Yet, a child’s identity will always be in process and never fixed. It develops and moves between drives associated with the semiotic or maternal body and the language system with the symbolic order (Zakin, 2011, p. 21 of 28). Kristeva sees in abjection the reason for women’s oppression, too. Patriarchal societies reduce females to their maternal body or respectively reproduction and thus to something one has to turn away from in order to become a subject. In such societies females will always identify themselves with the maternal body and develop what Kristeva calls a depressive sexuality (Oliver, 1998, p. 3 of 8). This seems to be the reason why Kristeva objects the term “women”, too, and rather proposes identities with varying extend of masculinity and femininity. Here, she differs from Irigaray who supports the idea of the two in culture. Thus, Kristeva does not see herself in what she categorises as the first two generations of female movements that are similar to those mentioned above by Grosz. She rather sees herself in a third generation that proposes ambiguity and a non-fixed identity. However, it is the fact that she still supports the gender dichotomy and does not deal with differences among females what caused criticism (Meyers, 2011, p. 10 of 16). The unawareness of the differences within the gender is probably the reason why Grosz still sees her in the second category (Grosz, 2005, p. 90).
Recent female researchers, among others Judith Butler, have blamed the psychoanalytic views for concentrating on a mainly white, middle-age, Western stereotype of a women. Thereby, researchers following such approaches fail to take differences in race, ethnicity, class and so on into account. Furthermore, those critics do not support the classification in sex and gender dichotomies (Mikkola, 2010, p. 8 of 23). A current belief that is shared by many researchers is that gender and sex are not clearly separable. Concentrating solely on the gender issue leads to the danger to not question the meaning that society associates to the sexes. It is said that what we regard as biological depends mainly on our social attributions (Smykalla, 2006, p. 2 of 11). Thus, Butler sees both, sex and gender, as socially constructed. Although we cannot deny the existence of our physical bodies, it is through our actions that we impose meaning to them. Thereby, we create sexed bodies that imply norms about gender (Mikkola, 2010, p. 11 of 23). This notion also finds support in our everyday language where people do not distinguish that much between sex and gender. Instead they often treat both categories as interchangeable (Mikkola, 2010, p. 1 of 23). Since Discourses is something that we do, gender and sex is also something that we do in our interactions (Smykalla, 2006, p. 4 of 11; Mikkola, 2010, p. 9 of 23). In our society, we create the categories “man” and “woman”. We ascribe roles, norms and stereotypes to them that we transmit through education, media and so on (Smykalla, 2006, p. 3 of 11). Thus, Butler agrees with Kristeva in the way that she also believes that the category ‘woman’ can never be used in a way that is non-ideological (Mikkola, 2010, p. 8 of 23). Some scholars following Butler and Queer Theory even blame feminism for strengthening binary oppositions like masculine/feminine and man/woman with their actions (Wilchins, 2006). Butler suggest ‘to question the categories of biological sex, polarized gender, and determinate sexuality’ (Meyers, 2011, p. 10 of 16). Hence, we would allow people to become manifold without limiting their positions within Discourses by judging them due to our social expectations. As Wilchins states this would also mean to abolish the association of sex and gender at the birth (Wilchins, 2006, p. 80). Instead we should accept what many poststructuralist propose, namely, that meaning is unstable and so is our sexed body, our gendered identity or in particular the category “woman” (Wilchins, 2006; Meyers, 2011).

In conclusion, Butler encouraged us to rethink the sex and gender issue again. Queer Theory makes us see gender as constituted by biological factors, like chromosomes,
physical factors, amongst others size, social factors, like naming practice, education, work division and experiences of being assigned the status of a man or woman (Smykalla, 2006, p. 3 of 11). As a result, sex is part of gender. What we regard as natural or normal in terms of sex is subject to social norms and expectations. Thus, with this understanding, social change is more likely to happen if we not only question our assumptions of masculinity and femininity but also how we expect men and women to be. Yet, questioning the category “woman” might deny the achievements of feminist’s political fight. Thus, some researcher have dealt with the issue of how to explain womanhood.

3.2.5 Explaining womanhood

If there is no such thing like a stable self, a stable gendered identity, then it seems that gender is not a feature that is shared by every women (Meyers, 2011, p. 11 of 16). However, in a gendered society, the experiences women make differ from those of men in general. So, we need to look here in order to understand how one makes sense of one’s life. Moreover, Weedon sees this understanding as ‘starting point for understanding how power relations structure society’ (Weedon, 2008, p. 8). Yet, if there would be nothing that women share, there would be no overarching category “woman” and thus people assigned to it before lose their political power (Weedon, 2008, p. 162; Mikkola, 2010, p. 13 of 23). Thus, movements like gender nominalism and new gender realism explain womanhood (Mikkola, 2010). While the former rebuilds womanhood by referring to something external to women, supporters of ‘new gender realism’ rebuild it by referring to something women share.

Supporter of gender nominalism are Iris Young and Natalie Stoljar. Young refers with her theory of gendered social series to Sartre’s theory of seriality (Meyers, 2011, p. 11 of 16). Here, a series is meant to be a group of people, which is determined by the environment. The environment directs the behaviour and defines meaning of this series by assigning certain people to be member of this series. The members, with focus on the series “woman”, can still decide if they give importance to their membership. As Meyers holds it, ‘a gendered self is optional although the membership in the series “woman” is not’ (Meyers, 2011, p. 11 of 16). Stoljar, on the other hand, sees womanhood rather as a cluster concept. One gets assigned to that cluster if one fulfils three of four features. Those features are ‘Female sex’, ‘Phenomenological features’,
like menstruation or fear of rape, ‘Roles’, like caretaking or female clothing, and ‘Gender attribution’ (Mikkola, 2010, p. 15 of 23). Thus, one can be called a woman even though that person is not female. Although she supports the belief that women share nothing unitary, they are unified within the cluster of womanhood.

Unlike Stoljar and Young, Witt and Alcoff following the new gender realism believe women are unified by something that they share. For example, Witt sees gender as the unifying feature of every social position an individual holds, including wife, sister, mother, student or leader, (Mikkola, 2010, p. 18 of 23). Contrary, Alcoff sees women social positioned only because of their role in reproduction. This causes different expectations, feelings and practices. It is from this shared positioning that women can act politically (Mikkola, 2010, p. 19 of 23).

Although we only present those theories briefly, they show us that acknowledging an unstable self with a variety of roles does not necessarily mean that there is no womanhood. Thus, it is the appreciation of a fragmented category of women that supports feminists’ political course.

3.2.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter we dealt with the questions concerning the development of a gendered identity and the relationship between men and women. Thanks to ideas of Post-structuralism, we are able to rethink our assumptions about the gender issues. Thus, we do not see the distinction of social roles and the meaning attributed to them as naturally given but as socially constructed. It is the contribution of many researchers in the philosophical, psychoanalytical and sociolinguistic field that enrich our understanding of the gender Discourse.

None of these theories can be seen as the one universal concept, it is rather how they refer to each other that explains our positioning within the gender Discourses. Thanks to poststructuralists like Foucault, Derrida and Lacan, we got an understanding of how the reality and our identity is socially constructed. Moreover, they showed us how language shapes our experiences. Things that we take for granted or even call “truth” get actually their meaning because of the Discourses we are in. Yet, the meaning is not fixed and our interpretation depends on the Discourses available to us. We become gendered by our experiences made in childhood, education and by our interactions within the society - as Chodorow, Millet and MacKinnon have shown us. Thus, we get assigned the status of
being a man or being a woman. Furthermore, Beauvoir opened our eyes how society oppresses women by comparing them to the ideal of a human that is presupposed to be masculine. Thereby, she encouraged Irigaray to support the cultural distinguishing of the gender into two without being measured against an ideal human. While Kristeva enriches our thinking by showing us that there is no pure masculine or feminine and it is rather the ratio of both that constitutes our gendered identities. Yet, Butler suggests that like the self is unstable, so is the gender, too. Although people occupy a variety of social roles that are open to interpretations and determined by many equally important characteristics, there is still a justification for women to politically act by referring to a unifying womanhood.
4 Methodology

‘The “forces” that move human beings, as human beings rather than simply as human bodies...are “meaningful stuff”. They are internal ideas, feelings, and motives.’

(Douglas, 1970, p. 9)

‘There is no way we can escape from ourselves, not even as “objective researchers”’

(Daudi, 1986, p. 133)

Through the following chapter we would like to introduce the development of our study and more specifically, the methods we have identified as suitable in our process of knowledge creation.

The first question we have asked ourselves as researchers, has been about how to create knowledge meaningfully. We are completely aware that what might be meaningful to us could not be defined in the same way from our reader. Our aim, in this sense, is not to generate a universal knowledge that can be generalised. Our aim is to create a “knowledge hook” for our reader in order to initiate a process of understanding, thinking, reflecting and generating thoughts towards the complexity of gender, its construction and its impact on the leadership development and practice.

As a first step we urged to understand how to position ourselves toward our research, as ‘Creators of knowledge’ (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1997, p. 4). The reality we live in is complex and rich of assumptions on how to learn, understand, explain what is around us. To be creators of knowledge, as Arbnor and Bjerke underline, researchers need to be conscious of their assumptions and opened to approach research not as a naive investigation on what is already known, but as an act of creation and development of new knowledge (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1997, p. 4). Our consciousness status, brought us to reflect on our position and the process of looking at our research from one direction and not another. We believed this was an important step especially in relation to the methodology we decided to approach in our work, the Discourse Analysis. In this
chapter, we hope to bring our reader in a journey they can get a glimpse of what we have seen, discovered and created through the lenses of the analysis we have explored.

4.1 The researcher and the researched

Analysing issues of power and method in their cases studies, Cameron et al. (1992, p. 5) underline how researchers cannot avoid to be ‘socially located persons’. We, as researchers, are embedded into the knowledge we create, we bring ourselves, our vision, our being into any step of the research process. This is an aspect we felt the need to take into account and we want to bring our reader to consider. A research thesis is not only a way to account some knowledge, but also, as it has been for us, a moment of growth and development as individuals. As individuals, we are aware of the fact that our history, values, culture, everything that constitutes who we are will somehow come to light in our work and in the problematisation of some issues. The fact that our subjective view is here involved should not be seen as a problem or a disturbance. We believe research subjects cannot be seen as asteroids, ‘inanimate lumps of matter’ (Cameron, et al., 1992, p. 5) that can be placed in the development of a study without reasoning their choice. Research can be seen as a relationship, a lively interaction between the researcher and the researched matter that leads to a process of mutual development in the process of knowledge creation. Words, whether in their written or oral form, do. In this way of considering words and language, we embrace one of the principal ideas of Foucault’s work, The Order of Things (orig. Les mots et les choses), of ‘language as action and happening’ (Daudi, 1986, p. 138), more than language a simple and linear structure of units. In the view of this active role of our words, in their doing, constructing and creating knowledge, we cannot escape or bring ourselves out of the text.

The ideal position of the social researcher in the positivist approach, for instance, is value-free and objective (Taylor, 2001, p. 11). Positivism considers research as “good” when not touched by individual biases or subjective views of how the world works. “Good research” should produce neutral information carefully scrutinised and selected in order to guide to a universal truth (Taylor, 2001, p. 11). This vision of how research should be conducted is stimulated by the way Positivism conceives ‘the conception of reality, the object of knowledge and the opinion in which these can be described and explained’ (Cameron, et al., 1992, p. 6). A clear description of how research would be
approached can be given through the metaphor of the game of billiard. A positivist approach, indeed, would mainly put attention on the rolling balls, their speed, the way they collide with each other and the sides of the table as objects, but not the friction, the gravity or the inertia they are exposed to (Cameron, et al., 1992, p. 6). A positivist researcher is not interested in what cannot be seen, the forces behind or the relationship between certain phenomena, but only the reality as it can be observed (Taylor, 2001, p. 11). Taking into consideration this point, since the beginning of our work, we have questioned whether this was supposed to be our case and if this could be considered even possible and fair to ourselves. Is research supposed to be a neutral, value free zone? Is this kind of research the one we aim to relate to as researchers? Does research in the sense described above even exist?

The point we need to reflect upon and we, as researchers realised in the choice of our approach and method, is that since the field of investigation blossoms from the researchers’ interest, it seems unfeasible to divide the two: the researcher and the researched. The aspects of investigation come to life through the eyes and the heart of the researcher, what one wants to see and what one feels in an undergoing process, a gradual and deep relationship building process.

As Daudi underlines, different authors as Sartre, Foucault and Popper to mention a few, have dealt with different problems and theories which is hard to define value free. More often, indeed, ‘the values of the researcher are transformed into arguments’ (Daudi, 1986, p. 117).

If any researcher has ever been able to keep him or herself detached from the reality studied is not the main point we aim to discuss, however, we would not be envy if this is the case. It is not our intention, indeed, trying to bring ourselves out of our text, to look at it as outsiders. We, instead, want to centre ourselves in it, to be consciously present (Daudi, 1986, p. 115) as we believe only bringing our perspectives to life will make us able to nurture and create knowledge meaningfully.

4.2 Insights of qualitative research

During our work we reflected on how to conduct our research and the way that could better serve our purpose. Quantitative research has an immense potential for researchers in different fields. Collecting data and analysing them through statistical methods has
over time enriched what we know from a more concrete perspective. Quantifying is important in every aspect of life in order to know how much, how many, in which percentage, for how long.

Although we recognise the importance of these aspects in research, we felt quantitative data could not really express at its best the human dimension we wanted to explore. We wanted to look into individual’s lives, something that is not possible to do through numerical or statistical records, or not only. Over time, different qualitative methodologies have been applied also in fields not typically considered as “humanistic”, reinforcing its potential consideration and application as a valuable and well-rounded approach to research.

Qualitative research methods do not rely on a pure collection of data in order to explain certain phenomena. Kumar, in his digression on the research process, underlines that the difference between qualitative and quantitative methodologies lays mainly on the different procedures of data collection, analysis and communication of the findings (2011, p. 17). From the perspective we have approached in our research, we found this definition too simplistic. A qualitative approach implies a theoretical perspective and, more specifically, it is phenomenology here to find its place. When a phenomenological perspective is taken into account, what individuals do or say, is interpreted as ‘a product of how people define the world’ (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 9). In doing so, our observations and analysis engaged us in a life changing interpretation process.

In considering how to approach our study, we have been led to consider many aspects concerning methodology and to reflect on our position as researchers as a starting point for its choice. By using Methodology for Creating Business Knowledge of Arbnor and Bjerke (1997) as one of our main resources, we have developed our operative paradigm.

The first step for us has been a reflection on the area of interest and in particular the object of our study. The methodological choices when deciding to study a particular phenomena can be many, however, we discovered how it is the problem itself that guides toward the right methodology, techniques of analysis included. In our specific case, we identified gender and its perception as a problem and an obstacle for many women with the ambition to get to the top and lead. Gender, as we imagined by ourselves since the beginning of our study, could not be just a concept in the air or a definition written somewhere, it had to be something more pervasive.
In the process of creating knowledge, as Arbnor and Bjerke highlight, researchers as humans carry with them ultimate presumptions when looking at different problems, presumptions that can influence the way they approach the issue and the techniques’ choice (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1997, p. 7). The role of ultimate assumptions in our research was particularly strong and due to our two different cultural backgrounds. We realised, confronting with each other, that many are the assumptions we are ready to make when talking about gender and the role of women in our respective society, projecting this view on how it is supposed to be in the world around us as well.

Language, for instance, was seen by us as a reflection of our thoughts, of our values and of our conception of gender itself, when we started. Some of our thoughts about its concept overlapped each other, creating a common ground, objectified realities (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1997, p. 71) that, however, we were ready to question and change. As well as our perceptions about gender, we realised that we as individuals were paradoxically the first point to start our study from in order to understand from were the “common” understanding of some concepts was coming from and to what extend it can influence our interpretations of different phenomena.

The relation existing between individuals’ interpretation and the reality they interpret is of a dialectical kind and under a constant reformulation process (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1997, p. 72). Every phenomena we look at is constituted by the conceptions we have of our experiences and thus, interpreted by us from the province of meaning we refer to. According to the province of meaning we look from, we might see certain things but be unable to see others (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1997, p. 73). Our goal as researchers, to clarify our approach, is exactly to understand first the provinces of meaning individuals orient their view from in order to understand certain behaviours in the social world, in that reality that the individuals themeselves helped to create. The results we aim for, as Abnor and Bjerke would describe, is to ‘contribute to a general understanding of different contexts of structural meaning and of the dialectic processes that create social reality’ (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1997, p. 76). These principles belong to the Actor Approach we took inspiration from in developing our methodology, with special regard to its social paradigms, reality as a social construction and reality as a manifestation of human rationality (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1997, pp. 32-35). The approach to gender as socially constructed, indeed, is a milestone of our research aming to explore how many other
different aspects of life as socially produced result disadvantageous for women and their advancement. Through our research we discovered how many beliefs are mere presumptions about how the environment is supposed to look like and how this is quite unconscious.

We decided to approach our research from a qualitative perspective to feel close to the reality studied and take in consideration all possible perspectives, looking for the challenge of suspending our personal beliefs. We wanted to be open to the discoveries of the human experience, ‘... the inner life of the person, his moral struggles, his successes and failures in securing his destiny in a world too often at variance with his hopes and ideals’ (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 7).

With this goal in mind, we are going now to describe the path we have followed in reaching the formulation of our operative paradigm through the theoretical background that has inspired its creation.

### 4.3 Defining and Applying Discourse

In this section, we first summarise what we have written in the prior chapters about Foucault’s Discourse. We find it necessary to remind the reader about certain aspects because then it is easier to understand the different approaches towards a Discourse Analysis.

#### 4.3.1 What is a Discourse?

The disciplines in the gender and language field approaching Discourse Analysis are many and through different methods. This made possible a range of different ways to define Discourse as a term, often left undefined in many disciplines undertaking Discourse Analysis (Baxter, 2003, p. 7). In this study Discourse is approached as a social practice, as the production of knowledge through language (Hall, 1992, p. 291). In this sense the concept is not referring only to linguistics, but it is language and practice (Taylor, 2001, p. 72).

According to Foucault, Discourses denote ‘practices that systematically form the object of which they speak’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). In this sense, Foucault tends to underline the constitutive, creative process of language. Discourse, is indeed, not made of signs,
of simple words and is not a mere connections between reality and language, it is something ‘more’, that ‘more’ that as Foucault himself states, we want to explore.

The statement and the text have a particular meaning for Foucault. Statements are indeed the most basic elements of Discourse and it is through their formation in a single unit that the Discourse itself assumes its status. Statements, furthermore, are everywhere. Everything we state does always implicitly refers to a certain field of knowledge and in its relation to it assumes a certain meaning (Fadyl, et al., 2012, p. 483). For instance, to state “I am a woman” will always assume a different meaning only according to its function, which will be different if we are applying for a job or we are entering in a reserved dressing room. The example just mentioned highlights the powerful force belonging to every statement we do, we hear or we read. Whether it is through a text or a conversation, language shows its constitutive power: words are not just spelled, words do; and in their doing, they do construct our reality and our identities. In this process of forming, creating and doing, Discourse is pervasive of any social dimension, produces our knowledge, forms ‘the way a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about’ (Taylor, 2001, p. 72).

All the forms of knowledge, whether they are assumptions or expectations, rule our social practices, our ways of defining and indicating what is supposed to be acceptable or not. All this is Discourse, in brief, the way we make sense of the world around us.

4.3.2 In Discourse with Foucault: a discursive practice

The Archaeology of Knowledge, written by Foucault, is a discovery of a new world for anyone that wants to engage in Discourse Analysis. Its complexity, as it has been experienced by many other researchers and authors, is a revelation of the same complexity the world and us as individuals embody, a universe we keep having difficulties to explain.

The Archaeology of Knowledge is just one of the numerous works of Foucault, each one consistently creating an additional milestone in Discourse.

In the occasion of the Inaugural lecture of the Collège de France, given in December 1970, Foucault explores the main principles of Discourse Analysis, representing a guide to everyone somehow in Discourse. Through this famous lecture, Foucault engages the
reader not only in an understanding of what Discourse is and is about, even more on those circumstances that nurture its formation and principles. What does really make Discourse able to flourish? In which way do statements constitute a Discourse about something?

In approaching the Foucauldian vision and trying to answer to these questions, it is necessary to underline where Foucault looks for and what he sees. Statements are the basic elements of Discourse and it is by the constitution of a unit of them, dispersed statements, that discursive formations are created (Daudi, 1986, p. 142). The circumstances in which Discourse is formed are not casual and is Foucault himself who explains the rules of its formation: surfaces of emergence, authorities of delimitation and grids of specification.

Surfaces of emergence are all that social and cultural situation where Discourse objects are formed and emerge as ‘manifest, nameable and describable’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 41), the place where they are shaped. Authorities of delimitation, the second rule, considers all institutions and authorities that give recognition and importance to the objects of interest. Finally, grids of specifications are the different kinds in which a certain object can be divided and differentiated. All three represent the circumstances in which discursive formations come to existence. However, for Foucault, the analysis of these rules by itself is not enough. It is the relation between them that can open the researcher’s eyes on how Discourses ‘form the objects of which they speak’ (Fadyl, et al., 2012, p. 484). A further element that is explored are enunciative modalities, which refer to the legitimacy of the author (L’enunciateur) to state something as truth. As Daudi (1986) clarifies, statements are the single elements and part of Discourse, enunciation is instead that action that allows the discursive formation (p. 146). Once that discursive formation starts being visible to our eyes, the methodological approach suggested by Foucault can find its application.

In the Discourse on Language (or The Order of Discourse) Foucault reflects on the apparently seen danger of infinite Discourses to proliferate. His call is specifically focused on the fact that Discourse is somehow controlled and redistributed in a certain way, in order to control events. The means this happens through what he names “procedures of exclusion”, procedures external to Discourse. The first one is the
prohibition that implies our impossibility to say whatever we think in every moment or speak about everything because that would result inappropriate and false. In this sense he refers to all those arguments that are taboo, to the attribution of anything that falls out of control in actions and thinking as belonging to madness and to the will to truth that constantly relies on institutions and established practices like systems of books and publishing, for instance (Foucault, 1970, pp. 54-55). The second procedure is the division between folly and reason, he explores referring to madness. The third is the “will to truth”, which explores what we indentify as true or false and counts for us as knowledge.

Yet, another Discourse restricting function is carried out by the Discourse itself, by procedures of limitations internal to the Discourse. The commentary, the author and the disciplines, indeed, delimit Discourse by identifying what is likely to be said and reproduced (Fadyl, et al., 2012, p. 485).

Pointing out the mentioned procedures of exclusion and limitation, Foucault underlines where it is possible to find the reasons of the Discourse’s delimitation. The disclosure of these forms of restriction are the heart of Foucault’s aim, which is achieved and explained through the introduction of four important principles (Foucault, 1970).

The principle of reversal is that principle that puts us into reversing the traditional relationship we have with Discourse. Reality and identities are constructed through the available Discourses that provide us an image of how things should be. It is through disclosing the procedures of exclusion, limitation and restriction that is possible to reverse Discourse not looking only at what it conveys, but at what is not said.

The principle of discontinuity explores how Discourse is never coherent or can be seen as a whole one, it is rarefacted. In the words of Foucault this means that there are no Discourses that are silent or unsaid, but that Discourses are ‘sometimes juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other’ (Foucault, 1970, p. 67).

The principle of specificity underlines the fact that Discourse is a human practice, something that is imposed on things and not based on perceptions. Hook (2001, p. 543)
suggest that this principle should take us to gather texts, in our case, from areas where Discourse can been seen and certain realities and practices are taken for granted.

That is why we collected job descriptions aiming to recruite leaders since we have seen how locations where material effects of Discourse could be seen were.

Finally, the principle of exteriority reveals how our point is not to go in depth into the meanings laying behind what is said and what constitutes Discourse, but staying on the surface and look at its external existence in order not to analyse what Discourses say, but what they do.

In the genesis of Discourse, Foucault does not provide a manual or a guide to follow step by step, he refuses to identify his analytical research as embedded in a methodology expressly named as well as he avoids to specify a set of final guidelines (Tamboukou, 1999, p. 201; Hook, 2001, p. 521). The principles and procedures we have described have been interpreted by us as hints in the creation of a personal Discourse Analysis.

Foucault, however, uses the terms “archaeologies” and “genealogies” as sets of analysis (Foucault, 1970, p. 70), although, as Tamboukou (1999) notes, he seemed like ‘slipping away from being committed to any of them’. The meaning of both terms is explained by Foucault himself in The Use of Pleasure, these are defined as ‘dimensions of analysis’ (Fadyl, et al., 2012, p. 481). In the dimension of archaeology the analysis focuses on the ‘identification and examination of discursive formations’ (p. 482), more on a discursive level, examining elements, processes and functions. The dimension of genealogy shifts instead on how discursive formations come to life and operate through relations of power and knowledge, implying an investigation on why certain Discourses are as they are, in which way we and others become subjects of these Discourses and which kind of power rules preserve them (Fadyl, et al., 2012, p. 481).

As we already mentioned, the framework provided by Foucault is not a step by step process to follow but provides a direction leaving space for further and personal developments in conducting Discourse Analysis. This has made interpretations of the
Foucauldian analysis very diversified and also complex to achieve, but at the same time has inspired many researchers and different areas of investigations in looking forward.

Through the next section we will provide a short overview of different analytical techniques that have inspired our analysis approach and helped us in creating our own method.

4.3.3 A post-structuralist approach to Discourse Analysis

The poststructuralist perspective on gender and language is with no doubt the one that has nurtured our interest the most during our work, and consequently inspired the methodological approach that will be soon discussed in more details. The reason of this lays on the history of textual and discursive inquiry Post-structuralism has been characterised from (Baxter, 2003, p. 21). In referring to Post-structuralism, it is the essence of gender as socially constructed that we have taken as a starting point. In this stream of the Post-modern vision of reality, no terms as women and men are ever taken for granted. The contestation of a fixed meaning, as existing once and for all as a property belonging to the individual, is one of the pillars we will refer to during our analysis. We have previously mentioned how to state ‘I am a woman’ becomes meaningful according to its function, indirectly relating to a certain form of knowledge. In this sense, what we also contest in a poststructuralist fashion is the fixed meaning of that “I am a woman”. Foucault has extensively considered the power interests behind those forms of knowledge we indirectly refer to and on a common ground with Derrida, he recognises that ‘social meanings are continuously negotiated and contested through language and Discourse’ (Baxter, 2003, p. 24).

Our approach seeks to take us into the consideration of language as constitutive, as constructing social reality and not merely reflecting it. Putting aside the mirror that for some researchers language embodies, we look at language as socially constituting human identities. In our theoretical framework we have underlined how different subjective positions have been made available to women by the stream of particular Discourses operating within a certain context and how this has led to women’s oppression in most of the cases. From this starting point, our practical study aims in part to disclose how institutional Discourses indirectly, or this is commonly apparent to our eyes, offer us ‘knowledge about “approved ways to be”’ (Baxter, 2003, p. 26). A point
to consider here is that not so often we question whether we have or have not control on our ways of being and behaving. This awareness status, as Baxter (2003) underlines, is seen by Foucault as something that should not concern us as authors. In this sense he explores Discourse without relating to the personal experience and subjective position underlining instead the constrains this can place upon Discourse (pp. 26-27). With our thesis, we attempt to go beyond this limitation. The Discourse Analysis we have approached, which will be further explored in the next pages, focuses on rising that awareness as part of its result. Aligning ourselves to a poststructuralist view, our task is now to ‘challenge and change the dominant and colonizing organizational Discourse, over and over again’ (Calás & Smircich, 1996, p. 245).

4.3.4 Discourse Analysis Techniques

Many different Discourse Analysis approaches have been developed over time, mainly inspired from very diverse scholarly traditions. As we have previously explored, the framework of analysis provided by Foucault aims to leave space for further developments and to expand what he has started (Fadyl, et al., 2012, p. 490). Foucault’s work has inspired many researchers in different areas of inquiry from language and gender to health research, only to mention a few. Each tradition has approached Discourse Analysis in slightly different ways according to the subject matters, the types of resources analysed, the features of the material found relevant. Their frameworks does not often rely on a single approach, but combines principles of different research traditions (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 44). In approaching our Discourse Analysis this is exactly how we have proceeded. Discourse Analysis is not a neutral form of investigation and involved our commitment as researchers in gaining a wide theoretical background but also in taking certain decisions. By considering different analytical techniques, we have gained an extensive view of the many perspectives available with the purpose to create our own.

Reasonably, the fields of Discourse Analysis we have considered have been mainly the ones using texts, even though we have also looked at those relying on interviews and conversations. Texts are not the only source to conduct Discourse Analysis, indeed, many others rely on interviews and conversations, which normally involves a recording and a following transcription process. As we will explain in the data collection’s section, we preferred to focus on different sites in our case, differently from
Conversation Analysis, Discursive psychology and Ethnography of communication, which focal point is studying the details of gender in oral interactions (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 51).

In elaborating our Discourse Analysis we came across different sources. The Handbook of Discourse Analysis by Schiffrin et al. (2003), Discourse as Data by Wetherell et al. (2001) and An introduction to Discourse Analysis by James P. Gee (2011) have been useful in drawing our path. They all provide different categorisations of Discourse Analysis methods and define the different research approaches that can be undertaken.

In Discourse as Data (2001), Taylor delineates four main broad approaches that can direct Discourse Analysis and will be here shortly introduced.

- The first approach is more close to linguistics and considers language as it is. In this kind of approach researchers normally look for textual patterns which can be focused on the grammatical structure, on some terms in particular, on the sentence order and so on. By doing so, the study is based on demonstrating the relationship occurring between the linguistic patterns and external phenomena as a result.

- The second approach takes a step further and the goal is not on the language itself, but more on its use. The analysis can be conducted on particular kind of texts with certain structures and attention is given to the author. In particular, he or she is not seen as free, but as influenced from the discursive practice previously went on and is seen as forced by the context.

- The third approach is interested in patterns of language-in-use. Different words are normally created within our cultural and social contexts and this approach aims to investigate how these terms make people able to talk about certain topics. In this way of considering language, attention is drawn on the context in which this happens, underlining how language is situated.

- The fourth approach, finally, is extracted out of some characteristics of the third approach, in considering language as situated in certain contextual situations. However, the goal of the researchers is in this case, more on reality as socially constructed through language. In particular, language and practices are seen as creating the reality individuals live in and how they perceive the world around themselves. This approach tends to underline also the historical dimension of certain meanings and on how the way things are talked about can construct the
definition of certain identities, of how things should be and individuals should behave.

The approaches just described are not labelled, instead constitute an input toward the principles that researchers might want to apply, still leaving open the definition of Discourse Analysis as a research activity (Taylor, 2001, p. 8).

At this point, once that we have approached a better overview of the ways we can approach Discourse Analysis, we think it important to describe the main investigations on a discursive level that different disciplines undertook and that have inspired our Discourse Analysis. All of them will be related to the field of Gender and Language studies as we wanted to look at how gender is constructed into current leadership practices through language.

4.3.5 Discursive Psychology

Discursive psychology is a research tradition belonging to England, developed into social psychology (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 52). Wetherell and Potter are the main representatives of this stream of research as many others that have contributed in reinforcing this branch of psychology and its use of Discourse Analysis rather than classical experimentations.

Discursive psychology assumes as central a constructionist concept of mental states, not as belonging to the individual as stable traits, but as created through interaction. In this sense, the focus is on Discourse which sites are social practices, on the way identities are created through social interaction and on revealing how different categories are constructed by discursive practices (Ahl, 2002, p. 80). A further focus is on ideology, where discursive ideologies are explored as determining a division of groups, favouring some instead of others. The main tools that are related to conducting this kind of analysis are related to Conversation Analysis (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 52). Conversation Analysis draws its development on the reproduction of gender through naturally occurring conversations and underlining this as the main locus to investigate effects of the social construction of identities (Weatherall, 2002, p. 78).

4.3.6 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been developed by many Discourse analysts, the main ones can be recognised in Norman Fairclough and Teun van Dijk. CDA
approaches language in a poststructuralist approach, blending insights of Marx theory (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 57), as constructing and reproducing ideologies to the point of letting them become common sense. This approach to Discourse distinguishes Discourse and non-discursive practices by building a bridge between the discursive micro-level (Discourse about something) and its effects on a macro-level (enacted practices), (Van Dijk, 2003, p. 354). In analysing this relationship, CDA aims to underline how power permeates all levels of society and how Discourse of dominance and inequality are actively reproduced determining the promotion of marginalised groups (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 57; Van Dijk, 2003, p. 354). The analysis is critical in the sense that takes a clear position in resisting inequalities and is used for liberating purposes (Van Dijk, 2003, p. 352).

4.4 The principles applied in our study

In this chapter, by addressing different approaches and Discourse Analysis frameworks, our aim has been to draw the path we have experienced during our research process in order to make the reader aware of why certain choices have been made. The methodological journey just reviewed, in addition to the theoretical framework has contributed to the design of our own Discourse Analysis.

Beginning with the application of the Foucauldian principles, we considered statements as part of the text, present everywhere but always connected to their field of relations to understand their function. Since Discourses ‘systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 49) we explored the circumstances of formation of the discursive object and its process. Through our analysis, we intended to examine:

- the surfaces of emergence, which we identified in the job descriptions aiming to hire potential leader figures and thus the social, cultural and economic spheres of Discourse appearance (Daudi, 1986, p. 145);
- the authorities of delimitations, that in our case represented the field of knowledge established and legitimated through the recruiting practice, that gives importance to the discursive constructions;
the grids of specification, which focused on the systems the object can be broken down into as different types. These are the different ways in which the leadership position can be named or otherwise classified.

Once discursive formations came to existence, it was possible for us to analyse its criteria of development, the procedures of inclusion and exclusion we have previously introduced. The application of the principle of reversal focused on looking at inclusions and exclusions, at the knowledge and truths Discourse and statements rely on and in which way they are maintained. We looked at the content and at the form asking “How are women positioned by job descriptions looking for leaders? Who are they looking for? What is excluded or chosen as not relevant? What cannot be said?” We discovered that Discourse becomes visible through the interrogation of its limits, more than through what is clearly visible. The path here described took us to reveal in which ways Discourse shapes what we know and what we think, our knowledge and those ideas that for too long have been taken for granted as “true”. Following this path, we looked at exclusion procedures; the prohibitions, what is allowed or not allowed to say, what as from the external delimits the Discourse. Then, we analysed how Discourse controls itself through limitations procedures, by underlining the position of the author as the origin of the meaning of what is written, and the discipline, constituted by the HR domain as an ‘interplay of rules, and definitions, of techniques and tools’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 222).

The Discourse Analysis developed brought in additional insights of discursive psychology, not only as part of the poststructuralist perspective of reality and identities as constructed we have adopted, but as focusing on ideology as well. We refer to ideologies as those conscious and unconscious belief that generate expectations on how things should be or look like. In this sense, our analysis looked for the ideological sphere of Discourse and its effect. The same aspect is seen in CDA, which ‘calls it attention to the ideologies of gender embedded in the most pervasive forms of Discourse in contemporary society’ (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 58). Critical Discourse Analysis lays far from the principles we applied to a certain extent, as it identifies the analyst’s interpretation as the same of the reader, which was not our case. However, CDA concentrates on written Discourse, looks at discursive practices as contributing to
imbalanced power relationships (Ahl, 2002, p. 80) and it is critical, as well as we are, with the purpose of generating change.

The process of analysis began with the analysis of the content of the job descriptions, the way they were structured and the main themes visible. We collected relevant information from each of them, selecting all the requested skills for a leadership position. This was done in parallel for Germany and Italy. The first part of the analysis focused on creating the ideal leadership profile searched by the different job descriptions which was constituted by the following points:

- Type of position;
- Main responsibilities;
- Required hard skills;
- Required soft skills;
- Additional requirements;

We analysed the job descriptions again and again, looked for presences and absence and thus how procedures of exclusion where enacted as well as limitations, taking anything for granted.

With this final aspect, we conclude here our methodological excursion and leave our reader enjoy the reading of our analysis. The last section of this chapter will be dedicated to the data collection while in the following chapters we will present our Discourse Analysis, conducted on German and Italian job descriptions, disclose our results and finally introduce our conclusions.

### 4.5 Sources of research

The following section is devoted to explain the sources we have analysed in our Discourse Analysis. Discourse, as we have stated before, is delimited by practices that constitute and limit it. These practices are not only textual, are instead constituted by a broad terrain of events (Nicholls, 2009, p. 33). The event we have decided to concentrate on in our research is anyway textual, job descriptions looking for leaders. Nevertheless, they are a practise as well, not only because texts themselves can be
interpreted as “talkative items” in the sense of communicating something to the reader, but also in the sense of the function they perform.

Our study focuses on the analysis of secondary data, job advertisements or descriptions (that in this place will be used as synonymous) addressing leadership positions in the business environment. To begin with our selection, we decided to focus the research of job advertisements respectively in the two different countries we come from, Italy and Germany. This aspect is important to point out since our ways of selecting have followed similar but different paths. In the rest of this section the main common principles will be described.

Terms and language variation

As students in Leadership and Management, indoctrinated in English, we found many differences in the ways leaders were indicated and looked for in the jobs descriptions of our respective countries. Therefore, we decided to devolve some time to understand which of these terms where referring to leadership positions but labelled in different ways. This step has been crucial in the identification of valuable resources that could produce meaningful findings. In Germany for instance, the term “leader” is often referred to in a negative way for historical reasons, while in Italy, differently, the term leader is not commonly used by itself but indirectly addressed as part of the features that individuals at the top should have. In both cases, the most common categories when put under “executive or top management positions”.

Relevant features

As we just said we looked for more broad categories. In any case, the research was oriented towards some elements that we valued as denoting leadership positions. We explored whether these roles implied the presence of a team or of a number of people the candidate was supposed to be in charge of and, especially, the kind of relation with them, directly or indirectly stated.

Avoiding biases

In order to avoid a biased process of selection, the job descriptions were collected looking only at headlines indicating a leading position. We considered that the content of the text, indeed, would have threaten the ethics of this thesis and of us as researchers.
Therefore, a further selection of the texts that did not satisfy the criteria have been discarded only later on during the analysis.

**Tools of research**

The tool used to collect our material was internet. The common HR practice has been for years using the web for posting job advertisements. This can be done through the company website itself, through HR companies specialised in certain kind of recruitments on their website or, additionally, through general platforms referred to by different online national newspapers or other websites connected.

In the case of the job descriptions in Germany, the main platform used was the following:

http://www.management-jobs.stepstone.de. Through this website is indeed possible to screen mainly leading positions advertisements for different sectors and different companies. The selection in this case was done by collecting all the job descriptions available and relevant for each sector.

In the case of Italy, instead, no general platform where available, but all job descriptions where present on the different platforms consulted: www.indeed.it, www.monster.it, www.trovolavoro.it, www.infojobs.it, www.careerjet.it, www.linkedin.it, www.careerbuilder.it. All these different platforms presented different positions for different sectors advertised. Many of them, however, where placed from HR companies in charge (Michael Page, Profi&Carriere, Gi Group, Human Value srl, Experis Italia) which website the job description was right after referring to. Furthermore, differently from Germany, many of the websites available required a paid subscriptions for looking at the position’s information.

In both cases, all job descriptions where selected from a wide range of sectors and belonging each one to different companies, ensuring an extensive variety of data available.

**Periods of selection**

Job descriptions and the recruiting system more in general, is characterised from a consistent turnover of positions available. The positions available since March, April and May 2014 are once mostly represented in our study and thus they refer to a specific
period. In any case, we believe the data reached present a good overview of the current practice.

**Additional thoughts**

The decision of selecting job descriptions as data for conducting our analysis, was reasoned on the fact that from our perspective, something very basic in the story of the leadership position was supposed to be somehow a locus of interested. With interest, we refer to the language-in-use, the basic element of the reality construction and, in our case, of a gendered leadership construction. The analysis of qualitative data is extremely labour-intensive when conducting the analysis (Wetherell, et al., 2001, p. 24) and for some aspect even inefficient sometimes. On this aspect lays the reason of the selection of a reasonably small sample of data to analyse. Our aim was indeed to be able to analyse in an effective way a number of job descriptions that could clearly be representative of a larger number as well. The selection of different sectors and companies also came along with this goal.

In the chapters following we will present both Discourse Analysis as from us conducted. We decided to devolve two different chapters for presenting reflections and findings because we valued as important the different perspectives and background the Discourse Analysis could be approached from. The reader will find different styles of presenting some issues, as well as, some aspect’s investigations reoccurrence. In any case, we believed this could enrich our work even more and engage the reader in looking at how different researchers are interestingly “embedded” into Discourse.
5 Leadership Discourse in Germany

In this chapter, we carry out a Discourse Analysis based on job advertisements for leadership positions in Germany. By doing so, we aim to understand if the transmitted expectation of the “ideal” leader is gendered. The statements made in the analysed job advertisements appear in a certain context and are influenced by the Discourse in Germany. In order to get to their meaning, we need to see them within the context in which they occur. Thus, we first have a look on the context. Afterwards we aim to understand how the statements in job advertisements contribute to the Discourse and if gender is relevant in these statements. With taking the context into account, we see who is more likely to meet organisation’s expectation of a good leader. The data that we used for our Discourse Analysis can be found in the appendix of this thesis.

5.1 Language-in-use

When it comes to sex and gender issues, people do not make the same distinction between sex and gender in German like in English. Both is translated “Geschlecht”. Only by placing the adjectives biological, “biologisches Geschlecht”, and social, “soziales Geschlecht”, beforehand a distinction between sex and gender is possible. Most of the Germans associate with “Geschlecht” one’s biological sex. Even the “Duden”, which can be seen as the “bible” of the German language, defines it in this way. Yet, it lists also “Gender” as a common term in German (Bibliographisches Institut GmbH, 2013; Smykalla, 2006, p. 1 of 11). Still, my experiences fit with what Mikkola wrote, namely, that we use sex and gender interchangeably in our everyday language (2010, p. 1 of 23). If this is the case, woman and femininity belong together as well as man and masculinity. Thus, people who do not meet the gender norms and stereotypes associated with their sex, are more likely to be marked as abnormal. Moreover, there is the risk that the meaning of the term “Geschlecht” makes it harder to change the historically, socially and culturally constructed gender (Smykalla, 2006, p. 1 of 11). If the translation from German “Geschlecht” is not clear, we will indicate it with “sex/gender” in this section.

Another term that is crucial for our thesis and might cause troubles in German is the English term “leader”. A direct translation would be “Führer”, yet this is a word that
finds negative association due to our recent history (Bibliographisches Institut GmbH, 2013). Hence, we avoid this term in Germany. Instead, we use “Führungskraft”, “Leiter”, “Geschäftsführer” or even “Manager” for people occupying top positions in companies. These have been the terms we used in our research for finding job descriptions referring to leadership positions in Germany, too.

5.2 The Context of the Discourse Analysis

Before we analyse job description, we need to have a closer look on the context in which they are written. As Gee states, every statement we make is made within a certain context (Gee, 2011, p. 51). Language is not decontextualized. Thus, in a Discourse Analysis, we have to move ‘from context to language and from language to context’ (Gee, 2011, p. 20).

5.2.1 Legal regulations

Every job description has to be written without violating existing laws. Article 3 (2) in the German “Grundgesetz” (engl. Constitution) requests explicitly the equal treatment of men and women. Moreover, public institutions are responsible for maintaining this equality and for abolishing existing inequalities. Yet, this article does not affect the relationship between individuals (Schmergal & Tödtmann, 2012, p. 77). Hence, it does not affect business relations in the private sector, too. In order to fulfil its duties, the German government introduced the “Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz” (AGG, engl. General Act on Equal Treatment) in 2006. It affects mainly an employer and employee’s relationship. Although it was introduced in 2006, it does not mean that the relationship had been based on inequality before. Prior regulations had just been codified less clearly in other laws (Kramer & Peter, 2014, p. 15).

According to § 11 AGG with reference to § 7 (1) AGG and together with § 1 AGG, it is not allowed to discriminate any individual because of their sex/gender or sexual orientation in job advertisements. Nevertheless, exceptions can be found in § 5 AGG and § 8 (1) AGG. The former only allows discrimination to compensate existing inequalities and the latter allows exceptions if the kind of work requests certain characteristics. Yet, in the case of § 8 (1) AGG, it has to be an essential job-related requirement and the exercise of this exception should be appropriate. For example, a company looking for a male model for a fashion show or an actress for a female part in
a theatre might be an appropriate exception (Küfner-Schmitt, 2009, p. 33). However, it would be inappropriate for a transport company to look for a male carrier. If an employer discriminates applicants due to sex/gender or sexual orientations, it might happen that he or she has to pay a three-month salary to the victim. It might even be more. If the applicant can prove that he or she would have got the job, the employer might have to pay the difference of the salary the applicant would have got with a promotion and the estimated amount of salary one gets without it till his or her retirement. Although the employer has to prove that one did not violate the law, it might be difficult for the applicant to prove that he or she would have got the job in the first place (Schmergal & Tödtmann, 2012, p. 77). Still, it is in the interest of an employer to write job advertisements in a gender neutral way. Otherwise it might cause financial and reputational damages. Even if the job advertisements tend to be written without gender bias, the authors act within existing Discourses. They resort to a language that transmits common stereotypes and norms. These might not be as obvious as without these regulations, yet as not only Derrida’s deconstruction has proven, these biases are still present. In the course of this chapter, we look on how job advertisements still carry the ideal of a male leader and thereby make it harder for women to enter leading positions.

5.2.2 Women’s representation in leadership positions

Many laws are introduced as a reaction of social discussions held within particular Discourses. It is safe to claim that the awareness of the gender inequality would not have been the same today without the female movements that we have discussed in chapter 2.1. These female movements have also not been without impact on Germany. They have found many supporters there, too (Sichtermann, 2009). One of the most famous one is Alice Schwarzer. Although the gender Discourse has never been silent in Germany, the social discussion about the lack of women in leadership positions has been reinforced since the last global economic crisis in 2008 (Sprenger, 2013).

Especially, the lack of females in top positions has been criticised and led to a debate about the implementation of a quota. Only 15 board-members of all companies in the “Deutscher Aktienindex” (DAX, engl. German share index) were female – together they represented 7.8 per cent of all board-members (Inacker & Terpitz, 2013). The DAX is an indicator for the development of the 30 largest companies that have the highest turnover in Germany. Thus, these companies not only mirror the German economy but
also serve as role models for other companies. Although the female representation was with 7.8 per cent in the boards of directors and with 19.4 per cent in the supervisory boards in DAX companies in March 2013 pretty low, it has been a positive development. In 2008, the percentages were with 0.5 per cent in management boards and 13.1 per cent in supervisory boards even less. A similar development took place in the top 200 companies excluding financial service provider. Within those companies, there has been an increase from 2.5 per cent female participation in 2008 to 4.0 per cent in 2013 in the boards of directors and from 9.3 per cent to 12.9 per cent in the supervisory boards (Inacker & Terpitz, 2013). Yet, only 16.5 per cent of the 200 largest companies and only 13 of 30 companies in the DAX had females in their boards of directors (Engeser, et al., 2013).

In the ‘glass-ceiling index’ published by The Economist (2014) Germany does not even meet the OECD average. Strikingly, it has a higher wage gap than the average. It seems as if the mentioned percentages represent and reinforce the notion that women are not regarded as leaders. A notion that we think is rooted historically and culturally deep in our language. Without getting aware of the importance of our language, the implementation of women in high positions might only show its effect in short-term. In long-term they will still struggle to be regarded as effective leaders and can only be successful if they follow the male ideal of a leader. Thereby, they unconsciously reinforce the general assumption of leadership requiring masculine features. As we will see in the next section, it may be due to this assumptions that some of those women, who got into leadership positions, face certain problems. It might be a proof that the problem is rooted much deeper.

5.2.3 Barriers blocking women’s career in Germany

At the same time the percentages of women in top positions are rising, a debate about the implementation of quotas for female leaders is going on. Some people argue that companies hire women for top positions only because they want to avoid quotas that would force them to do so (Schmergal & Tödtmann, 2012). Thereby, they imply that women will not be hired for other reasons.

Many reasons were mentioned why women do not make it into top positions. However, people almost only pay attention to three dimensions for gender inequalities mentioned by the European Commission (Smykalla, 2006, p. 1 of 11) but miss to deal with the
fourth, the norms and values. Inacker and Terpitz (2013) list in their article arguments like those that meetings are set up at 6 pm, that female leader cannot reconcile family and work, that female regard power as negative and that income splitting as well as child care subsidy reinforce traditional role distribution. Even though the latter two deal with the fourth dimension, the reasons mentioned in an online survey among male and female leaders carried out by the “Bundesverband Deutscher Führungskräfte” do not deal with this dimension (Schmidt, 2012, p. 91). Here, people blame the male domination in deciding bodies, a weak self-marketing of women, a lack of access to networks, a lack of support, a lack of compatibility of family and work as well as a misrecognition of advantages of diversity. German women in particular are said to be less confident and to be not as ambitious as their peers in other countries (Schmidt, 2012, p. 90). Furthermore, female leaders from other countries working in Germany recognise a different culture with a different perception of women in this country (Schmidt, 2012). In Germany, the traditional role of women is rather common. Most women go in part-time jobs after the birth of a child. Women care more about household in Germany than in other countries where they hire people for caring about it. However, it is the women that is still seen as being responsible for the domestic area. Language strengthens this traditional distribution of roles. For example, it is common to use the term “Putzfrau”, what can be translated with maid instead of cleaner. Thus, it seems as if the German language does not assign men to the domestic area, only women. If our language still assigns women to the domestic area, they lack the time to take over responsibilities in a work environment, especially responsibilities that come along with leadership positions.

5.2.4 Discussion about a quota

Recently, a debate about the implementation of quotas has been started and supported by many politicians in order to force companies to promote women in top positions. In March 2014 the government presented guidelines for an upcoming law that requests at least 30 per cent women participation in supervisory boards in large companies (Herwartz, 2014). Yet, this sudden change might turn out to be disadvantageous for women’s course. Due to recent developments, we may ask:

- Might a quota really increase the perception of women as being capable of leading?
• Is the supervisory board the best place for women to show leadership skills? and
• Is there no danger of starting what Derrida calls “”war between the sexes”” (1982, p. 72)?

If we consider recent developments in Germany and our knowledge about the role of language, we can answer all those questions with “No”. Sprenger (2013) sees in the quota a political way of distracting from issues like financing infrastructures that might give women time to integrate in the business world. According to him the quota mainly finds support by feminists, women that blame gender as a reason for not being promoted, by companies using quota as a tool to improve their image and consultants who find a new business in promoting women to top-positions.

We believe von Schmettow (2013) is right when he says that many women are sometimes promoted too fast in top-positions now and that one should instead develop one’s leadership skills on different levels in the hierarchy over time. Even among the 15 female-board members in 2013 three have been regarded as controversial (Engeser, et al., 2013, p. 81). Colleagues blame some of the female leaders in Germany for showing a lack of social competence, a lack of experience in a certain field and a lack of zest for action. Such complaints match the barriers listed by Oakley (2000) and mentioned above. By being promoted in top positions really quickly, women also have to develop their leadership skills quickly. Since they are not able to slowly develop the skills in order to negotiate their role within the leadership Discourse, they end in taking the role that is offered to them. In a world where the ideal leader is considered to have masculine features, they are more likely to adopt those characteristics. This leaves them open to negative evaluation from their male and female counterparts. Especially, some men in leading positions may acknowledge every weakness they can find in their female peers. Many male leaders have recently complained about being discriminated because companies promote women instead of men to top positions (Schmergal & Tödtmann, 2012). Since skilled female leaders are a rare resource, because of a lack of support in the past, companies tend to even hire women with qualifications with which men would not have even been invited to a job interview (Engeser, et al., 2013, p. 83).

Furthermore, employer place women mainly in leading positions in personal, legal or marketing departments where men now feel excluded (Sprenger, 2013). Still, men hold more those positions that Oakley considers as a prerequisite for becoming CEO (2000,
p. 323). Nevertheless, these developments may be disadvantageous in two ways. As Sprenger (2013) thinks they might encourage men to prove women as bad leaders or to keep them at a low level. Furthermore, as Schmergal and Tödtmann (2012) state, it may lead to male following counter-strategies like leaving the companies, intriguing against female leaders or suing against promotions. Is not a quota a nice excuse for every male that was not promoted to blame the quota for a woman’s promotion instead of acknowledging her leading skills?

The announcement of an upcoming law regulating the number of females in supervisory boards of DAX companies caused further discussions. Thorborg (2014b) founder of Generation CEO a network for female leaders questioned the usefulness of this quotas since there are not enough female yet with leadership experiences. In Germany the supervisory board only controls the executive directors and has no influence on the operational part of a company (Dehnen, 2014). Thus, the focus should be rather directed towards position where women can apply their leadership skills on an operational level (Thorborg, 2014a, p. 1 of 2). Moreover, people who often cited the example of Norway with a quota of 40 per cent females in supervisory boards often disregard that none of the 25 biggest companies in Norway is run by a woman (Thorborg, 2014a, p. 2 of 2). Yet, it is in the operative field where one can exercise leadership skills. Thus, might it be possible that a quota is not the best way to tackle the lack of female leaders?

The job advertisements that we analysed are published within this context. These advertisements may not be about positions in supervisory boards. Yet, they are not without impact, since DAX companies represent Germany’s economic situation. The developments affecting them, will sooner or later affect the rest of the economy. Furthermore, employers fear complaints from both sexes, men and women. The aim is indeed to design the job descriptions and requirements for leading positions as gender neutral as possible. Yet, they still transmit a message of a stereotype of a leader - a stereotype that we believe favours men. Finally, people receiving this message consciously or unconsciously will inherit and reinforce this stereotype. If the desired leader is considered to be a man, women may even be discouraged to consider themselves worthy to apply for a leading position in the first place.
5.3 A Discourse Analysis based on job advertisements

With our Discourse Analysis, we hope to understand why we find only a few women in top positions. Due to our research and participation in Discourses, we can assume that it is because of society’s masculine image of a desirable leader. However, in analysing job advertisements as discursive practice, we hope to get an understanding of how companies transmit their image of a desired leader. By focusing on language-in-use in such practices, we expect further insights in how organisations position themselves within the gendered Discourses.

We see job advertisements as a gatekeeper to leading positions. People have to meet the requirements in order to become a leader. Thus, job advertisements may also give an explanation why only a few women make it into top positions. Even though most of the analysed advertisements do not deal with top-positions, we believe they still transmit the image of a leader. Furthermore, according to our experiences, organisations promote people into top positions or hire them directly without them applying beforehand. Thus, we are less likely to find job advertisements for positions in a management board.

5.3.1 Proceeding

In this Discourse Analysis, we concentrated on 62 different job advertisements. We found them on one of the most famous online platforms in Germany where companies can publish their job offers, StepStone\(^1\). Since StepStone also provides a special platform only for “Führungskräfte” (engl. leader), we could almost be sure that all of the published job advertisements deal with jobs in leading positions. Nevertheless, we needed to check if this was really the case. The term “manager” can comprise both, management and leadership tasks, as well as only management tasks. Thus, we looked for hints indicating leadership positions. For us, a hint was if the headline includes terms like “Leiter”, “Geschäftsführer” or respectively similar words, if it explicitly asks for leadership skills or if the hired person is supposed to lead a team. Thus, we found 62 job advertisements that were all in written format. Furthermore, they were all based on business language. Since we are studying in business related courses, we had no problems in understanding them. Next, we could analyse the job advertisements according to their positioning within the leadership and gender Discourses.

\(^1\) [http://www.management-jobs.stepstone.de/](http://www.management-jobs.stepstone.de/)
Furthermore, we wanted to get a broad overview about the relevant themes in Germany when it comes to leadership positions. With the help of these themes, we could see how the image of a leader is gendered. In order to ensure a broad overview, we took job advertisements out of a variety of economic sectors and which refer to different positions in different departments. A list of the job advertisements with sector, department and position can be found in the appendix. We analysed all job advertisements according to the rules of the discursive practice of publishing a job advertisement and according to the reoccurring themes. By focusing on the rules that determine a job offer, we got a deeper sense of the effective power and the practice of exclusion. Moreover, the statements made in a job advertisement are influenced by current Discourses and have an impact on existing Discourses. Analysing the addressed themes, we could see those micro powers at work and see how they shape reality.

5.3.2 Practice of exclusion

In order to analyse job advertisements, we need to have a look on the internal rules of that practice. Therefore, we need to be aware of the writings as actions instead of focusing solely on the statements. Moreover, these statements have been made in a certain context and we have to see them in this context. Another point we have to address, is the status of the authors, their institutions and their position in relation to the Discourses (Daudi, 1986, p. 146). Thus, we apply our concept of the “who”, the “what”, the “how” and “where”: Who says what how and where?

We start by concentrating on the “who”. The author of the job advertisements gets one’s status from the organisation he or she is working for. This status makes one eligible to publish a job offer on behalf of the organisation. Yet, as Mills (2004, p. 84; 2011, p. 57) states, next to institutional status, there is also a local status. The latter can be negotiated and depends on one’s skills. In the case of the author, it is probably because of the skills in writing and/or his information advantage about how to write a job advertisement and about what kind of leader is needed. Thus, in most cases, it is a member of a HR department or an executive of an organisation. Sometimes, an organisation hires also an external to write those job advertisements. However, next, we needed to understand why an organisation is authorised to appoint someone who contributes statements to the Discourses. An organisation’s power is codified in the “Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch” (BGB, engl. Civil Law Code) and in the “Handelsgesetz” (HGB, engl. Commercial
Law). Power is attributed to an organisation if it is considered as such and if it participates in social or economic interactions. According to § 705 BGB a private organisation is established by a group of people following a shared goal that is settled in a contract. More power is attributed to an organisation with its registration in the “Handelsregister” (engl. Commercial register). The registration marks it as an active player in the economical world. However, not only private organisations hold power, public organisations do so, too. The latter get their status from the federal government or respectively from the federal state. Either way, they are treated like a legal entity. As a legal entity, an organisation holds power to contribute, for example, to the leadership Discourse. Yet, their contribution is also influenced by the Discourses available to its members and member’s interactions.

When we speak of the “what”, we mainly refer to the nature of the statements. However, these statements are made in a certain context. Thus, the “what” cannot be separated from the “how” and “where”.

All the job advertisements we analysed have been published in written form. That means, they were not delivered in an oral interaction nor in moving pictures. Although words carried mainly the message, more often than not, they were accompanied by other symbols, like pictures. Since the meaning of words and statements is never fixed, we need to understand what indicates a job advertisement as such. Here, we hold mainly the structure of the job advertisement as well as the context in which it is published responsible. Each of the analysed job advertisement indicated a job position in a headline with letters larger in size than the rest of the text. Furthermore, every job description included the tasks a candidate would have to deal with if that person is hired. All but one published next to the task description a profile description. This profile is supposed to preselect potential applicants. The description contributes indirectly to this preselecting by excluding persons that do not feel able to carry out those tasks. Amongst others both, the description of the profile directly and the description of the tasks indirectly, determine who in our society can be regarded as a leader and who not. By analysing them, we get a better sense of how the image of a leader is gendered.

In all but three cases, the job advertisements included a description of the company and in half of them also a description of the job conditions. Both can serve to carry a
gendered picture. The company description indicates the work environment and may discourage women to enter a male-dominated environment. However, we focused less on the environment and more on the transmitted image of a leader. Although we did not ignore the company descriptions, they will play a minor role in our analysis. They are rather important when we refer to the context. Yet, the job conditions will be part of our analysis. In our opinion, they fulfil a similar function as the task descriptions do. What we also recognised, is that all job advertisements included statements about a contact, too. That is another aspect that we believe indicates a job advertisement as such and thus contributes to its statement’s power. Furthermore, people will recognise a job advertisement only if it is published in the right context. In our research, it was an internet platform that finds much recognition in Germany for publishing job offers. Other occasions where we might expect job offers are on an organisation’s homepage, in newspapers, in radio shows, on (public) display panels or even in a conversation with an authorised person.

We have already discussed the kind of statements in a job advertisement. They address the profile of a leader, the tasks related to leadership and the conditions leader can expect. Yet, what they do not address is if the image of a leader is gendered in the first place. It is on those things that are not said where we concentrate our Discourse Analysis.

5.3.3 Making gender relevant

In this section, we focus on those statements that explicitly express the gender issues. In the job advertisements that we analysed the gender issue was addressed in all but two cases in the headline, sometimes in the pictures, one time in an addition and many times in the contacts section. In the following part, we will put less emphasis on the latter case since we cannot be sure if the gendered contact, addressed by “Frau” (engl. madam) or “Herr” (engl. sir), is the same person that wrote the job advertisement. Even if we knew, we could not say how much relevance that person gives to the gender topic. Thus, we concentrate on the facts that are obvious.

In all but two cases, the headline gives importance to the gender topic. In most of the times, it was by including the symbols “(m/w)” or respectively “(w/m)”. These symbols are often used to refer to both gender. In German “m” stand for “männlich” (engl. masculine), “w” stands for “weiblich” (engl. feminine) and “/” is an indicator for things
that are supposed to be equally important in this context. While Derrida would question that those two things are also meant to be equally important, we can assume that “m” and “w” in this context mean masculine and feminine. Another way used to indicate both gender, is the ending of the nouns. In German, nouns ending on “-er” indicate in many cases a masculine term while nouns ending with “-in” refer to the feminine equivalent. Yet, we found these application only in seven job advertisements. It was more common, in 47 of the 62 advertisements, to just write the masculine form and add one of the two symbols “(m/w)” or “(w/m)”. Thus, they put less emphasis on appearing gender neutral with the noun than they did with the symbol. We can assume that the legal requirements and the social discussion mentioned above might have influenced the authors in writing those headlines. Yet, any further interpretation would be too biased.

A few headlines, including those two that have given no relevance to the gender, included a verb-derived noun describing the activity instead of including the noun referring to a person. It seems to be an indicator where the gender topic appears less obvious. In some cases, also the department or sector where the hired leader is supposed to work was mentioned. Such a categorisation can evoke certain gendered association. Yet, we hold it like with the company descriptions and put them to the context of our analysis.

Another way of making gender relevant in the analysed job advertisements was in the choice of the images accompanying the text. Not all of the job descriptions were accompanied by an image. Even if an image was published, most of the times, it was not obvious gendered. In such cases, it was a label of a company, a larger group of people with different gender, certain objects associated with the business sector or the kind of work or something else. Yet, eleven times, we found pictures favouring men, three times we found a picture favouring women and eight times it was a picture of men and women without putting emphasis on any gender. While in the first two cases, we cannot say if gender was really relevant, it is safer to claim gender relevance in the latter case because the author cared about displaying both gender equally. For the other cases, we have to pay attention to the context and the other parts of the job advertisements to be able to tell if it is gendered on purpose.

The third way where gender was displayed as relevant, is one of the legal exceptions discussed above. It was in an advertisement from a university where they are looking
for an executive for their IT department. They wanted to increase the number of women in leadership positions that is why they mentioned a preference for female applicants. Thus, we can assume that there is currently a gender inequality in leading positions. Otherwise, one could accuse them of discrimination.

Out of this section, we can conclude that gender seems to be a topic in job advertisements in general and in job advertisements for leadership positions in particular. Yet, at this point, we cannot make any claims about whether the transmitted image of a leader in Germany favours one of the two gender. Conclusions out of the gendered pictures or headlines that use more often than not a masculine noun would be biased. Especially, the latter might prompt some analyst to attribute masculine features to the ideal of a leader. Yet, it seems to be rather used in the function of a generic masculine that stands for both gender. According to the Duden (2013) this is common in ordinary language. Also, the fact that a university needs to increase their number of female leaders can have other reasons than discrimination. Since we have seen that gender is relevant, we now analyse the meaning of the statements within the job advertisements. Here, we have to take the context into account.

5.3.4 Reoccurring Themes

After knowing how the statements in a job advertisement have an impact on Discourses and after having seen that gender is relevant, we concentrate now on the image of a leader that those statements transmit. Thereby, we could see why this image is gendered.

First, we analysed the statements in the job advertisements regarding reoccurring themes that were addressed. Thus, we saw what is important for society when they refer to leadership. With the help of our theoretical framework and by including the context, we were then able to see why this image is gendered.

During our analysis of the job advertisements, we found three themes that were addressed several times within each advertisement. We named those three themes:

- relationship and caring
- acting and
- expertise.
To the theme “relationship and caring” we assigned all those statements that express how a leader is supposed to deal directly or indirectly with followers, clients and other stakeholder. For example, organisational skills belong to this theme if they refer to the organisation of followers’ education as well as the organisation of processes, production and other activities done by colleagues. Furthermore, many job advertisements ask for team-work skills in their profile description or see a leader working in a team what is sometimes expressed in the tasks descriptions. Communication skills and tasks are also included since they serve to co-ordinate activities, educate others or to build up a network. Similarly, we see in this category also the required leadership skills or tasks associated with leadership in the sense how Bennis and Nanus (2007) define it.

The second theme, “acting”, comprises all skills, tasks and conditions that describe what a leader is expected to do without stressing that others are involved. For instance, activities like organising oneself, the creation of concepts, carrying out analyses, improving processes and production steps or taking over responsibility and showing one’s own initiative belong to this theme. Also, when it is said that an applicant needs to have assertiveness or needs to show resilience, the authors of the job description describe the nature of the activities. Furthermore, each time, they address a time dimension, we see them referring to a leader’s capability of acting. They address it when they ask for being flexible, offer a full-time or a part-time contract and state that the job involves travelling.

“Expertise” involves every statement about a leader’s knowledge or experiences. Thus, these are things that employers presuppose when a leader starts in a new job. This could be skills regarding computer soft- and hardware as well as special expertise in the field the leader will work. Moreover, statements referring to the potential leader’s education background belong into this theme, too. If they ask for professional experience, we count it to “expertise”. Sometimes, they want from applicants a proof of leadership experiences in the curriculum vitae (CV). Then, it belongs also to the theme “expertise”.

5.3.5 Analysing the themes

Now that we have an overview over the three themes, we can analyse them more in detail and see if they are gendered and how. Our interpretations are mainly based on what we have presented as common sense in the theoretical framework and the context described in the beginning of the chapter. It is that what many female researcher want to
tackle. By revealing those stereotypes, norms and so on that people take for granted, we encourage them to rethink their assumptions. Thus, we want the reader to not understand the following part as a reinforcement of common sense knowledge but as a chance of increasing one’s awareness of how oppression may work.

To the first theme “relationship and caring”, we assigned all the statements dealing with the leader’s relationship and interactions with stakeholder. The statements belonging to this theme meet different stereotypical features of men and women. Organisational skills are said to be stereotypical masculine since it requires more one’s thinking and one’s mind which both are codified masculine. For example, in the concept of the *homo economicus* it is the “man with the plan” (Meyers, 2011, p. 3 of 16). Furthermore, also the often stated leader’s duty to educate others would rather be assigned to men. “Lecturing” is one of the stereotypical communication styles attributed to men while “Listening” is rather a female stereotype. Yet, in general, all activities dealing with caring and relationships to other persons evoke an association with maternity. Thus, it is rather attributed to women. As Chodorow argues, it is due to the daughter-mother relationship that females stay emotionally dependent on other people. Moreover, according to Irigaray a subject-subject relation is a feminine choice and males develop rather a subject-object relation (1995, p. 16). Also, Tannen (1996) sees women’s speech stereotypically relationship oriented. Additionally, caring is generally associated with childcare which has always been women’s duty in common sense knowledge. Although a shift can be recognised and more and more male take parental leave, it has not found enough recognition to tackle the general association of women and childcare. Thus, we might say the statements in this category experience a gendered association and seem to favour the feminine more despite the fact that some of them are stereotypical masculine-related.

Still, this does not say if women or men are prioritised for leadership positions in this context. In chapter 2, we have talked about the recent shift towards seeing a female communication style as superior. Since communication is a necessity to build up relationships, it is really important for companies stressing statements in their job advertisements that relate to communication skills. However, we have also written that people favour men who show feminine communication skills over women. Thus, we can assume that employer’s stressing features belonging to this theme favour probably
neither men nor women for leadership positions. Moreover, women have a better chance to be hired in such organisations if they take over the role of “mother” when they exercise their leadership style. A role that also Baxter (2010) and Kendall (2003) found in some female leaders. On the other hand, men may position themselves as good organiser or educator.

Another common theme that we found in our Discourse Analysis was “Acting” comprising all statements with leaders acting independently. Also, this theme includes many associations with gender stereotypes. Yet, almost all of those stereotypes refer to the masculine. Skills and tasks needed for carrying out or developing analyses, conceptions, improvements and strategies are stereotypical codified masculine. Again, it is the respectively superior term in the binary oppositions of mind/body and logos/pathos that is valued more in these statements. Furthermore, notions that request leaders who show resilience and assertiveness encourage associations with sports and war, and most of all with competition. These are all areas historically seen to be men’s field.

Another area that has been always open for men and where women have just started to enter in a greater number for 150, is the economic field. Thus, stressing economical thinking as a prerequisite for becoming a leader, may evoke the image of a male. As our definition of the theme “acting” implies, it is a necessity to be independent. This finds expression in statements emphasising the need for a leader to take over responsibilities and being able to motivate oneself. This is an aspect where many of the theories in this thesis agree that independence is stereotypical attributed to men. However, they also stress the point that such assumptions have to be questioned. Independence is a topic in all statements dealing with the time horizon of “acting”. Full time contracts, being flexible and being willing to travel might address men more since women are still raised and educated to care about the family in a traditional sense. While caring was in the first theme rather in the interest of women, the statements in this theme may be disadvantageous for women who intend to become leader. In conclusion, we can assume that women in organisations directly or indirectly stressing statements of this theme are more likely to survive in leadership positions if they take over the role of an Iron Maiden. Yet, this may also cause troubles if the double-bind shows effect and women drain too much energy to meet a masculine image of a leader.
The third theme includes statements dealing with the knowledge or experiences a person should have to be considered by a particular organisation as leader and thus is called “expertise”. It is safe to claim that the statements referring to this theme are not only influenced by leadership and gender Discourses but also by educational Discourses. Nowadays, it is almost common sense that females do better in school and university. Furthermore, the amount of females with tertiary education was in 2011 almost the same like the amount of males with tertiary education (The Economist, 2014). Tertiary education is in all but six job advertisements seen as a requirement for becoming a leader. A requirement men and women should fulfil equally according to the statistic. Moreover, women should have an advantage when results are important. Yet, we cannot deny the existence of the leadership gap in Germany. Reason might be again that expertise is associated with mind and logos. Furthermore, the German industry is famous for its engineering. Thus, many companies operate in or have contact with companies in this sector. A sector that is considered to be male dominated. Not only are women less likely to follow a career in these sectors but also those who do are more likely to face the barriers mentioned in chapter 2.3.3. Therefore, a male dominated sector that is valued among the highest in Germany may support a gendered image of a leader, too.

However, many of the job advertisements asked for existing leadership experiences. If this is a requirement for being considered a leader in those organisations, more men meet this requirement than women. People are aware of this fact and as long as nothing changes, this awareness will rather contribute to a masculine image of a leader. Furthermore, men are said to apply a communication style where they express status, solve problems and lecture other. Thus, men stereotypically display their knowledge or to say it in ordinary language: they are more likely to “show off” with their expertise. As a result, organisations stressing knowledge and experience of leaders might tend to hire males who do not hold back with displaying it. Therefore, we can say that statements within this theme are gendered and according to the context in which they are made, they still are in favour for men.

In order to sum up, we have found three reoccurring themes by looking for the image of a leader. This image is transmitted in the descriptions of a leader’s profile and leadership tasks. While the first theme “relationship and caring” is gendered, it favours
neither men nor women. Yet, the other two themes attribute men an advantage. Although the themes are stressed differently in the job advertisements, we found them in every job advertisement. While statements associated with “acting” and organisational skills are more likely to appear in the tasks descriptions, other statements out of “relationship and caring” or “expertise” are more likely to appear in the profile section. This might indicate that the former are taken more for granted and the latter need to be emphasised as feature to further limit the number of people that would fit to the task descriptions. A notion that is supported by the fact that in 57 of the 62 job advertisements the task description appeared before the profile description. If statements associated with “acting” imply a male leader, it is the number of male who meet the general assumption of a leader that is limited in a second step. Thus women may be discouraged in the first place to consider themselves as meeting the requirements of a leader.

We have mentioned above that in Germany most of the female leaders can be found in personal or marketing departments. Thus, we also wanted to see if the transmitted description of leaders for such departments differs from the one of leaders in departments that are stereotypically considered as being male dominated. Hence, we compared job advertisements referring to personal and marketing departments with such referring to IT, finance and production. Yet, the tendencies were almost the same. Differences could only be found in different use of statements within a theme, especially, in the “acting” theme. Here, operational and strategic skills were more stressed for positions in personal and marketing departments. In the departments stereotypically considered to be male, it was the emphasis on analytical skills and economical thinking. Yet, other minor differences can be explained by our research limitations.

5.4 Evaluation of the Discourse Analysis

In this chapter, we have carried out a Discourse Analysis based on 62 job advertisements for leading positions in Germany. Our aim was to understand what kind of leader people expect and how this image is gendered. Thus, we first had a look at the context in which the job advertisements appear since every text is influenced by the context in which it is written (Gee, 2011, p. 20). Afterwards, we needed to understand
why statements in job advertisements hold power to contribute to Discourses. A closer look on the symbols accompanying the description of a leader, revealed that gender is relevant. Thus, in a next step, we analysed the themes that we found reoccurring in the statements. We aimed for finding the meaning behind the expectations of the desired leader.

We do not claim our Discourse Analysis to be complete and perfect. However, we hold it like Gee (Gee, 2011, p. 100) and refer to the ideas of Post-structuralism when we argue that there is nothing like an “ideal” Discourse Analysis. We see our approach as matching our research paradigm and it served us to see what people expect from a leader. When people write or say something, they do not mention everything that they mean. This would take too much time. Instead they rely on a reader or listener’s capability to take the context into account and thus get their intended meaning (Gee, 2011, p. 100). It is exactly this meaning that we wanted to reach when we applied our Discourse Analysis on the job advertisements. Thus, we found the description of a leader that is gendered and in favour for men. Nevertheless, poststructuralist have taught us that meaning is never stable. Furthermore, our research was influenced by the Discourses available to us. As the reader will attribute a different meaning to our analysis, we will find a slightly different meaning in our statements just after finishing this sentence, too. Yet, by having provided a theoretical framework and a presentation of the context to which we refer, we hoped to give the reader the necessary tools to understand our argumentation. Moreover, the findings in our analysis are similar to how the researchers in our theoretical framework and people in Germany perceive our current situation. Thus, we see ourselves as contributing to the Discourse and taking part in a social discussion.

In the current situation, a quota in Germany might send the wrong message since it may transmit the message that women cannot make it in to top position without it. Hence, people do not question their assumptions of a leader but see women struggling in leadership positions. It might be possible that a quota can help to change our view and to regard women as more common in leadership positions. However, experiences in Germany taught us that forcing a higher number of women into certain leadership positions does not tackle the barriers they face in general. Instead we need to focus on
our assumptions, language and so on, as we have shown with the examples of the job advertisements.

After having analysed the three themes, we could see stereotypical implications statements in job advertisements may evoke. No one can escape the Discourses we are in. They determine our acting, thinking, talking and so on. Thus, they influenced the authors when they were writing those statements, too. Yet, we can reconsider our positioning within the Discourses. We do not mean to necessarily leave the limits society has set for us within the Discourses immediately. This might rather leave us alone as “outsider”. However, it is our contribution, the contribution from each person, to the Discourses that may help to tackle those boundaries that limit our positioning within the Discourses. For example, we can ask ourselves why we still believe logos and mind are codified masculine and associated to men when women do better in school. Another point may be creativity. This is a skill stereotypically associated more with women (Ryan, et al., 2011, p. 473). This association might be due to the fact that creativity does not result from logos. In our analysis, only three job advertisements stated this skill to be a skill of a leader. Yet, we believe, creativity is as important as other skills for strategic decisions, for problem solving and in improving a company’s situation. So, we may ask ourselves why it is not as appreciated or stressed in job advertisements as other skills. Nevertheless, we do not want to start the “war of the sexes” as Derrida would say. It can only be the first step to question our hierarchical thinking and also our valuing of certain things over others. It would be wrong to believe all women do this and all men do that. We rather should acknowledge variety. Creativity may be a feature of a particular woman as it can be a feature of a certain man. The same is true for team-work skills, economical thinking, assertiveness, analytical skills, resilience, organisational skills and many others. It is because the categories male and female are fragmented itself. Thus, we may find persons of both gender that are suitable for being a leader. If people acknowledge this fact, we give the gender topic less relevance in leadership Discourses. As a result, women are less likely to face the glass ceiling.
6 Leadership Discourse in Italy

The present chapter is devoted to the Discourse analysis that has been conducted on Italian job descriptions looking for leaders. In the first part, we will present the cultural and social background within the leadership Discourse is placed to then demonstrate how certain themes and conceptions have deep roots in the language-in-use. Later, in the following sections, the Discourse emerging from the analysed texts will be presented, as well as the explanation of the different constructions.

6.1 Language-in-use

The study of sex and gender issues has a long history in Italy, especially when referring to social studies, sociology and psychology, which have extensively focused on their definition. The development of the gender and sex conception in the Italian academic history cannot be object of this thesis, but is important in the understanding of language differences. In particular, differently from French, Norwegian and Danish (Talbot, 1998, p. 7) for instance, gender and sex as well as in English exist as separated terms in the Italian language. “Genere” e “Sesso”, respectively gender and sex, are considered as distinct. “Genere” depends on social and cultural factors, referring to behaviours and “ways to be feminine”, while “Sex” is due to biological factors, reaffirming the presence of a biological determinism (Gelli, 2009, p. 199). In this sense, the Italian investigation of these aspects is influenced and part of the feminist movement that, through the different waves we have explored, has raised awareness on women’s oppression. This dichotomy is due, according to Gelli (2009), to our cultural matrix which, in the Italian case especially, has tended to create a pathology out of everything that determines ambiguities between gender and the biological sex, between what is enacted and the way instead is “supposed to be” (Gelli, 2009, p. 201). The aspect of language-in-use and of its powerful force in constructing reality, however, lacks of awareness in the cultural Italian domain with the effect that the conception of gender and sex, of masculine and feminine, result as deeply rooted. Furthermore, although the two terms have two distinct meanings and are both present in the common language, the term “Genere” is the one that has assumed a legal value when referring to women and men. This is especially visible at the legal level, where the whole law corpus refers to
gender. This aspect can be seen as a clear position towards the differences issues in Italy, where the extensive use of gender instead of sex implies a focus on the social position rather than on the biological determinism.

What will be later explored, is especially true when we refer to leadership. The term “Leadership” finds its same equivalent in the Italian language without difference. However, in the case of this study, the references constantly used to indicate a leading top position is more generally “Direttore” (director), “Dirigente” (director) and “Manager”. Exceptions refer to the “Team Leader” position, directly imported into the Italian language in its English version.

6.2 The Context of Discourse Analysis

The aim of conducting Discourse Analysis cannot be separated from an overview of the context in which is itself situated. Individuals, as language users, whether they communicated or write or receive information, are situated in a certain context (Wetherell, et al., 2001, p. 9) that in this section will be taken in consideration.

The Italian disciplines towards equal opportunities in the workplace have gone through a long journey, in order to ensure that women and men could access to the same positions without discriminations. This aspect is particularly relevant for the job descriptions, as the texts we decided to investigate during our analysis. Job descriptions are indeed the roadmap of recruitment and do answer to specific rules and regulations, in particular when relating to discrimination’s issues.

The study *L’evoluzione della normative di genere in Italia e in Europa* conducted by Marcucci and Evangelisti (2013) underlines the aspects of the Italian law process of development. The critical aspect to consider about Italy is the inexistence of a policy related to the equal opportunities until the ‘90s, when the European Union begins with a consistent evolution of the regulation process of this issue at a European level, determining a consistent pressure on the evolution of all the countries part of it (Marcucci & Vangelisti, 2013, p. 9). With policies in this case, we refer to all those rules and institutions’ actions with the aim to ensure and equal representation of women and men in the political, social and economic sphere. Indeed, in that historical moment, the Italian problem was not only to ensure an equal access to the workplace, but to ensure women’s consideration on a wider level. It is only at the end of the Second
World War (SWW), indeed that the Italian Constitution with the Art. 37 declares for the first time women and men equality under law and in the workplace (Marcucci & Vangelisti, 2013, p. 9). The position of Italy highlights a consistent gap compared to the evolution of other European countries and this can be better understood when we consider Italy from its cultural background profile. At the end of the SWW, the country was still conservative and the society extremely male-oriented. Women were not only subordinated, but limited in any aspect of life and unable to participate to any aspect of the political, social or economic life. The Italian regulatory framework development can be mainly divided in three steps: the phase of the protection and prohibition of any discrimination, the phase of equal opportunities and positive actions and finally, the phase of gender mainstreaming (Marcucci & Vangelisti, 2013, p. 5).

It is with the Art. 3, that the Italian Constitution places the foundations for the future development of the gender equality issue, declaring the “equal social dignity” as belonging to all Italian citizens and opening the doors to further developments. In the ‘70s, indeed, the law 903/77 states the prohibition of any discrimination based on gender in the access to the workplace including payments’ differentiations, and on the family status (married or not married). Italy has to wait until the ‘80s in order to see the implementations of the first positive actions and the institution of government’s bodies finalised to the active promotion of women in the job market and decisional level positions (Marcucci & Vangelisti, 2013, p. 10). At the end of the ‘90s the Italian sensitivity seems to be changed and more attention is paid to flexibility issues with the aim to legally ensure the possibility for women to enact a “double presence” (“doppia presenza”), practice of conciliating home and family caring duties with a professional career in a top position (Sala, 2004, p. 11). This is the phase of the gender mainstreaming, when work-balance issues begin to have a place and a voice, as well as women finally seem to have a voice and a presence to be taken into account. The detailed Italian regulatory framework’s description is not the focus of this thesis, however, we valued the importance of the context understanding as a priority before getting deeper into the analysis, especially as regarding to certain specific issues. One of them is, indeed, the Gender Pay Gap. As we have previously mentioned, in Italy only in the late ‘70s the law starts regulating the payment issues between women and men and their differences. According to the Italian law, 903/77 Art. 2, women and men have the right to receive the same compensation when the performances required are the same or
have the same value. Furthermore, the professional classifications which determine compensations, need to follow the same criteria for men and women. Although this is clearly stated by the Italian law, the reality shows a different face. The Gender Gap, which is the difference between women’s and men’s pay (European Commission, 2013, p. 4), is indeed still present in Italy and accounts for 5.3 per cent. Despite the International Labour Organization and the European Union reinforcement of different policies, the problem still persists. The reason lays on indirect ways of discriminating from within, the years of experience, the education level, the different skills required are all those elements that today still allow a lower remuneration for women in Italy and that, from a formal point of view, will still allow so in the years coming.

6.2.1 The Quota Issue

Also in Italy, as well as in many other countries in Europe and in the world, policy makers have made the “quota” issue relevant in their agenda. On the example of Norway, the opportunity of introducing quota emerges in Italy with the aim to ensure a minimum presence of women in the companies’ boardroom (Marcucci & Vangelisti, 2013, p. 18). In 2012 the discussion started to then see the formal approval at the end of 2013 for the public limited companies. A long way, instead, has still to be passed through in order to see the approval of the same law in the political boards, just denied by the parliament few months ago. According to Marcucci and Vangelisti, the introduction would help to create a sort of “equilibrium” among the top management powers and represent a valuable example of equality in those places where inequality instead seems to rule (2013, p. 19). In the peculiar case of Italy two characteristics can be underlined. In the first place, two different kind of quota have been discussed over the last year “societarie” and “elettive” (regarding in different ways the corporate and the political boards). The problem, indeed, is more pervasive that it can be imagined. The minimum quota of women is not only a problem of the business environment, but even more, of the political one. A question, at this point, raises spontaneously: is it possible to ensure a gender equality on a corporate level, when the same is not already guaranteed on a political one? As we have seen in the previous sections, Italy is still not advanced enough from a legal point of view, and many of the basic laws ensuring a possible work-life balance are still far from being approved. We do not believe that, the problem could be solved for companies when is not still solved socially, legally and
politically. The second characteristic, is even more peculiar, since the “quota”, in Italy, are addressed as “pink”, “le quote rosa”. The pink colour has always been a sort of female “status symbol”, but in this case, underlines even more how the issue is well far rooted than in the quota themselves.

The “quota example” followed is Norway, that in 2003 started with reform of the public limited companies act. Later on, Spain (2007) and France (2011) adopted similar regulations and further inspired other countries to follow the same path. Results from Norway, in the study Matsa et al. (2013), indicate that the number of women, since the introduction of the law, almost doubled compared to the previous years, from 18 to 40 per cent (p. 12). However, this does not imply whether the effect would be positive or not in the rest of the countries as well. Each regional area, indeed, is exceptional for having different cultural backgrounds. The apparent “positive” results of the Nordic countries, at least from a numerical point of view, might not be the same in Italy, for instance. Furthermore, it might also not help to change the general assumption about women in leadership position as we have discussed before (chapter 5.2.4). From our perspective, the quota will not help in Italy either to avoid that “war between sexes” Derrida has so much talked about. The reasons of the status quo are far behind a numerical presence in the boardroom, as we aim to demonstrate in this place, and will not find their answers unless the way we talk about it will not change.

6.2.2 Women’s representation in leadership positions

In this section, we aim to present in a concise way, the representation of women in leadership positions in Italy. This presence will be observed in the business world, excluding the political environment that is not object of this thesis. The discussion that will be presented here under, relates to an interesting study conducted, *Women on corporate boards in Italy* (Bianco, et al., 2013). The study, highlights the main features characterising the position of women in Italy in leading positions. The female presence in the corporate boards in Italy does not present positive data. In 2010, only the 8.6 per cent of the boards of directors of the Italian companies had a woman sitting in, demonstrating that a board where all men are present is instead the norm (Bianco, et al., 2013, pp. 7-8). A similar trend is also shown on a more global level, where the Global Gender Gap Index shows Italy among the lowest, close to India, Austria, Turkey and Austria (World Economic Forum , 2013). In the boards, the average number of directors
accounts for 10 and hold different decisional powers according to the kind of board we refer to. The representation of women at the top is in Italy finds its own reasons. Studies demonstrate how the common relation existing between the dimension of the company and the women’s presence in leading positions, normally positively related, shows a different trend. Small companies, indeed, show a higher rate of female presence in the boardroom compared to big companies (p. 11). The reasons can be found in the different controls models that are associated with different rates of representation as well.

In the Italian context, companies controlled by a single agent are more present than companies with a more dispersed representation (p. 11), and in the first model, women appear to be more represented than in the others. The second aspect concerning women’s leadership trends, is that on the analysis of different executive directors women appeared to be present, but more difficultly independent, compared to men (p. 12). This, in particular, underlines how the aspect of decisional power is clearly positioned and belonging to men, more than to women. This points reinforce the aspects mentioned before about the introduction of the “quota”. When the issue is so deeply rooted into the way the role of a woman is constructed, the introduction of any “law ad hoc” cannot promise significant changes. A further element that needs attention is the fact that, although the female representation in leadership positions exist in Italy, even if low, the 57 per cent of them are family members of the company they lead (p. 12). We found this facet very peculiar, even though not so surprising. The number of companies controlled by a single agent are the majority in Italy, as we have seen, and, at the same time, a consistent number of them is also owned by the founder or historical family. Different trends, in different contexts, support that Italy is still a conservative country from many point of view. From a certain perspective this enables to keep beautiful traditions, but at the same time, allows the reiteration common assumptions that, taken for granted, are difficult to scratch. The same company boards of directors show a certain “inertia” in changing their structure (p. 15). A similar inertia is also present in the consideration of which are identified as typically “feminine” sectors like IT and services more in general, and typically “masculine” like administration, where we respectively find the majority of their leading positions, according to their gender (Sala, 2004, p. 32).
6.2.3 The main obstacles to lead

Considering the main obstacles for women in getting to higher positions, we can find in the Italian literature on the issue, a very peculiar way of pointing it out. The most common themes are indeed “la stanza dei bottoni” (the buttons’ room, our literal translation) and “il soffitto di cristallo” (the crystal ceiling, our literal translation; the glass ceiling), which looks like terms referring to a mythological fairy tale. The path to the boardroom, as we could see from the number of women today in leading positions, is not an easy one in Italy. The main obstacles that women commonly find in getting to the top are mainly the issues of policies adopted from the top-management in charge, prejudices from male colleagues and senior managers, flexibility for travelling and motherhood (Sala, 2004).

The issues related to the top-management policies and prejudices within the corporate environment itself seems to be very common. It is not surprising that these kind of practices have been able to survive for so long. Indeed, when the discrimination comes from the inside, it is even harder to fight. For top-management policies, we refer to all those practices that deny in an indirect way a possible path of career advancement for an individual. These can be for instance claims of inadequate competences, of sexual discriminations or mobbing of different kinds. This seems to be true not only from the top-management positions, but also from the colleagues women relate with on the same level. The flexibility for travelling, identifies a very common issue closely connected to the working schedule that is normally provided. In particular, the willingness to travel very often and thus, to respect the corporate practices as they are, is valued as a rewarding behaviour in the Italian firms, when looking for career advancements (Sala, 2004). The typical model of a continuous and sacrificed work relationship is still the norm and alternative paths as motherhood or discontinuous career courses are not positively valued (Sala, 2004, p. 29). The most visible consequences are normally a loss of influence, difficulties created from the organisation structure and stagnation of the economic pay (2004, p. 30).

Finally, the motherhood issue is not new, not even worldwide. The Italian law and guarantees connected to it seem to be very promising compared to many other countries in Europe, however, the main issue lays on the lack of possibility of finding a personal influence in a certain role once the period is over. Many women, indeed, find in Italy a
consistent barrier in developing their professional path if the motherhood constitutes an issue. Different laws have tried over time to take over these discriminations, but the reality is that in Italy motherhood is not still accepted when relating to leadership positions. The aspects just considered, conclude our theoretical framework. From the following sections, the Discourse Analysis will be instead explained, from how the Discourse emerges to the main themes reoccurring.

6.3 How the Discourse emerges

Different discursive practices can emerge from different spaces. They are constituted and continuously delimited and thus, are responsible of constructed realities taken for granted. In the following Discourse Analysis, we will focus on 30 job advertisements. The present descriptions have been analysed in Italian, as the mother tongue of one of us, in order to trace with the possible best practice, all those elements that the cultural background can help us to see and disclose.

The research of the texts and their selection has been done by focusing on the research of the main terms that in the Italian language refer to top or executive positions. The following ones, as we have experienced, are the ones the Italian practice refers to more often: “direttore” (director), “dirigente” (director), “capo” (chief), “responsabile” (person in charge), “Manager”. Moreover, other terms, even if less common, allowed us to look for further material available: “team leader”, “senior”, “team manager”. These last terms have been borrowed from the English language and are nowadays very common in Italian. The term “manager”, however, needs a further explanation. From our research, we realised how the words “leader” or “leadership” are unusual in the job descriptions as positions’ labels, although both of them are part of the Italian language. The meaning the concept of leadership has in the Italian context is the same as in English. With leadership skills, indeed, job descriptions refer to the influence and impact a person is able to exercise on a group context, by determining certain member’s behaviours (Bryman, 1996). When looking for the material available, “Manager”, however, resulted to be more consistent as a label in order to collect valuable data. The reasons of this pattern lay on the different cultural ways to look at labels, and more specifically, on the fact that the insightful debate on the difference between leaders and managers has not already touched the Italian context so deeply. In this sense, we can
equal the term “Manager” to “Manager of meaning” (Bryman, 1996, p. 271) in this case. The job descriptions on which we have developed our analysis, we believe, are a good example of the leadership positions currently offered in the Italian business context.

6.3.1 Practices of inclusion and exclusion

Job descriptions are a roadmap for the recruitment process and are a fundamental tool in order to attract the right candidates to apply. Combining an accurate job advertisement looking for a leadership position, indeed, determines who the applicants will be and, potentially, the success of the recruitment process. Job descriptions, in this sense, ‘support leadership success’ (Pavur, 2010, p. 119). Referring to Stybel (2010) job descriptions are also intended for different kinds of audience, the internal and the external one. They indeed orient the internal talent management processes while being part of the recruitment program externally (Stybel, 2010, p. 106). In most of the cases, job advertisements are contextual, displaying valuable information but hiding some others. The aim of this kind of structure, according to Pavur, is that a very attractive description would interest many unsuitable candidates, in any case discarded. Indicating, instead, inaccurate but intriguing information, the auto-selection process would probably be more effective (2010, p. 120). However, here we are prompted to ask, what is meant for “unsuitable candidates”? And for ideal candidates instead? Who has the power to decide? In the job descriptions we came across, the Foucault’s exclusions and limitations procedures showed all their majesty. The structure of how the text is supposed to appear follows its standards, rules and conventions as according to the HR practice. The contextualisation of the position itself begins with the description of the company, which refers to all those aspects of the corporate culture that the applicant may find appealing. In a second moment, the definition of all the duties the potential leader will have be responsible for find their place to then going deeper into the interpersonal skills that the individual should demonstrate. The descriptions reflect all those skills and responsibilities that in the common framework of the Discourse of leadership the person aiming to become a leader in that context should have. It is not surprising that here, already, practices of exclusion and control are explicitly visible. We will come back to the main themes recurring later on in this analysis, but here we
can already introduce how the way of creating and writing a job advertisement exercise power in relating to an environment typically male-oriented and male-dominated.

The function of the author is here at work and, as a result, not everything can be said or stated at any time and place. In this sense, the figure of the author here is important as belonging to a certain status which gives himself or herself the right to speak, or in this case, to write. This position is normally held by HR specialists often in charge of taking care of all the phases of recruitment. In the job advertising analysed this role was exercised by different recruiting companies, highly specialised in the recruitment of candidates for executive positions in most of the cases. Foucault underlines how the restrictions and set roles of the subjects allowed to speak are a further way to exercise control over Discourse (Foucault, 1972, p. 224). Qualifications and expertise give the legitimacy to explain what is worth to be considered or not when looking for a leader, thus producing the Discourse on what a leadership position should entail. In this way, the acceptable methods are part of all those “ways to talk or write about” that are taken for granted and that constitute the roots of women’s discriminations Here lays, indeed, the power to decide who and what is best, as well as the way to communicate it to the external audience.

This section aimed to describe the discursive practices that shaping the dimension of hiring a leader. We paid attention to what regulates Discourse from the inside to get an insight on how the whole Discourse of gender finds its place in the leadership context, especially in the crucial moment of recruitment. The next section will introduce the reader to consider how gender becomes relevant in this context.

6.3.2 Making Gender relevant

The gender relevance finds its clear place in the analysis of Italian job descriptions. Here the aim is to understand whether the texts reviewed show or do not show the relevance of the gender issue and in which way and where this happens. In order to provide a clear understanding, a focus on the Italian language forms might be necessary. Differently from the Italian language, indeed, not all names are absorbed under a “neutral” noun which implies the referral to both gender, female and male. The Italian language, known for its complexity, presents an extensive range of exceptions which can be found in the articles used before a noun and in the ending characterising a certain term. Beginning from the articles the Italian language refers to male with “il” or “lo”,

which both find their translation in “the”, and to female names with “la”. The three just underlined are called determinative articles, differently from the indeterminative articles, “un”, “uno” for male and “una” for female forms. Linguistically speaking, “il” and “un”, as a third article, might have a neutral meaning in most of the languages. In the case of Italian, “il” and “un” are considered both masculine, underlining a peculiarity of the language: there is no neutral version of things and words, any animate or inanimate is masculine or feminine. Furthermore, the use of the two articles referring to men are differently chosen according to the consonants and vowels’ rules. The articles peculiarity presented show in a limited form the second aspect of the language that we have mentioned above, the presence of specific endings to indicate a masculine or feminine term. The ending we refer to are “-a” and “-o” respectively standing for female and male. The Italian language, especially in the case of the terms reoccurring in the business context, presents the use of both rules in different ways sometimes. For instance, “manager”, “senior”, “leader”, as imported from the English language, preserve their original form and do not have a female counter term ending with “-a”. However, the difference can still be traced by the kind of article that is used just before, “il”, “la”, “un”, “una” manager, “il”, “la”, “un”, “una” leader and so on.

In the 30 job advertisements analysed, 22 of them addressed the “ideal” person by using the masculine version of the word candidate (“Il candidato”). Over the reading and screening session of the analysis, this can be identified as a recurring feature of all job descriptions available. Out of the 30, and excluding the 22 just mentioned, four of them addressed the applicant in a neutral way. By neutral terms we mean “la persona”, “la figura”, “la risorsa” respectively meaning “the person”, “the figure”, “the resource” (in the case of “la” as here used, it does not indicate any masculine or feminine trait, but it is just grammatically coordinated with the word it refers to). The last four, finally, presented the dichotomy “un/una”, “il/la” to indicate that the position is directed towards both men and women. Out of this four cases, two of them showed a controversial pattern by specifying the dichotomy, but then proceeded with a masculine orientation (one of them, showed the pronoun “him” later in the description). A further element that could be noticed in the analysis of the texts, was the presence of a legal statement highlighting the openness of the position’s research to both gender. In particular, the law 903/77 that we have explored in the contextual section is expressively mentioned in seven job descriptions out of 30. The aim of this section is
not to underline the interpretation of this data, because this would imply a biased analysis from our side. The purpose is mainly to present some elements that we identified as relevant in order to provide the reader all the necessary information. We also approached this data with a sort of blind “faith” and the confidence that something was there although we did not have any certainty. An additional point was also constituted by the images available. Differently from the case of Germany, the job descriptions in Italy are not used to present any image according with the position. However, in one of the cases, an image was placed. The three pictures in question showed both sexes, one of them representing a man working, the second one representing two men and a woman in the middle of them working closely on a table and finally, a third one showing a man in the front with two women working in the background. As a final point of this section, a main point has been considered and left as the last, but not considered as less or not important. The language by which the leadership positions were labelled, were in 30 advertisement on 30, masculine oriented. The terms by which the position was underlined were indeed “Direttore”, “Capo”, “Responsabile” and “Manager”. In the case of “Manager” and “Responsabile”, as we have mentioned before, the only differentiation can be done through different articles. In all the cases, this was not further specified and the dominant male pattern remained visible. We can conclude that somehow in Italy the leading positions, in the way they are addressed through the job descriptions are someway gendered. In the rest of the chapter we will underline how out of the texts analysed the Discourse emerged and how the language-in-use we have explored has led to construct a reality that too often is taken for granted.

6.3.3 The reoccurring themes

We will start this section with one important claim that will underline the importance of the points coming here under. We have stated that language constructs the reality we live in and, none the less, our individual identities. This does not make us free to behave as we like, even when we think so. We are extremely constrained by different Discourses that shapes the way we are supposed to be. Thus, Discourses are not innocent representations of reality, they exercise power and they do very clearly. In order to see as Foucault did, however, we need to look at the social world with different eyes, get deeper into things we have taken for granted for generations and unfold them.
This is not an easy task, but is what we attempt to do with our Discourse Analysis. The further important point is that Discourses do not only proliferate, but they are recreated and reiterated over and over, nurturing “permanent” assumptions. The themes here under, will contribute to revealing those assumptions hoping to scratch their permanent nature.

In the analysis of the job descriptions we have conducted, an ideal leader profile indeed emerged. Far from creating a list of “traits” that are supposed to be masculine or feminine, we have however helped ourselves by identifying all those aspects companies look for when hiring a leader. Which kind of leader are they looking for?

An “ideal” leader, as emerging from the texts analysed, presents indeed certain characteristics recurring very often. An ideal candidate has five to ten years of experience in the sector and in a managerial position, is excellent in managing HR and is a team player, is good at communicating with others, has an authoritative attitude, is strongly oriented towards results and has leadership skills. Moreover, is autonomous and, finally, available for frequent travelling which might account for sixty or seventy percent of the working time scheduled. Only few times aspects like creativity, empathy, integrity and problem solving as potential characteristics are mentioned. The aspects just mentioned, shed a light on who is the potential person suitable for a leadership position. Here, different statements connect each other and a discursive formation comes to life, through those elements that, taken for granted, exercise a dominant power. Extensive studies have focused over time on differences and similarities that distinct female and masculine leadership styles. The study of Eagly and Carli points out how the jobs’ candidates’ leadership style is strongly evaluated when recruiting for managerial positions (2003, p. 813). The result’s, conducted on 162 cases, demonstrated how women relate more to a democratic and interpersonally oriented style which finds its counterpart in the authoritative and result-oriented male one. The aspect of whether this leads to better performances or not, is not part of our interest, even though this is the reason why, also in Italy, many studies are carried on. What comes out, instead, is the presence of a dominant male subject as the ideal one, with some determinate features.

Looking closely at the profile above, recurrent themes in this profile can be underlined.
“The excellence in managing human resources and being a team player” is stated in the majority of the job descriptions we have analysed. This means a consistent importance is given to the relationship between a leader and his or her followers. The ability of communicating of influencing people in the right way and towards the right direction is in this place fundamental. However the style with which this can be expressed by leading is considered as differing between women and men (Eagly & Carli, 2003). At the same time, also the way in which this aspect is underlined tells us a lot. The principle through which the idea of a sort of caretaker relationship as belonging to women is often underlined. Women in the common ideal care about others, as it is in their “nature” that they take care of family and children. This is not only something that is said or believed, it seems more to be a natural attitude that is often seen also in the way women talk about others. When a woman is asked about a personal experience or a narrative, she will talk about women and men more as a resourceful group. By contrast, men, use to draw themselves as the main characters, talking about other men (Talbot, 1998, pp. 56-57). In this sense, caring about others is considered always as a feminine aspect as well as the capability of communicating in the right way. The job descriptions analysed, however, few times placed this aspect between the interpersonal skills. Indeed, the way in which this element was placed as significant in every description belonged more to a duty of directive nature. The language typically used was indeed “gestione” or “direzione” (meaning management) of a team or more people of a department. This way of naturalising the relationship with others as a managerial one more than a relationship orientated one, gives as a hint of how, even in those aspects so fundamental for a leadership position, the dominant way is one and strongly stereotyped. This point, takes us to a second level of the discussion. What does the Discourse exclude? What can we read between the lines? The characteristics of empathy, communication skills, integrity were present in just few job descriptions. Looking at empathy and integrity, especially, only in two of them. The emphatic way of relating to others, as well as the communication aspects of the relationship are not distinctively masculine and not part of male oriented relevant behaviours. They were not present, just once and we tried to understand, what does this tell us? Why are such important aspects missing? The reason is very simple, after what we have just discussed before. The principles of exclusion lay in these discontinuities, as Foucault would say, in what is not said because there is a contingent Discourse about it that tells us, this is
not the norm. The norm is not to be emphatic, the norm is not communicative in an interpersonal way, the norm is a man, not a woman.

This leads to a second important theme reoccurring in the job descriptions, “the authoritative nature of the role”. We all recognise that over years, for social cultural and historical reasons, the father was supposed to be the one deciding for all, the one that knows best. This has been the pervasive role model for generations and even storytelling for children were significantly spreading the message (Talbot, 1998, p. 71). Authority, in the most cases does not belong to women either. The authoritative person is commonly understood as the one that is able to make things work and people work. The persistent conception of a successful leader is, indeed, normally connected to agentic qualities more than warmth and selflessness (Eagly & Carli, 2003, p. 818). The authoritative nature of the leadership position job descriptions look for, confirms once more the principles of exclusion of women. The component of exercising power is here at stake and particularly relevant if we look at the Italian context and background. The decisional power, historically, does not belong to women. In the boardrooms still today, only a small percentage of women is part of the strategy definitions or has operational responsibilities (Sala, 2004, p. 36) and, in any case, it is not valued as having the same influence.

While the first two themes have underlined features an “ideal” leader should demonstrate towards others, the third theme will take in consideration a more self-personal characteristic. An ideal candidate is, as we have mentioned at the beginning, “strongly oriented towards results”. This was present in almost each description. The orientation towards results is not only typically masculine, but in the context of each description, was clearly related to qualities of performance and competitiveness. These two last aspects deserve some more time in this discussion. In Italy, indeed, many studies have been conducted in order to discover whether different gender imply a different business performance. All of them failed to demonstrate any correlation between gender and performance (Depalo & Lotti, 2013), however, they opened a space for a possible inquiry of whether women are better or worse than men. The Discourse was even reinforced by further findings that demonstrated how women show on average a lower competitive attitude compared to men. Indeed, a “regularity” appeared as consistent when in situations that deserve a high competitive spirit, men seem to
perform better than women (Bianco, et al., 2013, p. 18). In a cultural and social context as the Italian one, then, we can understand how characteristics as the orientation towards results is more than only a quality that could belong to any individual. Men are well known, indeed, for being competitive as well as self-oriented and in reflecting this in the corporate context very often.

A fourth theme reoccurring very often, finally, was flexibility as referring to the availability to travel 60-70 per cent of the time of the working schedule. The time flexibility is a crucial aspect when we refer to the opportunity of women to work and be available to move on a national and international level very often. In Italy, indeed, this appears to be one of the main reasons of a limited career advancement (Bianco, et al., 2013, p. 29), by constraining a possibility that for men is instead considered a norm. From a cultural point of view, the stereotypes concerning the division of the roles and the position of the man as the breadwinner and of the woman as the caretaker are persistent in the Italian context. The inequality towards a family and caring duties’ sharing is far from realistic and the lack of an efficient work-life balance infrastructure limits it even more. In this landscape, a flexibility that implies 60-70 per cent of the time travelling, as we can understand, can discourage many women that, as trying to look for higher positions, could find an obstacle in the effective possibility of doing so. Flexibility, once more, implies a gendered division of labour, where the expectations about who does what always ends in a women as caretaker more than a potential leader. The Discourse is even reinforced by the whole attention given to create a work-family balance, thinking that somehow, by creating a perfect regulatory framework, things will change. A flexibility that implies 60-70 per cent of the time travelling, as we can understand, can discourage many women that, as trying to proceed towards higher positions, could find an obstacle in managing family and work together.

The analysis of the reoccurring themes, has taken us to realise how language-in-use in job descriptions can lead to practices of exclusions of the female subjects not only through what is clearly stated, but also through what is not. The different themes emerged from the many statements available in the job advertisements and through their connection, a clear image of the ideal leaders companies looked for appeared. In all the aspects described, the male norm is constantly present preserving the idea of the woman as the Other. As Luce Irigaray noticed in *The Language of Man* (Irigaray, 1989), ‘a
perpetually law prescribes all realisations of language(s), all production of Discourse, all constitution of language, according to the necessities of one perspective, one point of view, one economy: the necessities of man, supposed to represent the human race’.

The Discourse Analysis we had the pleasure to conduct in this place, underlines how also in the case of Italy, as well as in Germany, the leadership position is clearly stereotyped in favour of a male dominating figure. The decision to tackle this kind of analysis has given us the opportunity to discover something that we, as researchers, would have not been able to do otherwise. As Talbot claims, the principal difference between Discourse Analysis and other data analysis does not refer so much to the initial process but more to the concepts involved (1998, p. 150). Our analysis needed to be theoretically placed, in order to grasp everything it could offer, as the theoretical framework provided can confirm. Our aim was to go behind the blind conception of the male dominance that is distinctive of Italy as a country and, unfortunately, of the rest of the world. The identification of specific locations of the male power in the social structure was of crucial importance for our research. Only in this way we could hope to reveal to ourselves and to our reader where the Discourse of gender lays and how this affects the potential leader of today and the leaders of tomorrow. In this fashion, we aimed to question the commonsense notions of a genderised leader and, by analysing different texts, create a productive suspicion of text interpretation (Mills, 1995, p. 21). Our sense of self, even though we do not recognise it, is constituted in Discourse, as well as our autonomy of thinking as individuals and our command of language. We are not just passive individuals, we are fully active and not only in the construction of our social identities, but even more in the way we perform them.

The Discourse Analysis on job advertisements aimed to make the reader aware of all this hoping to open minds an eyes on how the Discourse of gender is something that we actively create and nurture. Only as long as these will be part of our minds, there will be space for change, in Italy and all over the world.
7 Conclusion

In the course of our master thesis, we got a deeper understanding of why women are not regarded as suitable for leadership positions and how language serves to transmit the image of a masculine leader. In this section, we do not want to repeat what we have mentioned before. Instead this chapter serves to summarise certain aspects of how we developed our own understandings. Furthermore, we want stimulate the reader’s interest for further researches by offering directions for following research questions.

In the beginning of our thesis, we have already mentioned why and how we see our reality as socially constructed through language and determined through Discourses (see chapter 1.2). We would like to remind the reader that we use categories, stereotypes, norms and ideologies in order to deal with the complexity of our reality. It is because of this reason that we do not believe that we and every other person are able to avoid using such simplifications. However, what we can do, is to question whether we use them for good reasons or if we might harm other people by using them. Especially, norms and ideologies may serve to oppress a particular social group. We got aware of the fact that language is powerful and we are not in control of words’ meanings. Since language is used to understand and create reality, we should be careful with our choice of words. In the case of gender, women have been said to be oppressed through language and certain practices. It is always our choice if we make gender relevant or if it is not relevant for us. In this thesis, we have shown that gender is indeed relevant in leadership practice and thus connected to leadership Discourses. After having carried out two Discourse Analysis on the practice of writing job advertisements in two different countries, we were able to see how organisations position themselves within the leadership and gender Discourses. Surprisingly, job advertisements in Italy and Germany show many similarities in the addressed themes and in both countries they transmit the image of a masculine leader. Thus, we can assume that the gender and leadership Discourses are strong Discourses, to which Alvesson and Karreman would refer to in a ‘Grand Discourse approach’ (2000, p. 1133). Here, an assembly of Discourses present a frame for organisational reality and lead to a dominant use of language about ideology and corporate culture. As we have shown in our Discourse Analyses, people in the Western World, still view the ideal leader as being masculine. Consequently, women are less likely to be hired or promoted in leadership positions. This leads to a gendered
leadership gap in our organisations. Thereby, we lose a lot of potential to make the world a better place. Therefore, if we do not question our assumptions and still give relevance to one’s gender in leadership context, women keep on facing what is said to be the glass ceiling phenomenon.

In our opinion, no person should be excluded from the society only because does not meet certain expectations. We believe that in many cases this is not the goal of many others either. However, by approaching Discourses on gender, we can understand how many of these mechanisms are unconscious more than the other way around and how they can represent even a worse danger. Furthermore, no person should be regarded as having less value because of certain features. We should more often question ideologies, stereotypes or norms that people have to meet and instead acknowledge variety. If society does not push people towards certain identities, social change is more likely to happen.

As we stated above, this thesis is supposed to help us to understand why females are less likely to make it into leading positions. At the time, we came up with this research question, we could not have guessed how the whole topic will turn out to be. Yet, after we came across Post-structuralism and female researchers like Irigaray and Baxter, the topic got its direction. We started to understand the impact language can have and that we have to be aware of the fact that we can never be sure if others will get what we mean. Still, the language that we use has the power to shape our perception of reality and also the perception of those persons we are interacting with.

A point that we realise as important is the understanding of whether Discourses of gender, especially in the leadership domain, imply a benefit for anyone. Women, as we have seen, do not benefit from it since they are locked and stopped before achieving anything in many cases. Men, on the other side, might partly benefit from it. The status quo which inherits a hierarchical order implies the possibility for them to keep their privileges, without being questioned about their capabilities. However, when looking for diversified perspectives or counterparts in the workplace are they really getting any benefit out of it?

The hierarchical order is not only perpetuated through job descriptions or HR practices, but finds its roots everywhere, for instance in academic articles or in the scientific domain where the social facts Durkheim refers to determine the way things should be.
When we observe the way young talents, female or male, look at the future with high expectations, the importance of raising awareness becomes more visible and urgent. Our society, indeed, is not definitely benefiting from the available Discourses and from the way we keep constructing the leadership domain as male oriented.

Although this thesis holds power to contribute to the gender Discourse, much more work needs to be done. In our thesis, we have mainly concentrated on women and their oppression in a male-dominated world. Yet, women are not the only ones that we oppress in our language. The content of this thesis can be referred to other aspects of reality, other social groups, even if they comprise men. While the lack of women in leadership positions, finds a lot of interest in our social discussion, it seems that statements about minorities like lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender in connection to leadership are still taboo in today’s Discourses. Further researches may help to increase this awareness and help to lead the society to accept variety. We as researchers should always be aware of the fact that we contribute with our research to the Discourse. In the terms of gender, we have offered directions further research could follow in different sections (e.g. chapters 2.2.2, 2.2.3 and 2.4). In our thesis, we have focused on the aspect how leadership practice is gendered by looking at job advertisements. Yet, we believe that researchers hold much power to contribute to the leadership Discourse. Thus, further studies might concentrate on how they uphold consciously or unconsciously the image of a masculine leader. An awareness of how scholars shape the Discourses may help to cause a shift for some researchers to another research paradigm, a research paradigm where one is aware of the power of words.

In the presentation of our thesis in front of our class, we have used two pictures of the same alien. Then, we were able to show how the belonging to a category, male or female, creates gendered identities that determine one’s dressing, the object one is using as well as one’s thinking, behaving and communication style. Thus, it might be helpful for us to step back and see each other rather as aliens instead of gendered identities.
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Discourse of Gender

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Discourse of Gender

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Appendix

Appendix A: Overview of the German Job Advertisements

Table 1: Overview: German job advertisements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Industry 23</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Headline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G01</td>
<td>Stiftung Landheim Schondorf</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>executive</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Schulleiter (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G02</td>
<td>Johanniter</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>executive</td>
<td>Leitung</td>
<td>Kita - Leitung (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G03</td>
<td>Medbo</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Leiterin / Leiter Personalreferat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G04</td>
<td>Gemeinnützige Werkstätten Neuss GmbH</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Logistics</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Betriebsleiter (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G05</td>
<td>JUL gemeinnützige GmbH</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>executive</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Geschäftsbereichsleiter m/w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G06</td>
<td>PCI Bauprofis</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Leiter Learning &amp; Training (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G07</td>
<td>Hufeland-Haus</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>executive</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Leiter/in der Kindertagesstätte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G08</td>
<td>CID</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>executive</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Erziehungsleiter_in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G09</td>
<td>Bauhaus Universität</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Leiterin / Leiter Abteilung Dienste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G10</td>
<td>P&amp;P Gruppe</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Teamleiter (m/w) Rechnungswesen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 nothing if the job advertisement was published by an agent and if it was not mentioned
3 Categorisation according to NACE codes (European Commission, 2010)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Company/Institution</th>
<th>Department/Category</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G11</td>
<td>Bruker Cooperation</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Leiter Operations Controlling (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G12</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Leiter Bilanzbuchhaltung (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G13</td>
<td>Schenk Transport</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Bilanzbuchhalter als Teamleiter (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G14</td>
<td>Daimler</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Meister</td>
<td>AMG Meister für Motorenmanufaktur (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G15</td>
<td>Aldi Süd</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>IT-Manager (m/w) Supply Chain Management Program (Internationale IT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G16</td>
<td>1 &amp; 1</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Head</td>
<td>Head of Home Access Decision Services (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G17</td>
<td>Bosch</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Teamleiter (m/w) Field Service Qualitätsmanagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G18</td>
<td>PwC</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Manager (w_m) IT- und Geschäftsprozesse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G19</td>
<td>Otto</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>Senior Technical Project Lead (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G20</td>
<td>DB</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Teamleiter Fachbetriebsführung Fahrplan-IT (w_m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G21</td>
<td>Astro</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Leiter Arbeitsvorbereitung _ REFA-Techniker (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G22</td>
<td>Autohaus Brüggemann</td>
<td>Sales and Services</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Kundendienstmeister als Service-Leiter (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G23</td>
<td>peiker</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Teamleiter SMD-Fertigung im 3-Schichtdienst (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G24</td>
<td>TRW Automotive</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Teamleiter Produktionsbereiche m/w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G25</td>
<td>Headhunter</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Leiter (m/w) Fertigung _ Zerspanung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G26</td>
<td>ALBA</td>
<td>executive</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Niederlassungsleiter (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G27</td>
<td>247TailorSteel GmbH</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Produktionsleiter _ Betriebsleiter (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G28</td>
<td>WingFan</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Leiter Qualitätsmanagement (m/w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G29</td>
<td>SF Hochbau</td>
<td>executive</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
<td>Bauingenieur/in, Architekt_in als zukünftige_r Niederlassungsleiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G30</td>
<td>Industrie-Elektronik GmbH</td>
<td>F &amp; E</td>
<td>Leitung</td>
<td>Leitung (m/w) mechanische Konstruktion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Company/Organization</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Function</td>
<td>Unit/Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G31</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>F &amp; E</td>
<td>Leitung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G32</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
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<td>bertrandt</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>F &amp; E</td>
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<tr>
<td>G34</td>
<td>CWS-boco HealthCare</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>G44</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>G48</td>
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<td>Laube Gruppe</td>
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<td>Leiter</td>
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<tr>
<td>G50</td>
<td>Merck</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>G51</td>
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<td>J</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
</tr>
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<td>G52</td>
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Management Strategy & Development (m/w)
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<td>Geschäftsführer</td>
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<tr>
<td>G54</td>
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<td>Head</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
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<td>G56</td>
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<td>G57</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>F &amp; E</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G58</td>
<td>Persona</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F &amp; E</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
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<tr>
<td>G59</td>
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<td>Geschäftsführer</td>
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<td>Jägermeitsre</td>
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<td>F &amp; E</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
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<tr>
<td>G61</td>
<td>Augustiner Bräu</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G62</td>
<td>Amadeus Fire</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Leiter</td>
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- Geschäftsführerin _ Geschäftsführer
- Head of Retail Marketing (w_m)
- Leiter (m/w) Qualitätskontrolle
- Leiter Biostatistik - Biopharmazeutische Produkte (m/w)
- Teamleiterin / Teamleiter der Testhallen für Rotorblattprüfungen
- Laborleiter/in
- Geschäftsführer Pharma (m/w)
- Teamleiter Labor (m/w)
- Abteilungsleiter Finanzbuchhaltung (m/w)
- Leiter Finanz- und Rechnungswesen (m/w)
Table 2 NACE codes (European Commission, 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Category Name</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Water supply; sewerage; waste management and remediation activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Transporting and storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Information and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Real estate activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Professional, scientific and technical activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Administrative and support service activities</td>
</tr>
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<td>P</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Q</td>
<td>Human health and social work activities</td>
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Appendix B: Analysis of the German job advertisements

Table 3 Analysis German job advertisements

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Adressed Topics</th>
<th>All Departments</th>
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<th>HR, Marketing</th>
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<td>34</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>communication skills</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>team-work</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>economical thinking</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibility/ initiative</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>flexible</td>
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4 = Amount / Total
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<th>VII</th>
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<td><strong>Expertice</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td><strong>Conceptional Skills</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analytical Skills</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Creativity</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td><strong>Mathematical Skills</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Professional Experience</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td><strong>- Technical</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>- Economical</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>- Communication</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>- Computer Science</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 0 5 8%</td>
<td>1 0 1 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32 0 32 52%</td>
<td>16 0 16 59%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 0 8 13%</td>
<td>4 0 4 15%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 0 8 13%</td>
<td>5 0 5 19%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4 0 4 6%</td>
<td>2 0 2 7%</td>
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### Appendix C: Overview of the Italian Job Advertisements

*Table 4: Overview: Italian job advertisements*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Department</th>
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<th>Headline</th>
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<tr>
<td>A01</td>
<td>SCR</td>
<td>DH</td>
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<td>Direttore</td>
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<tr>
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<td>None</td>
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<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Executive position</td>
<td>Direttore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A03</td>
<td>MEGE</td>
<td>DG</td>
<td>Sales</td>
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<td>Direttore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A05</td>
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<td>DG</td>
<td>Operations</td>
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<td>Direttore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A06</td>
<td>Avanade</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Team leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>A07</td>
<td>Ho.Re.Ca</td>
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<td>Executive position</td>
<td>Direttore</td>
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<tr>
<td>A08</td>
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<td>General Manager</td>
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<td>Lavorint SPA</td>
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<td>Administration</td>
<td>Executive position</td>
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<tr>
<td>A11</td>
<td>Imperial Business s.r.l.</td>
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<td>None</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>Manager</td>
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<td>Westhouse</td>
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<td>IT</td>
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<td>Role</td>
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<td>K</td>
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<td>K</td>
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<td>K</td>
<td>Finance</td>
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<td>Secretary Plus Spa</td>
<td>K</td>
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<td>Rising Start</td>
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Table 5 Industry Codes Italian Job advertisements

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<thead>
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<th>Category</th>
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<td>Manufacture of rubber and plastic products</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG</td>
<td>Manufacture of chemicals, chemical products and man-made fibres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Real estate, renting and business activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>personal and household goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>personal and household goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Private households with employed persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Health and social work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>Manufacture of machinery and equipment n.e.c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Manufacture of pulp, paper and paper products; publishing and printing</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Electricity, gas and water supply</td>
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</table>


**Appendix D: Analysis of the Italian job advertisements**

*Table 6 Analysis German job advertisements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader Characteristics</th>
<th>All Departments:</th>
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<tr>
<td>communication skills</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>team-work</td>
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<tr>
<td>economical thinking</td>
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<td>responsibility/ initiative</td>
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Declaration

We hereby certify that this master thesis was written by our own. Furthermore, we confirm the proper indication of all sources that we used.

Kalmar, 15\textsuperscript{th} of May 2014

Martin Hohendorf  
Alessandra Pucci Daniele
Linnaeus University – a firm focus on quality and competence

On 1 January 2010 Växjö University and the University of Kalmar merged to form Linnaeus University. This new university is the product of a will to improve the quality, enhance the appeal and boost the development potential of teaching and research, at the same time as it plays a prominent role in working closely together with local society. Linnaeus University offers an attractive knowledge environment characterised by high quality and a competitive portfolio of skills.

Linnaeus University is a modern, international university with the emphasis on the desire for knowledge, creative thinking and practical innovations. For us, the focus is on proximity to our students, but also on the world around us and the future ahead.