University of Economics, Prague

International Business

"Women in top leadership positions –

Research in the socialization process"

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<u>Declaration:</u>

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis entitled "Women in top leadership positions – Research on the socialization process" I duly marked out all quotations. The used literature and sources are stated in the attached list of references.

In Prague on ....   …………………….
Student's name

Acknowledgment

This page will be dedicated to my family which has always supported me during my studies, my supervisor Ing, Zuzana Křečková Kroupová, M.A., Ph.D., who has helped me choose the topic of my thesis and supervising it, the interviewees who made this whole research possible and my close friends Jan and Gregor, who were always there to support me.

Abstract

What are the characteristics of women who have made it into leadership positions or top management positions? In this thesis, the author wants to concentrate on the process of socialization with a special focus on the influence of socialization on women in leadership positions. Additionally, the research determines in which ways it has a negative or positive impact on their careers. In the first chapter of the thesis, the author defines all necessary theoretical definitions which are essential for the overall situation and the end evaluation. The second chapter explains how empirical research was conducted and on which model the evaluation is based on. In the third chapter, the author evaluates the in-depth interviews he led with 12 women in leadership positions and compares the outcome to the theoretical part. The research question "How does the process of socialization negatively or positively impact the career aspects of women in leadership positions?" was answered with the following: The socialization process has a negative impact on the career aspects of women in leadership positions when it comes to development climbing up the career ladder. This result could serve as a base for further research, of the topic "women in management positions"

Table of Content

2

Table of Figures:

"Women in top leadership positions – Research on the socialization process"

Introduction of the Thesis

The author´s motivation for writing the thesis "Women in top leadership positions – Research on the socialization process" lies in the negative experiences and exposures a lot of women go through every day within their professional and academic careers. These events are still mainly based on and caused by old-fashioned stereotypes which simply should not exist in modern society. The goal is the empowerment of women so that they can free themselves from unwanted roles and stereotypes. But it is just as important to sensitize men who should reconsider what equality means and that respectful and equal treatment of the genders is beneficial for our whole society.

When taking a precise look at the literature of leadership and leadership behavior, there is one clear indication; the perfect leader does not exist due to the fact that leadership is situational and, therefore, incredibly complex (Wallner 2009). According to Statistics Austria, there are more men in leadership positions than women (21,4 % in 2019) in the top 200 most profitable companies in Austria (Statistics Austria 2019).

To justify this uneven positioning, a common claim is that women are not interested or not qualified enough due to gender-specific characteristics. One of these characteristics includes lower productivity as a result of their family responsibilities and a higher workload in the household. Another claim regarding their characteristics is a lower willingness to take risks, which is a basic requirement when working in top management positions in a company. Generally, the perception exists that men are more in favor of taking risks than women, so recruiters prefer to hire male candidates for leadership positions (Littmann-Wernli, Schubert 2001).

The process of rejecting, employing, or promoting workers is based on the expectations and results of the employee – research has shown that women are less likely to be promoted than men (Accenture 2009). One of the reasons for this is the existing stereotype concerning women and their work ethic. It claims that women are less efficient at work, do not tend to take risks, and leave or change the working environment more often due to career changes and family planning (Hofmeister and Hünefeld 2010).

Especially when it comes to the gender-specific characteristics, there are a lot of different explanations and theories. In this thesis, the author wants to concentrate on the process of socialization and focus his research on the influence of socialization on women in leadership positions, as well as determine in which ways it has a negative or positive impact on their careers.

Problem definition

When comparing the current market situation to the one 10 years ago, there is an almost equal number of women in the active working force as men. In 2016, out of 4.412.400 possible labor forces, 2.071.900 were female and 2.340.500 were male workers (Gender Index 2017). A famous quote from the Author Heiß states that the most important factor to improve the equality of women in the labor market is education (Heiß 2011). Assuming this is true, there should not be any problem concerning gender equality within leadership positions since the recent numbers of University students in Austria show that there are more female than male students (54% female, 46% male students), there are more female graduates, and the number of female workers is almost equal to the number of male working forces in the country (Gender Index 2018). Unfortunately, this is not the case and possible reasons for this inequality could be:

Inequality based on stereotypes:

Especially within the inequality based on stereotypes, there is a pattern, which leads to the separation of work between the two genders concerning leadership positions (Macha 2001). A person who is qualified to be the ideal leader is typically associated with the characteristics of a man: self-assertiveness, emotional restraint, risk-taking, and many other characteristics that are correlated to these stereotypes.

Job-related gender segregation:

This inequality states that women are still mainly employed in "women-friendly jobs", which do not provide the same level of prestige or chances for promotion and are often jobs with lower wages (Macha 2006). To solve this issue, one could argue simply to provide "male-friendly jobs" to women, but the problem is a deeper one: Already at an early age, the identity-forming process of women is influenced by the perception of femininity in the current society.

Gender-based inequality:

Women with the same high qualification as men related to the same job position have a lower success rate than their male competitors (Haffner, Krais und Schühmann 2008). This injustice has been acknowledged, but besides introducing governmental actions such as the women´s quotas in companies, the unequal gender order is still predominant in the market.

The Methodology

While conducting the research for this thesis, the author wants to analyze the process of socialization which prevents and discourages women from leadership positions.
First, a theoretical approach addresses the general idea behind the topic, as well as defining the theory and empirical research questions. Furthermore, the author will conduct in-depth face-to-face (or over the phone) interviews with 12 women in leadership positions. A qualitative research design is chosen for this thesis to open the field and make it more attractive for further research. The in-depth interviews with 12 women in the top- and senior management positions of different fields and branches will be evaluated so that the results include a spectrum of different backgrounds. The branches will be in the top 10 of the most important sectors of Austria´s economy, which have the biggest financial input on the country. The results of this data will be evaluated, and an overview will be created.
Included in the final section, is the conclusion of the research questions, a future outlook, and an input for further research. Also, on a cross-cultural level, findings will be compared to international authors' results in order to look at the issue from a global and national point of view. The author explains why he came to certain conclusions regarding the analysis of the

studies and will express his opinion about the future development of the socialization processes in relation to women in leadership positions in Austria and on a global scale.

The aim of the Thesis

In this thesis, the author has the goal to discover the socialization processes which are essential for the integration of women in leadership positions. With the help of in-depth interviews, the author wants to analyze which circumstances exactly impact the process of socialization and how much weight and influence these different scenarios have on women in leadership positions. Furthermore, the author wants to provide a clear evaluation of the reasons for this process and eventually wants to express his personal input and recommendations for existing- and future companies in order to tackle this widespread inequality.

Another goal of this thesis is to look at the current situation within the Austrian market and compare it on a global scale. There are many more authors who research this important field and it would be essential to compare the final result to other already accessible findings. With the integration of international outcomes, it will also be easier to differentiate between country-wide and global issues when it comes to addressing the process of socialization.

There are more explanations for how a person's character and qualities are determined; nevertheless, within this work, the author will put his main focus on the socialization processes. This does not mean that I personally believe that this is the most essential reason for this existing inequality – a lot of factors play a role when it comes to the process of how people are characteristically shaped – but I personally believe that in the research which has been already conducted, there is a lack of focus on the socialization process and this research gap motivated me to go into depth in regards to the already mentioned process.

Empirical research questions

The main question the author is focusing on in his thesis is "How does the process of socialization negatively or positively impact the career aspects of women in leadership positions?". Since this is a very broad and not directly answerable question, the author decided to divide this question into 5 smaller sub-questions in order to receive qualitatively better answers, so that the results contribute in a more effective way to the assessment of the overall issue and situation.

7

The sub-questions are the following:

1. Is the thought of having kids a determining factor in making decisions about their careers?

2. Which influence does private life have on working life for mothers in leadership positions?

3. Which influences did the parents exert on their daughter´s perception of socialization?

4. Does gender inequality play a role in the job?

5. Did the interviewee witness a different outcome for the female and male gender within an internal competition of the firm?

In respective chapters, all sub-questions are answered individually alongside the evaluation of the interviews. Finally, the research question is answered and compared to other authors' findings with the use of the answers which are collected through the sub-questions.

1. Theoretical part

In the following part, the author will summarize the most important theoretical aspects in order to understand the background of this research.

Furthermore, in the first theoretical chapter, there will be a summary of the findings from the most recent research which has been conducted within the field of the socialization process and women in leadership positions.

1.1. Literature review

In this chapter, the author will summarize the current state of research. For leadership positions, our society requires male attributes, but a stereotype is that women do not have them which comes in correlation to their rare promotion into leading positions (Powell, Butterfield and Parent 2001). A closer look into recent cases will focus on the existing problems and the current situation our society is facing. Furthermore, the author will point out the scientific findings which have been done in relation to the issue of the socialization process.

In the year 2015, KPMG launched its „Women´s Leadership Study “, which researched the behavior and results for women on the path to leadership. 3.014 women in the U.S. (2.410 women with jobs and 604 women in college) between the age of 18 and 64 have been surveyed to topics such as „leadership while growing up", „attributes and characteristics of a leader", and many more topics in a 20-minute quantitative online-survey.

The overall results are similar to other findings within the field. In general, the situation is improving and is looking more promising than 10 years ago, but there are still many key issues. The major issue that KPMG pointed out was the lack of self-confidence. When asked, the group of working women (between the age of 25 and 64) an astonishing 56% answered that they are very cautious when it comes to making first steps in the direction of a leadership role. Even more shocking are the results when the question was asked if the female participants of the study can imagine themselves as a leader in the future. 59% of females between the age of 18-64 years answered this question stating that they sometimes have difficulties seeing themselves as leaders in the future or in their current job.

According to the company, to engage more females to reach leadership positions, they must concentrate on three key points: integrating the aspiration of leadership early in the career,

9

demonstrating leadership skills with the help of role models and providing or upgrading corporate programs that push more women ahead.

KPMG´s suggestions in order to improve this situation are the following:
1) Identify the women with these aspirations early and help them to develop their skillset.
2) With the right constructive feedback this confidence can be empowered, and a lack of self-confidence can be avoided.
3) Build up a network that focuses on the opportunities to develop leadership growth within the female community of the company.
4) Proactively search for leadership opportunities that can be given to qualified female employees.

Another study, with similar results to the one of KPMG, was conducted by Claudia Peus and Isabell M. Welpe (2011). In their study, research on the question „what is the reason such a small number of women are represented in management positions and how companies are counteracting to these findings" has been made.

According to the authors, these reasons are in correlation to the person itself, the organization and the system. The issues on the person-level are poor self-confidence of women, worse self-portrayal as men, a less aggressive style of communication (women address topics as in "we" instead of "I") and a smaller number of strategic career planning options for women. Not all researchers agree on the reasons for poor career planning. Some say it is because of a lack of self-confidence among women, others that girls and young women are less encouraged than men to plan their careers.

The level of the organization includes role models, networks and mentors. It is disadvantageous for women to see a few female role models in leading positions because of women. Thereby, mainly orienting themselves to male role models and adapt their behavior. Networks help build a career, but there are too few and for women hardly any influential networks. Only recently more and more networks that focus on women and the development of leadership skills are being established, integrated and accepted by our society. Mentors help through providing relevant resources in career growth but according to the authors, women have fewer influential mentors than men.

Looking at the level of the system, there are two reasons for the slowdown in women's career chances: role expectations and compatibility of family and work. Proposed solutions from the

authors are open recruitment and promotion channels, training of decision-makers in correlation to the awareness of gender stereotypes, proactively looking for challenging tasks for women, flexible working time and target agreements.

Another interesting study has been published by Schönefeld and Schirner (2017). Since the beginning of 2016, at least 30% of women need to be represented on the supervisory boards of companies listed in the German stock market. They argue that the current guidelines should not oppose any problems for companies and yet there are still multiple businesses that face a lot of inequality with their organizational structure.

In the past, the employment rate of women has risen continuously in all age groups. For years, more women than men have been leaving universities and universities of applied sciences, mostly even with better diplomas and certificates, often enough with first experience abroad, but above all highly motivated. These female graduates know their responsibility for their following careers and want to help shape and change the social and economic issues of the future. There is actually no shortage of female specialists who are suitable and able to offer management positions.

Yet there is still the big issue, for which the researchers claim that women market themselves as specialists less aggressively than men.

The focus of their future is based on just a few industries. They change jobs less often and work part-time more often. Despite all efforts at emancipation, they still carry most parts of the family work and parenting. The expectations that both genders are equally strong are still shaped and suppressed by traditional ideas, stereotypes or role expectations. A veritable career with the goal of management or chairmanship of the board continues to apply as a men's business, even if there are now individual counterexamples. As a result, women do not make good progress in their everyday work. And women still earn significantly less than men in comparable positions.

The proportion of women in top positions has stagnated in German companies for years. According to the Institute for Labor Market and Vocational Research (IAB), in 2013 only about every fourth position in the private sector was filled by a woman at the highest management level. They are even rarer on the boards of large, German stock corporations.

For 2015, the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) puts the proportion of women at the top of the 200 largest listed companies in Germany to a good six percent. The authors state that there is movement, but so far only small steps have been taken and that there is a long way of development ahead of society in order to create equality and provide equal chances for leadership positions within the market.

11

In 2008, the Catalyst, a nonprofit organization that promotes women's work published their study "Companies With More Women Board Directors Experience Higher Financial Performance, According to Latest Catalyst Bottom Line Report ", and came to the result that companies with the highest proportions of women on the top management levels performed better in all three criteria examined than the companies with the lowest proportions of women. The criteria were: return on equity, return on sales and return on invested capital.

Research has been conducted between the years 2001 to 2004, the "Fortune 500" were examined on the three points mentioned above. The scientists received the data from the "Standard & Poor's"database. As the companies on the Fortune 500 list change every year, at that time a total of 520 companies were analyzed (Catalyst 2008).

The study from McKinsey came to similar findings in their research study "Women Matter 1 ". Using a proprietary analysis tool, from which 115,000 employees and 231 private, public and non-profit organizations worldwide were examined. This tool measures the following criteria: leadership, guidance, responsibility, control and coordination, innovation, external orientation, ability, motivation, work environment, and salary. The performance of the companies increased significantly if at least three women were represented in a ten-person team in the senior management (McKinsey 2008).

A lot more research has been conducted in this field, and the findings are often very similar and point out why it leads to such inequality:

- Prejudices and stereotypes associated with women as well as obstacles initiated by women themselves, such as non-qualifying training, little assertiveness and lack of self-confidence cause these circumstances.
- Obstacles within an organization, such as lack of access to important networking opportunities and male-dominated corporate culture make it more difficult for women to reach leadership positions.
- Barriers caused by social role thinking decrease the chance for career development for female workers in the market.

1.2. Important Definitions

To continue with the theoretical part of the thesis and before the author will go into depth for the empirical part of this paper, it is essential to point out specific definitions that will help to understand the overall subject behind the socialization process of women.

1.2.1. Leadership position

A leadership position can be described as a position, whose owner or manager has decision-making powers within its areas. It must be distinguished between executive and managerial positions (Körner & Günther 2011).

The managerial position has the authority to prescribe tasks to be performed by executing authorities, which actions they must take and which they must refrain from. Through their leadership skills, they assume external responsibility and delegate implementation skills. The leadership tasks of a manager include organization, planning, goal setting, decision, coordination, information, employee evaluation and control (Altfelder 1973). In general, within leading positions, women are less represented than men and only reach the percentage of 8.2 percent when it comes to being executives within the 200 most profitable companies in Austria (Statista 2020).

Concerning the authors work, he will use the term leadership positions for positions in middle and upper or top management, because the interview partners operate at these levels.

1.2.2. Stereotypes

A stereotype is a description of a person or groups represented in everyday life occasions and used in everyday knowledge, which is memorable and pictorial and simplifies a situation and automatically relates to it. Stereotypes are relatively rigid, over-individual or widespread ideas. In contrast to the term cliché, stereotypes are purely related to people. Moreover, in contrast to the term prejudice, which expresses a general attitude, stereotypes are part of an unconscious and sometimes even automatic cognitive assignment, which are sometimes also positively used (Dröge 1967).

Furthermore, a stereotype is a mental simplification of complex properties or behaviors of groups of people. Although these simplified impressions and representations are not always truthful, we need stereotypes to reduce the complexity of our environment and to facilitate interaction with people from other groups (Dabrowska 1999).

13

1.2.3. Gender

Since the author will only research the female environment and conduct interviews with 12 different women it is important to mention that within sociological work this dichotomy is not scientifically relevant and usually always all gender groups should be considered when it comes to in-depth research.

Gender is the mechanism by which ideas of masculinity and femininity are produced and naturalized. People in everyday life behave based on the expectations and knowledge they have and in correlation to what they think about how it should be for a woman or a man to be perceived by their environment as either male or female. This behavior is learned through imitation and perceived through interactions with their parents, teachers or other important people in their life (Butler 2006).

1.2.4. Female and male characteristics

Within the author's work stereotypes about male and female attributes are really essential because in most cases, leadership positions and managerial positions are associated with male characteristics. This basically implies that often a „male behavior" is expected from people within these positions with no regard for their gender. Often, women are perceived as too „female" and have to learn to adjust themselves in order to behave more „manly" to reach leadership positions within their company. Another extreme example is that women, due to the prior socialization, stopped behaving „feminine" and do not show their female attributes at all within their work environment. Typical female characteristics are understanding, considerateness, friendliness, trustfulness and being empathetic when it comes to dealing with people, etc., while male attributes are: independence, risk-taking, expressiveness, etc. (Gmür 1997).

1.3. Socialization process

In this chapter, the author will summarize the theoretical knowledge the thesis is based on. Especially the approach of the whole socialization process is essential since this research paper and its main research questions are in correlation to this and build upon this topic. Moreover, the author describes the gender roles, the after-effects of children and gender separation, the definition of the socialization process and how it affects the business world. Another topic addressed in this thesis is the stereotype of the "physical inferiority" of women and the rhetorical modernization in correlation to the changes within Europe.

When it comes to academic success and scholar qualifications women nowadays almost caught up with men. Although there are almost the same possible career choices for females as for males and the interest is almost equal in obtaining a professional career there is still a huge percentage of female professionals represented in the sector for social professions or within a job with lower development- or career opportunities. This is the result of a year-long socialization process in which young females and girls are demotivated by our school system, media, and their parents to orient their future based on their personal interest (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit und Frauen 2018).

1.3.1. Gender Roles

In the famous research which was conducted by the researcher Bürgel in 1995, he found out that in earlier times the role of the women was clearly defined and connected to the parenting of the children, while the man was responsible to work and to take care of the family. Women had the right to work but it was more common to stay at home and to do the duties around the household (Bürgel 1995).

In regards to the cohabitation of women and men within their professional lives, authors like Bäcker and Stolz-Willig (1994) are of the opinion that old fashioned gender roles are the reason why men and females often face difficulties when it comes to the professional coexistence. It is also important to mention that more women urge men to elaborate their thoughts concerning this topic than vice versa.

Already in the 18th century, there exists literature about the gender role of women which states that women learn in the early years through their mothers how to behave and adjust themselves in order to seduce men which will guarantee themselves security and a good life. For younger women education has second-tier importance and education in physical skills with a focus on the household is more essential. The lack of knowledge can be compensated with a man on the side of a woman (Wollstonecraft 1999).

Although this statement from the 18th century is absolutely outdated and not relevant nowadays since women by far reached the same level of education as men, there is a small correlation visible: A big percentage of women still work in jobs with a lower income and reputation than men. Especially these types of patterns are still very dominant in the perception of many people and are one of the main causes of this cultural construction which leads to the stereotypical image of men and women and their behavior. Notably, this whole scheme drastically affects the career and career choice of women which leads to the low representation of females in leadership positions. The above-mentioned cause and a lower income than men have a huge impact on why so many women decide to go into childcare rather than their husbands/partners/etc. Furthermore, when it comes to technical professions and engineering jobs, there is still not much success to make these types of jobs as attractive for women as they are for men, as they are still up to this day mainly dominated by males. (Haffner 2008).

According to Statistics Austria, a job in a leadership position within these technical fields brings up to 45.000€ annually before taxation while the typical "female job" (such as office administration, etc.) only brings up to 32.000€ annually before taxation (Statista 2019). This is another factor and as already mentioned above pressures women into taking care and making decisions concerning childcare since otherwise, the economic loss in regards to the household budget would be higher and more impactful. The role models of females, which in many cases are the parents, often act in a gender separating manner which can be very negatively impactful and influences future women as potential managers, because through the example of their parents it appears normal for women to strive for social or other "female" occupations and to accept lower wages and jobs with fewer chances for a career- and professional development (Spellerberg 1996).

16

With the support of the main research questions, the author wants to find out if gender roles played an essential role in the past of the interviewees and if yes, which impact they had on them. With the empirical questions focusing on if the interviewee was influenced about their career choice when it comes to having children and if the parents consciously or unconsciously portraited gender separation at home, the author wants to find out if the interviewees were taught in the early years that women have to do "female" work and look for "female" jobs in the future. Moreover, this would also mean that there was not a lot of motivation from the parents' side and the future professional career only had second-tier importance.

1.3.2. Children and gender separation

Up to this day, games for children have an enormous impact in correlation to gender separation since most of them are influenced by media, movies, tv-shows, and books, which if not up to date and pedagogically relevant still include a lot of the old fashioned and stereotypical gender roles. Boys mainly take over the "male" part and are more integrated into adventurous games while young girls tend to play roles such as the princess, the mother or similar characters. Furthermore, the games of the boys include much more aggression and fighting while the games played by girls focus more on emotionality and therefore are less complex than the games of the young boys (Faulstich-Wieland 2003).

Through the influence of these games in the early years, there might be an impact on the life of these kids once they are grown up. Specific branches and sectors are clustered as "female sectors" such as work in the household and childcare, while the man is responsible for work concerning handicraft and the garden. These classifications can already be detected in children's games and have a bigger impact on society and our culture than most people realize (Gmür 1997).

With the focus on the youth of the interviewees, the author wants to find out if those early influences had an impact on how deep the perception of women doing "female" jobs is. Another indicator is the imitation of the mother, which in many households is a role model for the daughter, and how much the interviewees oriented themselves according to their mothers.

1.3.3. Socialization approach

Socialization itself is defined as an adjustment to the thoughts and values of a society through social and cultural norms. It is an instantaneous process that is created through each individual and always adjusts itself through constantly changing norms in the world or each civilization. (Nestvogel 2004).

Furthermore, it can also describe a human´s approach to deal with the social and material environment, the so-called "external reality", and the natural disposition and physical and psychological constitution, the so-called "internal reality". With the help of the external reality, people know how to behave in certain situations and therefore act in a specific pattern of manners. When children grow up, they also experience the socialization process and therefore also include specific behaviors and values within their personality once they are grown up and are adults. If it sees its whole life, a family consist of a father, who is the hardworking man in the family, and a mother who takes care of the house and the kids, it most certainly will take over this belief and integrate these values in his/her everyday life (Rost 2005).

Similar experiences as the ones already mentioned above leave an impact on the children while growing up. Besides the preferences, values, and manners of their parents, there are many other things, such as toys, books, educational staff and generally how their environment treats them, that influence young boys and girls a lot. All those things count as "external realities" and will play an essential role throughout their whole life which will also affect the personality a lot (Lehner 2002).

To sum up the socialization approach, it leads people in a specific direction in correlation with their norms and values. When looking at the stereotype of young girls playing with dolls, in order to adjust themselves to femininity, and young boys playing with trucks, in order to perceive the picture of how a man should behave, it is not very surprising that a lot of women work in jobs within the social branches and men rather prefer technical professions.

1.3.4. Physical "inferiority" of women

From a scientific point of view, without any doubt, there are differences between the male and the female body. Nevertheless, in times as we are today and with the help of technology, the right inventions and innovations have been introduced to our society in order to make the physical differences obsolete and no difference between men and women must be drawn (Kasten 2003).

The expectations of equality between females and males concerning the future should not only be a task for our governments but should also be private, socio-economic and socio-cultural responsibilities. Therefore, according to the German ministry for youth, family, and women, the following things should also be considered when it comes to the mindset of people: recognition of women in certain Professions (e.g. in the technical, scientific field), acceptance of the physical differences between women and men, resolution of gender clichés in the essential areas of life (work, private life), fair division of household chores and upbringing in a partnership, career opportunities for both partners (Wippermann 2007).

1.3.5. Rhetorical modernization

Within the last years, there has been a tremendous movement with the focus on gender equality all over Europe. Linked to the new measure is the claim to initiate a paradigm shift in women's and gender equality policy, and it could indeed be considered paradigmatic since instead of women we are now talking about gender and instead of complaining about gender-specific differences, we discuss now gender hierarchical structures and social inequality (Wetterer 2003).

Moreover, for a while there has been a radical shift, meaning that the cultural and structural connection shifted against each other. The knowledge, which the members of our society had about the difference of the genders and the social meaning of the gender difference is ahead of the structures of gender relations and of the large parts of social practices. Cultural patterns of interpretation, models and self-concepts, gender discourses and with that the explicit and explicable part of the gender norms have become recognizable from the 'old' matter of course adopted and gender hierarchical distribution asymmetries have definitely become in need of justification (Wetterer 2004).

According to the author Hirschauer, the whole process of socialization and the creation of barriers is enormously impacted by the government and our countries. He claims that the state universalism is fine with the persistence of inequality, marking and coercion with the state legitimating itself as a neutral third party and more could be done in order to improve the overall social norms and existing patterns within the society (Hirschauer 2013).

1.4. Visible and invisible obstacles for women on their way into leadership positions

In the next chapter, the author will elaborate on some possible obstacles which exist for women on their way to leadership positions. This theoretical approach will be essential in order to understand why the author chooses specific questions for his empirical research.

1.4.1. Work-life-balance

In order to describe the compatibility of different areas of life, it is more and more common to use different definitions. Often, expressions such as "professional and private compatibility", "work-life-balance", "double lifestyle" or even negatives, variants such as "double load" are being used in our everyday lives. At an organizational level, many enterprises use terms such as "family-friendly" in order to give an impression of how much workload a job possibly contain. All of these terms have one thing in common, they express the combination of the professional life with the private life, and in the best case, as already the term "work-life-balance" includes, create a fair balance between the two. It embraces different aspects such as health, personal free time and the maintenance of the social network. Therefore the goal is to achieve a balance between different areas of life and is fulfilled when it does not create health-damaging tensions and conflicts between the private and the professional lifecycle and when it generates enough time to implement the upper mentioned aspects within the overall life (Rosemeyer & Rastetter 2017).

Although we live in a world lead by of radical innovations and technology which can improve all workflows and processes within an enterprise and which can compensate the scientifically proven body difference between male and female through powerful machines, a lot of companies around the world still fail to offer their employees a fair option for balanced work life.

A survey in 2015 states that the increasing workload and increasing time constraint is one major reason for plenty of women to avoid aiming for leadership positions, due to the fact that combining family with the job plays an essential role within their lives (Lott & Klenner 2018).

According to the German ministry for economics and energy, in order to reach the full potential of integrating women in top leadership positions, the organizational management must offer these target groups possibilities to enable flexible working hours, decentralized forms of work and better compatibility of family and work in the management area. Leadership in combination with part-time hours is compatible with what more and more people in the business world demand: shorter working hours for improved productivity. This would also mean that the number of opportunities increases for women trying to achieve leadership positions within big corporations and companies and that the enterprises themselves gain a significant competitive advantage in the battle for the best talent in the market (Schreurs & Leis 2014)

1.4.2. Gender segregation

Segregation, in general, is defined as the unequal distribution of groups with specific characteristics across different areas or positions in society. In context to gender segregation in correlation to the job market, it describes the unbalanced and unfair job opportunities and life between men and women, despite the regulations in the market and the increase of academic education for women. Specifically, it is about the inequality in the presence of males and females in the enterprise, jobs, professional fields or at hierarchical levels. Moreover, it is significant to mention that gender segregation has a negative effect on women, such as lower payment or fewer chances for a higher wage (Achatz 2008)

When considering the gender segregation, one has to differentiate between horizontal and vertical segregation. On one hand, vertical segregation describes the inequality on the hierarchical level within the enterprises. In this case, the position of the person within the profession, industry or company is decisive. Particularly at the top management level and in leadership positions in larger companies, a strong under-representation of women can be observed. On the other hand, horizontal segregation explains the inequality within the different branches, also clustered into male-, female-, and gender-neutral professions or branches. In this context, the gender attribution
21

of a profession is closely related to its value. So-called "female professions" such as kindergarten teachers or dental assistants are commonly undervalued by society and are not perceived with the same social status and reputation as "male professions" (Funder 2011).

Besides the positive development in regards to the increase of academic qualifications for women within the last years, there is still a lot of space left for improvement. Especially, when it comes to industrialized countries, gender segregation is still to a high degree present in the job market. Although there are national differences, females everywhere tend to occupy the lower and less prestigious professions, while males dominate in the leadership positions and more prestigious jobs and occupy the positions of power in society (Ahlborn 2005). Looking at the numbers of the index of dissimilarity, which indicates the percentage of the opposite sex that would have to change jobs to achieve an equal distribution of the genders among the professions in the country, in 2018 in Austria had a percentage of 0,39%. This means out of 100 women, 39 would have to change their job in order to reach a balanced ratio.

A big question arises whether women occupy certain jobs because they are simply more suitable for them and that lies within their nature, or whether they are limited to specific professional branches because the more prestigious professions are in correlation to heavy obstacles caused by a male-dominated market. "Male job branches" are generally more segregated than women's occupations, which could give one the hint that women generally find it harder to work in opposite-gender niches than men. Studies have proven that women in leadership positions when comparing them to their male colleagues suffer under a greater impact of stress overload caused through the family and other responsibilities. Explanatory for this could be the dual socialization of women through family and work, and women in male-dominated professions experience difficulties caused by structural limitations, such as non-existing part-time jobs in leadership positions or an unbalanced work-life-ratio (Rastetter 1998).

In 2010 in Germany, which had a similar condition in the job market as Austria, 54% of women were working in a female job branch, 34% were in mixed professions and 9% were working in male professions. Regarding men, 67% worked within the field of male profession and 25% in a mixed profession (Busch 2013). This points out that the segregation process in Germany was and is still strongly represented in the job market.

22

1.4.3. Glass ceiling

As already proven by numerous empirical studies, the opportunity for a leadership position in the different markets worldwide not only dependent on characteristics such as age, social background or ethnicity but also heavily dependent on the gender (Reskin & Ross 1990).

The term itself is a metaphor for the "phenomenon" that members of a certain population group are not able to ascend to political or economic leadership positions due to the fact that opportunities are not given to them. From a closer perspective, the term is mostly used today to refer to the fact that qualified women hardly ever make it to the top positions in companies or organizations and are "stuck" at the middle management level. Many studies assume that such glass-ceiling effects are created and reinforced by several obstacles, such as stereotypes and prejudices regarding the suitability of women into management positions, a corporate climate that is usually advantageous for male employees and the lack of access to informal networks. These obstacles are often linked to organizational structures and thus difficult to recognize, hence the metaphor of an invisible barrier to advancement, therefore also the name "glass ceiling" (Hördt 2006).

Among the reasons for the existence of the glass ceiling, studies cite the increased promotion of male employees by male superiors and the extensive exclusion of women from important professional networks. Furthermore, HR-management often tacitly assumes that almost all females will at some point take a "family break", sometimes without having asked the respective woman about it - which would also be illegal and a committed crime in most legal systems. Many times, the view is expressed that career and children are difficult to reconcile (Macha 2006)

In Austria, for example, a lot of people have shared the opinion, even among women in leading positions, that from a certain level of the hierarchy a clear decision must be made between parenthood and career. This is also supported by analysis of a "leaky pipeline" at universities where, for example, 30% of students are female but only 10% of the same cohort become professors. Specifically, there is a call for more or better childcare facilities in order to give women the opportunity to present their research results internationally and to network. The view is also expressed: The easier it is for a mother to have her child cared for externally, the higher the percentage of female bosses (Dubois-Shaik & Fusulier 2015)

Overall, although actor- and structural theory approaches make a specific contribution to explaining gender-specific segregation, they neglect either societal contexts as whole or

23

individual differences and organizational contexts. A critical aspect of actor-and structural theory approaches in correlation to explaining the glass-ceiling phenomenon is that they neglect the importance of inner-organizational connections. When it comes already to the early education process, girls and young women do not yet learn to set themselves high goals according to their talents and to achieve them in a strategically planned manner. This is another reason for stopping careers and bumping up against the glass ceiling, as well as too few childcare facilities, a lack of reflection of conditions for women's careers, parental leave and especially parental leave solutions that do not disadvantage women, need for flexibility in the workplace and last but not least, only a small number of qualified women who are among the applicants for leadership positions (Hördt 2006).

1.4.4. Reproduction

Having children is no longer a guarantee nowadays, due to the reason that contraceptive methods can be used to make a conscious decision for or against children. The considerations that are taken into account before the decision is made to have a child are the realization of life plans, fear of instability and security of the professional- and material situation, and not enough support overall. Especially career security is an enormous challenge for women in leadership positions because besides being active on a professional level many women also take over childcare and the household. Unfortunately, in many cases, women can only count on a rather small level of support from their partners, since men of focus more on their careers than women. Therefore, child care and household rather play a secular role in their lives. With the birth of a child, the professional directions of men and women usually separate, which means men continue to work as before in spite of paternity, while women take a career break, move their place of work to the household and switch to childcare (Macha 2006).

A career break plus subsequent part-time work often has a destructive effect on a career. For the individual woman, the question of children is often a decision she would rather not make - to choose between recognition as a mother or a professional woman. Women can, in comparison to the earlier days, theoretically determine their life course themselves, but in practice face some restrictions that make it difficult for a woman to be a mother or career woman alone. The compatibility of children and career is still unsolved. There are gains for women in education and the labor market, but there is also an increase in structural violence in institutions with respect to

equal treatment and balance between men and women (Krais & Ragna 2008).

Raising a child/children while having a successful career is hardly possible for women in top positions. Particularly in the infant and toddler phase, a well-planned life is almost impossible due to the unpredictable needs of a newborn child. A professional commitment during this time is extremely stressful for the mother because there is almost no time for personal regeneration. One way to reconcile children and the career is motherhood at a time when the woman has achieved a satisfactory position. This is usually possible at an advanced age; the consequence is late motherhood. However, it happens commonly that the desire to have children is not realized because the necessary support is not received or the hurdles for a successful reconciliation between work and family are subjectively experienced as insurmountable (Hofmeister & Hünefeld 2010).

2. Empirical Research

This thesis centers around a socio-basic assessment of the issue of the inconsistent appropriation of chances among women and men to fill leadership positions or positions within the top-management. Obstacles that hinder women on their career path have already been researched several times, therefore the author would like to look behind the scenes of these obstacles and reveal why these obstacles exist at all, in combination with a cross-cultural comparison which should point out if these obstacles are more common within other countries. Exactly how I will proceed is described in the next paragraphs.

2.1. Design of the Research

In order to fulfill the objective of this research, a qualitative research method was chosen that was further enhanced by multicriteria decision making based on qualitative assessments. Firstly, a qualitative approach was used to gather data about customer adoption variables. The main advantage over a quantitative design is that it enables a complete analysis of the research subject while not limiting the scope of the research or the participant's response. Hence, to answer the research question, an inductive research approach was applied. By observing a small sample size, in-depth interviews were conducted to produce generalized theories and conclusions. In-depth interviews are personal and unstructured, whose aim is to analyze the participant's feelings and emotions towards the research subject. Unstructured interviews also allow flexibility to the interviewer, providing room for conclusions that were unplanned to derive further assumptions regarding the research question. The conduction of the interviews followed a semi-structured questionnaire, while some questions were prepared, others were posed to elaborate on certain details as the interview progressed. The sample questions that were asked during all 12 Interviews were as following:

- Question 1: Is the thought of having kids a determining factor in making decisions about the career?
- Question 2: Which influence does private life have on working life for mothers in leadership positions?
- Question 3: Which influences did your parents exert on your perception of socialization?

- Question 4: Does gender inequality play a role in your job?
- Question 5: Did you witness a different outcome for the female and male gender within an internal competition of the firm?

2.2. Choice of Interviewees

The interviews were conducted with women in the highest possible management positions because the number of women decreases as the position increases within the management sphere and therefore you find the most extreme scenarios At the top management level. This is interesting for the study because their socialization processes could show a way how younger women and girls could be socialized in the future to enable more women to reach higher positions in the future. The author interviewed twelve women in total. The contact was made exclusively by email and through recommendations from women in management positions who had already been interviewed. Standardized emails were not written, but for every mail, each a different approach was chosen and a personal text was written for each inquiry.

In general, the author wrote 25 emails to women in the biggest economic sectors of Austria, located in the cities of Vienna, Linz, and Salzburg (which are also the most important cities when it comes to the Austrian Economy). From the 25 emails sent out, the author received 15 responses, of which 10 of them agreed to an interview over the phone or Skype. The other 2 interviewees were found through recommendations as already mentioned above.

For reasons of anonymity, the author does not want to give the names of the interviewees and companies where the interviewees are employed, he only mentions the division and the position in which the respective woman is represented:

1) Governmental Business Branch - Head of Investors and Location Management
2) Venture Capital Fund – Principal
3) IT Automation - Sales Channel Manager
4) Steel-based Technology Group - Head of Sales
5) Metal Industry – Transformation Manager
6) Technology Group - Department Director

7) IT Sector - Chief Experience Officer

8) Textile Industry – CEO

9) Construction Industry – Head of Corporate Communication

10) IT Sector - Director of Enterprise Sales

11) Oil & Gasoline Industry - Head of TECH-Center

12) Innovation & Technology Group – Executive Expert Operational Excellence

2.3. The evaluation process

The interviews were transcribed in their entirety. The pronunciation was not adapted, all interviews were "translated" from an Austrian dialect into "High German" and translated from German into English or were originally held in English. The system analysis helped to discover aspects of complex and internally different social fields and the analysis is primarily directed at the structuring subliminal characteristics of the focused social fields.

Furthermore, the evaluation was based on the "Grounded Theory" and on the process of content structuring where the goal is to summarize certain topics, contents, and aspects from the interviews. The content which was extracted from the interviews is defined by categories and subcategories developed based on the theory (Bryant & Charmaz 2007).

The categories were the following:

- Career
- Family
- Personal
- Company

The sub-categories were the following:

- Scholar education
- Career development
- Family influence
- Family planning
- Family support
- Financial situation
- Gender-related issues
- Tradition
- Company culture

The questions, that were associated with the theory in the course of the thesis, were analyzed and evaluated in the interview and summarized in a table. The short descriptions of the respective interview passages are paraphrased, specific features were filtered. The thematically matching paraphrases are grouped into as above described categories, and if necessary, thematically identical or similar categories are again summed up into a kind of superordinate category. With each of these steps, the level of abstraction increased within the evaluation process. On the following page, the author shows a sample page of the analyzed tables and how the data was analyzed and evaluated.

Respondent ID	Answer	Category	Sub-Category	Nationality
1	Well thanks god because my parents were very chilled let's say and I had a total freedom, you know, I played computer games with my brother, I played football with my cousins and I think that did, you know , play a role in the end.	Family	Family-Influence	Other Nationality
2	What I remember exactly is, that I thought, ok I don't want that, so for me it was clear if I would be grown up, I would do it differently, If a kid would be born, I would do it differently, I would not stay at home.	Comapny	Gender-realted Issues	Austrian
3	I come from Romania, a former communist country, and there gender differences weren't that big, but my family was still somehow traditional, so I wanted to play with cars, but I couldn't really or I only got a pink car, and it was very clear that my father was the bread maker.	Company	Tradition	Other Nationality
4	So I always had a good balance between the alpha man dad and my mum side being crazy feminist but also very realistic of how you go with the times you live in, I guess often we talk about the role of women in Europe, its still a very privileged conversation, because we don't take political or cultural situations into consideration.	Family	Family-Influence	Other Nationality
5	What has absolutely shaped me is, that I come from a very patriarchal family, my father brought the money home and was also able to determine what we were allowed to do and what not, and so it was clear to me that I didn't want to have that, and what motivated me was that I always have my own money.	Company	Tradition	Austrian
6	It was always the case that both of them strongly promoted my school development, supported what I was studying and there was no classic role model, but rather an open approach to topics and rather supported that you can achieve everything if you are focused.	Family	Family-Influence	Austrian
7	I have been socialized in such a way that a woman can be employed and be successful in her job, but my mother actually tries to make me realize that it sometimes better to stay at home more with my child.	Family	Family-Influence	Austrian
8	I was used to not having someone around all the time or spending a lot of time with our grandparents.	Family	Family-Support	Austrian
9	My mother also always wanted to explain to us that financial independence is incredibly important for a woman. With this, the foundation stone has certainly been laid. I did not automatically choose toys like dolls, but rather technical toys, and that was always encouraged by my	Family	Family-Influence	Austrian
10	We had more of a conservative role model in the family, where the father brings the money homeand the mother is at home.	Family	Family-Influence	Austrian
11	My father was a strong support for me from the start and taught me early that you can try everything. He wasn't able to try so much himself, but he made it possible for me to try a lot and always encouraged me to do so.	Family	Family-Influence	Austrian
12	But I was very lucky with my husband, who is very open and showed me that it doesn't have to be that way. He had helped me a lot and supported me.	Family	Family-Support	Other Nationality

Figure 1: Evaluation example of question 3; "Which influences did your parents exert on your perception of socialization?"

In figure 1 it is clearly visible that the author divided all the answers, which were given in correlation to the third question of the interview, into categories and sub-categories. Furthermore, a separation between the nationalities has been applied as well to conclude the cultural differences when it comes to the socialization process.

Concerning the overall statistics and frequency of the categories and sub-categories, the author found the following results:

Figure 2: Frequency of categories

Within the figure 2, the author visualized the frequency of the categories which were used in the overall interview in all the participant's answers. The x-axis describes the number of times a category was used, the y-axis describes which exact category was being used.
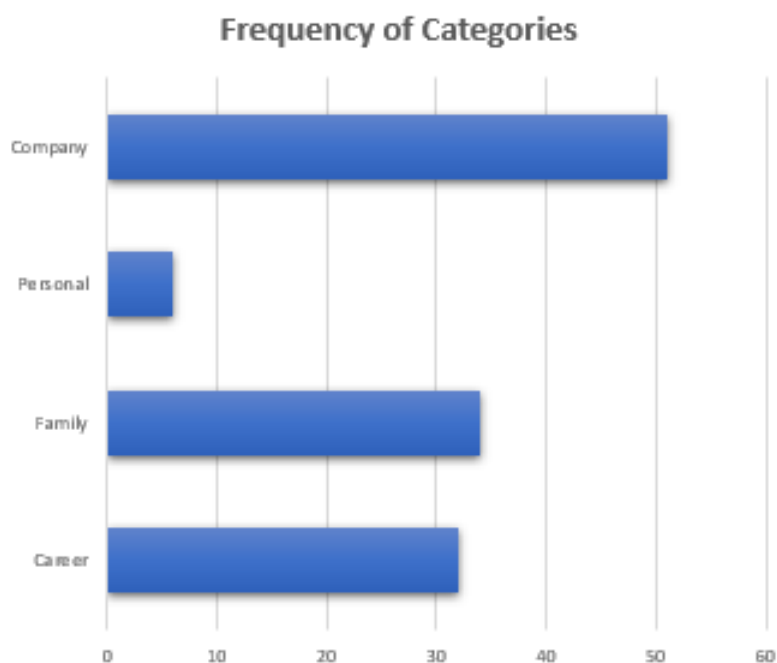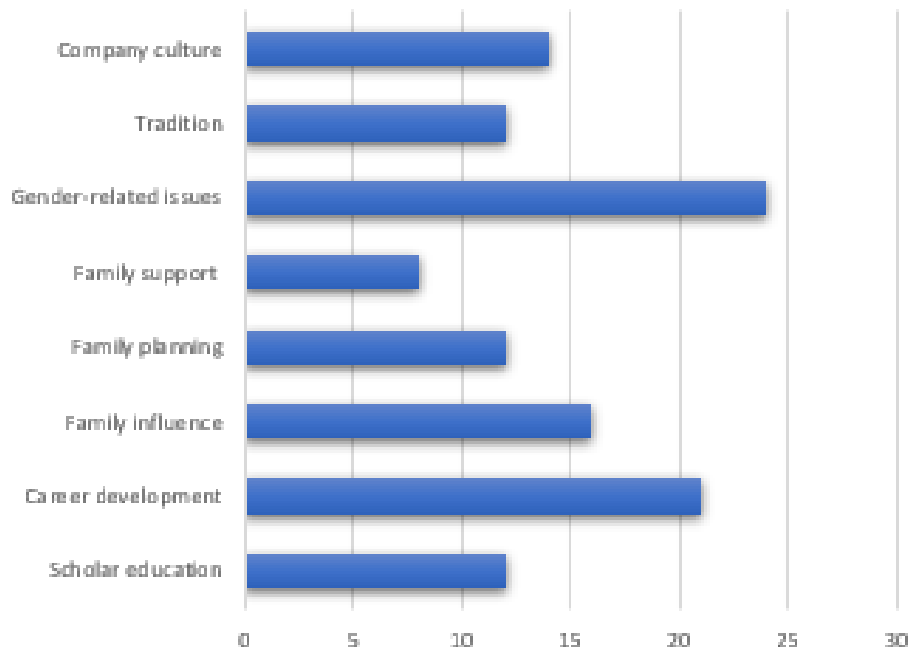
Figure 3: Frequency of sub-categories

Within figure 3, the author visualized the frequency of the sub-categories which were used in the overall interview in all the participant's answers. The x-axis describes the number of times a sub-category was used, the y-axis describes which exact category was being used.

Figure 4: Frequency distribution of categories

Figure 4 shows the frequency distribution of the categories. With 41% the category "company" was used the most, followed by "family", "career" and "personal". The numbers are the overall numbers including all the answers from all participants in the interviews.

Frequency Distribution of Sub-Categories
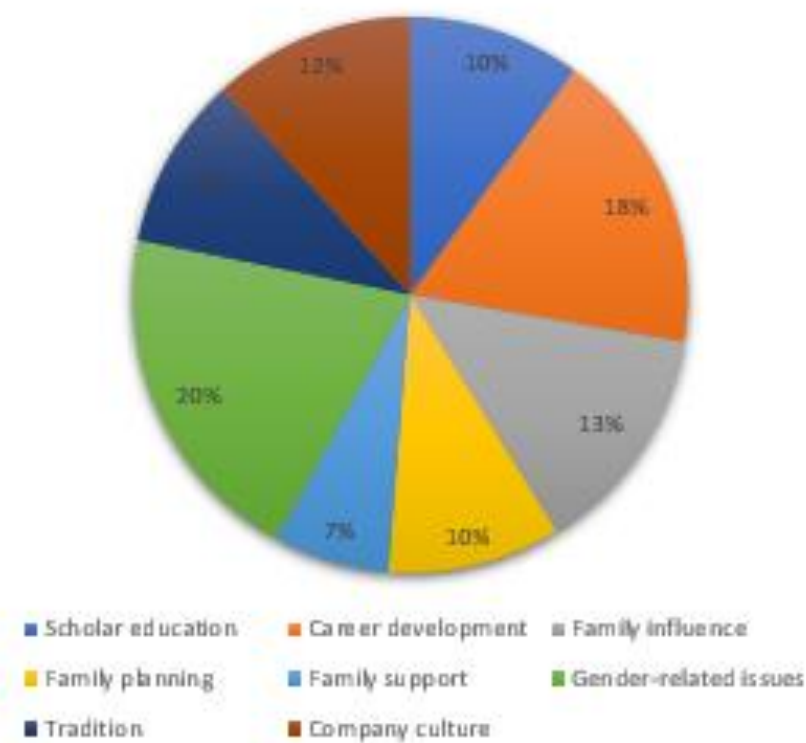
Figure 5: Frequency distribution of sub-categories

Figure 5 shows the frequency distribution of the sub-categories. With 20% the sub-category "gender-related issues" was used the most frequently, followed by "career development", "family influence" and others. The numbers are the overall numbers including all the answers from all participants in the interviews and are a good key indicator of the most common issues and influences that happened within the interviews.

3. Results

To evaluate the results of this thesis in the best possible way, the author adhered to the main scientific question, which is "How does the process of socialization negatively or positively impact the career aspects of women in leadership positions?". Since this is a very broad question, the author defined 5 sub-questions in order to find the right results to answer the main question.

3.1. Results of the sub-questions

In order to have a better overview of the thesis, the author would like to repeat the sub-questions one more time.

The sub-questions are the following:

1) Is the thought of having kids a determining factor in making decisions about their careers?
2) Which influence does private life have on working life for mothers in leadership positions?
3) Which influences did the parents exert on their daughter´s perception of socialization?
4) Does gender inequality play a role in the job?
5) Did the interviewee witness a different outcome for the female and male gender within an internal competition of the firm?

3.1.1. Question 1: Is the thought of having kids a determining factor in making decisions about their careers?

For the first question, it was very interesting to see for the author, that there were two very strong opinions that the interviewees represented. Some claimed that it definitely plays an enormous role and definitely has a huge influence on the career of women in leadership positions. The other strong opinion was that both is definitely possible and is just a matter of flexibility and time management to handle the childcare and the job at the same time.

It was also very interesting to see, that mainly the women, who do not have children claimed that it is an impossible thing to balance both at the same time. A very strong opinion in correlation to
34

flexibility was, that a woman has to either decide for a career or to have children. A big influence on this is the company culture and the flexibility these women have within their top management positions. Repetitively the statement was made, that if a company takes care of their employees and offers them a possibility with flexible working times, part-time solutions or even complete home office, almost all the women agreed that childcare and being in a leadership position is possible. Unfortunately, this is not the case in every company and many interviewees made the statement that for them it would not have been possible to only work part-time and be in the current leadership position as they are.

On one side, a lot of the interview partners had a very negative perception of the influence of the thought of having kids on their careers and statements like this were the outcomes:
"It definitely is, it's always an influence, its either the possibility of having the flexibility of how to coordinate if a kid would happen, if there is the chance to deal with the job and the kid if you are in Bucharest, or if you are in Strasbourg, and I always, when I negotiated my contract, I always negotiated daycare and kindergarten in my contract, although I didn't know if it will happen or not" (Person 2, Page 6). Similar to this statement was the statement from Person 3: *"I have the perception that women or mothers generally tend not to go into higher positions. Not that they are not ambitious, but they take jobs that give them more flexibility and more time to spend with their family. Or the opposite, mothers who take higher-level positions, generally have a better financial situation, so they can take nannies or things like that, which is not always an option for everybody"* (Person 3, Page 8). These two statements really underline the fact that a lot of the interviewees feel the need of flexibility in order not to choose between their career or their family, which is a heavy influence when it comes to the decision of working hard and dedicating their life to their career to gain a top management position within their company.

On the other hand, some of the interviewees were also really positive about their perception of the combination of having a career and children made the following statements:
"I didn't really plan my career that way, it just happened. Always at the time when I thought I wasn't so focused on children and where I thought I was concentrating on my career, and then the first child came. Then I didn't expect to have a second one, and when I came back I was offered another job, and that's when the second child came and somehow it always happened, and I've always been able to bring my career and my private life together very well, thanks to my company, which has been very good at this. I always had good contact with my company, even

35

during my maternity leave, and I always worked from home, which is also a success component for me in that it is easy to combine the two" (Person 5, Page 11). Also, more neutral comments were made, such as *"It definitely matters. I know many people who make the statement that you have to choose between your child or your career. I find it different and perhaps too naive, but I think that both are possible at the same time"* (Person 6, Page 13) or *"I would also like to say that my desire to have children has not stopped me from making a career or prevented me from deciding to have a career. It was clear to me that if I make a career, I still can do it the way I want to, among other things I was aware that I would have the financial means for an au-pair girl. However, I do not have children, but this is not because of my career"* (Person 7, Page 16).

Moreover, many times the author experienced statements that the whole country Austria itself is too traditional concerning women and leadership positions and that its society and the values of the society are a "career blocker" for women who simultaneously want to have a family and a career. *"Yes, or whether you have children at all if you are focused on your career. This is definitely an essential issue because, of course, in most cases, women are the ones who take the time off and look after the children and childcare. If you find a partner who is willing to choose different models for raising the child, it can work, but Austria is traditional and a real career blocker if you are a woman and you choose to build a family"* (Person 11, page 20).

Summing up the comments that have been made, if having children is a determining factor for women on whether to have a career or not, the opinions are rather split up but one factor, every interviewee mentioned was, that flexibility is the key factor to the combination of both and if companies want to create loyal employees and integrate women in their top management positions, they definitely have to think about the implementation of new models which will allow women to have more time to start a family and to be in a leadership position at the same time.

3.1.2. Question 2: Which influence does private life have on working life for mothers in leadership positions?

Concerning the second question, the author found out that the answers of the interviewees again emphasized on the topics of flexibility and time management. A vast majority of the answers targeted specifically these issues and also pointed out that the childcare is still a topic, which in Austria concerns rather women than men. As already mentioned in the theory, childcare is still a "duty" which is mainly left to the women in Austria, and this was definitely reflected in the answers of the participants. In the case of person 4, she made the following experience:

"First of all, the sad thing is that there are not that many women in leadership positions, I'm talking about the fashion industry, the total workforce 70 percent is female but only 25 percent are in leadership, which is insane, and before founding my own company, I have worked for many brands and some of them were quite big and I witnessed sometimes how women in leadership positions were scared to take maternity leave or take time off to spend it with the family or kids, because even if the law in European countries say that you can't be lowered down from your current position when you come back from maternity leave, still companies will find a way to get rid of you or replace you as fast as they can. Also, again referring to the creative industry, I guess when you reach a certain age, people will either not give you the job being scared that you might get pregnant at some point and cost them money, and they might go for a male candidate instead, and again women are, in general, those who take care of the elder people at their home, or the kids, or the extra work at home, it definitely influences each other, so private life and professional life is definitely merged for women in leadership positions when comparing it to men who do not have to take over this aspect" (Page 9).

It is clearly noticeable, that private life not only affects the working life but also vice versa. Also, her statement underlined the theory of men not being as integrated into childcare as women which then again heavily influences the decision-making-process of women when it comes to leadership positions.

Another example which pointed out the time management issue and the dependency many women in leadership positions with kids have was made by person 5:

"Of course, this is an important topic. In general the private environment. I say without help, private help, it is very difficult. I was lucky that I had parents-in-law and parents in my environment, for this reason, I never needed a single day of care, when the children were sick someone was always there, so it is important to have someone in the private environment and to

accept this help. You always have to fight with it between a bad conscience towards the children and also that you are successful in your job. So especially at the beginning I often had a bad conscience, because you think that maybe the children come too short. Certainly, the grandparents are an important factor, that you have someone who lives with the children and also takes care of them when the mother is at work. It is not easy, I often had a bad conscience because I had to travel a lot in my job and then I was often not there, so I often didn't feel so good" (Page 12).

So, not only do women struggle with the pressure from work, which is according to the interviewees mainly caused due to the companies' unflexible conditions, but also with their feelings of guilt. In Austria, as in many other places around the world, the gender role of females typically includes being the main caregiver of the child, which, when coupled with frequent absences, can cause feelings of guilt.

Only a few participants mentioned that there is almost no influence and this opinion was expressed by person 9 regarding this topic:

"I would say, basically, there is no influence. The experience I have had with members of my team is that there was no influence up to the point where they became mothers, after that there was a fluctuation because many young mothers are insecure when they come back from pregnancy and have to find their way back into their role, which normally always takes 1 or 2 years. Also, they are exposed to extreme stress, due to extra strain on the toddlers. Usually, it takes about 6 years until the children start going to school because I have the feeling that in the first years the mothers do not live for themselves but live for their children. What you also notice is that when the children come to school, the mothers go through a really positive development, also at work, they look more at themselves again, are more stable again. Additionally, it is to be noticed that they are very strengthened afterwards in crisis management and conflict management and that the pregnancy and following years definitely had a positive influence on the mothers" (Page 16).

She generally perceived the influence as overall very positive, besides being shaped by a higher level of stress within the first years of motherhood, which is again an indicator for the theory that women do not receive enough support when it comes to childcare, neither from the partner nor the company they are employed at.

"What I notice is that especially with mothers working part-time, with 32 hours, most of the time almost as much as if they were working 38 hours, that it is often still the case that appointments are made later, around 6 or 7 in the evening. This already makes it very difficult for mothers who are in management positions and it is difficult to combine everything. Especially in part-time work, I still have a lower income than my partner, and that is exactly what the women live in. My partner's job will always be more important because it is also financially more important. After all, the woman can often only work part-time since she has to take care of the kids" (Page 17). This statement has been made by person 10, who did not only point out the dependency of the women on the company but also the financial dependency on the partner which still exists and is still a huge barrier for many women when it comes to combining professional life and private life.

3.1.3. Question 3: Which influences did the parents exert on their daughter´s perception of socialization?

In question 3, it was very interesting to see for the author that there were impressions of cultural differences and influences when it comes to the general perception of gender roles and roles within the family for the interviewees. This was based on the data the author gathered, where 4 out of 12 interviewees came from different countries and additionally one woman grew up with parents who migrated to Austria. The author is aware of the relatively small sample size and that every perception claimed about cultural differences has to be done with reflection to the sample size and as a whole is definitely not valid to make scientific claims about the culture of a country.

Especially when it comes to the influence of the parents, all the females, who were interviewed for this thesis, had something in common. Before they reached their top management position or leadership position, they all finished their studies or have studied at one point in their life in a university. This stresses out how important education is. This is a good sign since it was already mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis that the number of female students is rising and almost equal to the number of male students at universities in Austria. Within the interviewees, almost all of them stated, besides either having gender roles within their family or not, that their parents were very keen on education and perceiving their goals regarding scholar education. A good example of this was made by person 6 who said the following:

"My parents used a liberal and very open educational method. My parents were older when I was born, my mother was already 40 years old for example. Both had professions that could be combined with childcare, my mother was a teacher, my father worked in the public service. Nevertheless, it was always the case that both of them strongly promoted my school development, supported what I was studying and there was no classic role model, but rather an open approach to topics and rather supported that you can achieve everything if you are focused" (Page 14).

What was also very interesting to see for the author was the gender roles. While the Austrian women in this study had rather traditional parents where traditional gender roles played a big role, it was quite the opposite for the women of other nationalities. At this point in the evaluation in regards to cultural differences, the author wants to emphasize again the sample size of the thesis, but in the case of the 12 interviews, these were the cultural outcomes. Person 1 stated concerning the 3. question the following:

"Well thank god because my parents were very chilled let's say and I had total freedom, you know, I played computer games with my brother, I played football with my cousins and I think that did, you know, play a role in the end, actually I'm not a fan of only women-focused events because I have more the mindset if you want to do something just do that with it I think it's also a lot because my parents just gave me total freedom you know I could go for the whole "be someone today" and they were never dressing me in total pink stuff and so on, so I think yeah so I could do whatever I wanted, and also because I had a brother, his presence also influenced me in the end you know. It made me more flexible and it didn't put me in certain categories where you are supposed to act as a woman or as a girl" (Page 5).

In the perception of the influence of the parents on socialization, person 2 said:
"I definitely grew up gender conform, meaning lots of dolls and barbies, but I think that's the nonconformity, I was always pushed and supported in reading, in getting to know more things, experiencing things, every kind of technical thing I got, which was broken, I tried to fix them, so also technical things I worked a lot on, also with my father in the garden, but in regards to playing and literature, it was not so gender-driven, but concerning the gender roles, concerning my parents, it really was. We were a "classic" Austrian family, my dad was the worker, he got up at 4 in the morning to start his shift and he came home at 3 in the afternoon, then, of course, he was tired. So he stayed on the couch and my mom was at home until I was 12 years old, classic for the countryside, there was no daycare possibility at the time, so she was forced, although she

wanted to work, but she stayed with me and my sister and took care of us and our homework, etc. But what I remember exactly is, that I thought, ok I don't want that, so for me, it was clear if I would be grown up, I would do it differently, If a kid would be born, I would do it differently, I would not stay at home, although I could experience my mom did a great job with me and my sister, we were very comfortable, in a manner which a lot of kids wish they would have been raised, but I thought as a woman I see myself not as the housewife" (Page 7).

Therefore the author comes to the conclusion, that in regards to gender roles and whether they strongly exist or not within a family, the parents definitely have a huge impact on their daughters who will later implement a lot of thoughts and values of their childhood in their everyday lives and their perceptions but with the key focus on education, which clearly shows that if it is strongly supported a career in a leadership position is possible.

3.1.4. Question 4: Does gender inequality play a role in the job?

Concerning question 4, it was clearly the case that the opinions spread between the participants of the interviews. Some claimed that gender inequality is a topic that definitely plays an essential role within their company, due to the fact that they are working in a very male-dominant industry. Others claimed it plays a role, but rather about the self-awareness and if you can take an advantage out of the gender inequality situation within a whole industry or company.
Often the company culture was mentioned and is more or less an excuse for a lot of companies defending their low percentage of females in leadership positions in the perception of the interviewees. Some even went as far as stating that in case of clear male dominance within the management positions, a woman should consider continuing her career in a different company since Austria can be a big "career killer" for women. The following statement was made by person 8:
"Yes, it matters. At the last annual meeting of my company, a shareholder asked the head of the enterprise how he views the proportion of women in the company, as it is very low, especially in management positions. His answer was that we are a technical company and there are not so many women who are interested or suitable for this. I actually found this very outrageous of the circumstances in our company. This is a role model for an old industry that is no longer up to date. If you look at me, I am one of the few women working in sales, where out of 10 people there

41

are 8 men and 2 women. In many cases, these are also men who are older than me and I still manage to manage them as a director and that's why I simply don't find this argument admissible. In my previous position, for which I should have been the successor, a man was then chosen with the clear propose that a man should be in this management position. The inequality plays a role in any case and often arguments are used, such as that women are not interested in technology or that someone is needed who is strong enough, which is a completely outdated stereotype" (Page 17).

It shows, how stereotypes are still represented in the daily life of women in leadership positions and how a rather traditional country can build very large barriers for women who want to achieve a successful career in their professional life.

A similar statement was made by person 10, who said the following:

"I work in a very male-dominated area because it is a technical area. That means there are very few female role models and I am also very often the only woman in a leading position in meetings and in the environment. We all often underestimate this, even though we all always say that we are all equal, men and women are equal, you are still the outsider, you react differently, you are simply different and this sometimes creates a certain inequality that is ideally compensated by the management. Unfortunately, this doesn't always work, because it is often not even conscious. Of course, if it would be balanced out between men and women, the feeling would not be the same. It is also a difficult situation for women's promotion programs. Of course, you have to put more energy into it until more women are in management positions, but on the other hand, it also gives the impression that women are constantly dependent on support and that is also wrong. This might be viewed as women are perhaps not yet ready and everything has to be built up first. It is necessary for such groups that one has to consider how to change the wording because otherwise, it has the effect that women are not yet ready for leadership positions and that they first have to be developed and promoted" (Page 18).

Person 11 stated something similar and said the following:

"I say yes, but my superiors don't believe it. It is also a question of hierarchies and also of more informal issues. In my job, I am now the only woman in a managerial position surrounded by many men, including many older men. I keep coming up to the group with new topics and that is usually all blown away. I also notice in the language how the difference is. In our organization, the language shows the culture, the longer I speak, the more important I am. You have to listen to

all of this, even if it lasts for hours, and most of the time people forget that the woman in the room also has an opinion. She must not interrupt, but she is also not invited to express her opinion. I always have to say that I don't interrupt, but that I also want to share my opinion" (Page 20).

This reflects a lot, the culture in many Austrian enterprises, which are still related to a lot of old values and not really adjusted to the current times. It is clearly visible, that a lot of the interviewees have issues with these perceptions of the society and it directly affects them.

On the other side, some of the interviewees think it is also up to the woman what she makes out of the circumstances and that the gender inequality has an impact, but not only a negative one.
"I mean I have been only working in small companies, so I have never been discriminated against because of that. I see that more of an opportunity because you know, in the tech field where I am, there are so little women, like there so few women, that you can really stand out in a few moments of confidence if you're not afraid of that.
You get more attention and that's good you know that helps with business, it can help to socialize, to network, because you kind of stand out so I think you can make it.
You have an opportunity out of that but yeah it depends on the person because I know that many people don't feel comfortable with being, you know, the only woman within a group of fifty so it depends on the person now, but I haven't been discriminated, at least I haven´t noticed that but I don't have examples with experience from me in a big company where you have to climb the ladder, you know, to the next position and so on" (Person 1, Page 5).

This on the other hand clearly shows, that some women, who experience inequality on a daily base turn everything around and trying to gain an advantage for themselves in an extreme situation like this.

A similar mindset was shared by person 6 and she made the following comment:
"At the management level we have a clear surplus of men, I personally think that this is not necessarily a disadvantage. I have also learned in my professional development that working with men is often much more relaxed than with women, because women are nevertheless often more difficult to manage, especially for a female manager. I don't see this in a negative light, but in the overall picture it is also the case that I am active in several supervisory board functions, and in the majority of these I am always the only woman. This shows a great unbalance, but it's not so much about gender as it is about age. In the meantime, I have started to support women who I think are very good to coach so that they develop positively. But often you must be frank

and say that communication with men is sometimes easier, like clear instructions and that you can communicate more directly and not face any emotions" (Page 14).

Also, person 5 had a similar idea about this:

"Not really, I must say. With us, we are a very male-dominated company, a technology company. But I believe that I earn the same as the men in our company. Our boss has two daughters himself and it is very important to him to promote women in our company. Unfortunately, this was not very successful in the beginning, but now this community is very active and there are many women in top management positions. But when it comes to technology, you notice that there are simply not enough women. Unfortunately, women don't apply for these jobs, there is still a fear of technology. It was the same with me, and how I was offered the job in the technical area 7 years ago. I had the same thought; I can't do it. And it's often the same with women. If you get a job offer and you don't meet all the criteria, then you doubt yourself very often. With men, it's the opposite, and it's more a matter of self-confidence. I can only appeal to all women, please have some confidence. You can learn so much, and interest just has to be there, but you don't have to have learned everything in a school or university just to do a job. Women are extremely overcautious, and this often prevents them from taking advantage of opportunities. I work with 99% of men, and I see that they often appear with a lot of self-confidence, but unfortunately, I don't see this so often with women" (Page 13).

This comment heavily underlined the theory, when it comes to encouragement and support of women that there is a huge deficit in Austria. Already in their early life, they hear from a society that a job in a male-dominant industry is not made for a woman and therefore they do not have enough encouragement to go for higher positions within these industries which are all based on outdated stereotypes and knowledge which influences the Austrian society.

Summing up, it clearly shows that the imbalance plays a drastic role for many women in leadership positions and definitely has an influence on them. Some interviewees also experienced having an advantage out of this inequality. However, the main thought most of the participants share is, that in the Austrian market exists a huge numerous difference between female and male managers and that it can create career barriers and discourages a lot of women in many companies to strive for top management positions.

44

3.1.5. Question 5: Did the interviewee witness a different outcome for the female and male gender within an internal competition of the firm?

Overall speaking, question 5 had a similar outcome as question 4, where the perceptions of the interviewees were divided into two different opinions. Some of the females experienced severe outcomes when it comes to gender inequality and some women did not experience any discrimination in their companies and working environments.

In regards to the aforementioned theory, person 11 made a very strong comment:
"Again and again. That means the glass ceiling is very low. I've seen it happen that lower qualified men with less experience and less employee engagement suddenly became my superiors and I wasn't even considered. I see it all the time and if something like that happens the only way for a woman who wants to pursue a career to change the organization. If a woman is ambitious and wants something, it is perceived negatively and if a young man is like that, then, of course, it is positive. At 40, I often heard what I still lack for the next steps, but I'm definitely further than colleagues who are currently in management positions in our company. When it comes to leadership positions, women are either not seen at all or perceived as a threat" (Page 21).

This shows how low the glass-ceiling is and how it can play a huge role in the Austrian market for women, who want to obtain a leadership position and in the worst cases, this eventually hinders them from achieving their goals.

Also, a very common experience, which was mentioned by many of the interviewees, was stated by person 12:
"Yes, I have seen it a lot when it comes to the application process when a woman and a man apply for the same job, the men get selected in the most cases, and this based on the fact, that often the company does not want to deal with the emotions of the woman and therefore choose the man. It is not always like this; it heavily depends on the manager and its criteria for the whole process and not always like this" (Page 23).

Generally speaking, this question points out the fact, that for a woman to even get into the company, not even speaking about making a career and later on achieving a top management position within the company, is already more difficult than as it is for a man and reflects a lot the current situation in the Austrian job market.

4. Result and answer of the main research question

To facilitate, the author is stating the main research question one more time for this thesis:

"*How does the process of socialization negatively or positively impact the career aspects of women in leadership positions*?".

After evaluating the sub-questions, the author came to the clear result, that within the spectrum of his scientific research there is a huge negative impact of the socialization process on the career aspects of women in leadership positions. Starting in childhood, if parents are not constantly supporting the females to achieve good results for their academic career, it already starts affecting them negatively at an early age. Parents have to emphasize the opportunities and possibilities that a professional career in leadership positions is possible for women and therefore have to support and stimulate the desire for knowledge. Furthermore, flexibility in regards to the company culture plays an enormous role in how women can integrate themselves into top management positions in case they do not want to choose between family or career. A lot of companies in Austria should reevaluate their part-time - or maternity-leave models. Also, the values which are perceived in Austria and within its society, have a big influence on the women who witnessed a lot of negative experiences or unfair treatment in correlation to their gender.

Moreover, more networking possibilities, also within the companies, have to be integrated or provided, to motivate their female employees and to build and earn their trust.

5. Comparison of the research outcomes with the theoretical part

After answering the main research question, it is essential for the author and for the scientific progress to compare the results to the already existing theory.

In the theoretical part, the author presented six different studies, such as the KPMG study, which suggested that one of the main issues that could cause this imbalance, is the lack of self-confidence. In this study, results showed that in the age range of 18-64-year-old women, 59% of the females, who participated in the research, stated that they sometimes have difficulties seeing themselves as leaders in the future or their current job. Concerning this, the author believes, that this is strongly connected to the non-existing or low number of networks within the different sectors in Austria. Most of the 12 respondents stated in their interviews, that they never had a female role model they could look up to and that there was rather a competition among the women in leadership positions. But with the introduction of more networks, where women actively support each other, this burden could be overcome and with the right support more women would be willing to accept a challenging job in a leadership position. Also, some mentorship programs could be introduced by companies to bring active female top managers into the position of mentoring the other women in a company or sector and to give them the opportunity to look up to somebody.

As already mentioned in the theoretical part, another key-finding in the existing literature has been made by Claudia Peus and Isabell M. Welpe, who stated that girls and young women are less encouraged than men to plan their careers. When looking at the current numbers of female and male students at the Universities in Austria, it is still the fact, that fewer females than males are enrolled in universities overall, but in the last years the difference is shrinking and numbers are almost equal to this day. Therefore, the author suggests, that the influence of the family plays an equally essential role as the academic progress. All the females interviewed had either a University degree or were enrolled in a university. But for them, what was even more important as stated in the interviews, was the support from their family and the motivation they received to focus on their education and their personal career development.

The last study, the author wants to compare his results to, is the study conducted by Schönefeld and Schirner in 2017. The researchers found out that despite all efforts at emancipation, women still carry most parts of the family work and parenting.

In the author´s opinion, this is closely connected to the values of a country but also has close ties to the existing time-management-models of companies. Almost all the 12 interviewees stated that flexibility is the main issue for them when looking at work-life balance. They witnessed a lot of women accepting part-time jobs so they can fully devote themselves to the family and childcare while their partners have full-time jobs and are financially the main supporter of the family. With these answers give, the author suggests that companies have to reevaluate their existing leadership positions concerning time-management and implement new models, which would allow women in a more effective way to combine their career and family life while not being financially dependent on their partner in their private life.

With the comparison of the results to the current theory, the author hopes he can motivate his follow scientific colleagues to have a deeper look inside this topic and to encourage more people to devote themselves to this topic, since it is an essential one for our society, and we all as a community can benefit from it.

6. Conclusion

After analyzing and evaluating the socialization process a lot of women face within their career, which also, as already stated in the answer of the main research question above, harms the career aspects of women in leadership positions. It is very obvious that a lot of circumstances, but also the way a lot of Austrian companies think, have to be changed.

It is essential to not only blame Austrian enterprises for the creation of this imbalance and inequality but to already look at the circumstances which these women face before they even start their professional career. Especially these old values or stereotypes such as "women are not meant to work in the technology sector" have to be buried and more young females have to be motivated or have to come in contact with technical – or stereotypically, "male" sectors. It is essential to already do this at a young age because that is where the mindset is being built and established and also it will have an impact on the values of the women throughout their whole life.

Also, more companies as employers have to trust their female employees with leadership positions and have to invest in building up networks, where they can support and motivate their female workers and help them grow personally. It should not be a question whether to have a career or a family but it should be possible to successfully combine both and with the help of innovative part-time models, this can be achievable.

Still, a lot has to be done and Austria is just at the beginning of a long journey but the author is convinced that with the right measures and the help of education for the new generation a lot is possible and a lot can be changed to create equal and fair circumstances for both genders and to close the existing gap.

7. Future Outlook and limitations

In this chapter, the author wants to discuss what has a lot of potential for further research in regard to the socialization process and women in leadership positions. Moreover, he will also talk about the limitations he faced while writing this master thesis.

7.1. Future Outlook:

In regards to the future outlook of this topic and for the future scholar research the author urges his academic colleagues to focus more on the childhood of the women and to research more in the psychological field of this topic how much young females are influenced by the ongoing socialization process in Austria. It is already very clear that there exists a huge imbalance when it comes to the gender balance in top management positions, so now it is very essential to find out, why certain values exist in Austria and why still so many people or even the society have specific values, believes or even stereotypes within themselves that cause a lot of the circumstances we face in Austria concerning unfairness and imbalance.

7.2. Limitations:

Furthermore, within this thesis, the author faced several limitations which definitely have to be pointed out:

First of all, this thesis was written in the times of the COVID-19 crisis, where a lot of people worked under or were influenced by new working conditions. This made it really hard to reach out and to build up the contact of the interviewees. Therefore, the author was also in some cases dependent on the commendations he received from some of his interview partners in order to create new contacts. Also, it was very difficult to arrange the times for the author, since a lot of the interviewees had to be very flexible and therefore a lot of rescheduling had to be done.

Another limitation is the sample size for the impact of the cultural difference, which has been evaluated in the sub-question 3 of the interviews. The number of interview partners was 12, but the author had 7 Austrian interview partners and 5 Non-Austrian interview partners. The ideal outcome for this would have been a balanced number, meaning 6 Austrian and 6 Non-Austrian interviewees, but again, due to the COVID-19 crisis, it was very hard to find a balanced number.

8. Appendix

Additional Information regarding this thesis.

8.1. The Interviewees

After the author explained how he approached the interviewees and how the interviews have been conducted, it is essential for this thesis, to give a short introduction of all the women who participated and to summarize the interviews and to highlight the most important factors.

8.1.1. Person 1:

Person 1 completed her Bachelor studies in the field of "Technical Sales" and then started a part-time master's degree program in "International marketing" while working in the field of sales development. Later, she moved to Germany, in order to open up a subsidiary for the company, while finishing another master´s degree in "Business Law". Besides her professional career, she also completed an MBA program in Finance and a Ph.D. in Business law in Vienna. She was employed by a company with a focus on innovation and technology and spend several years in the United States to work on various projects. After that, she switched to a different company, where she is now the "Head of Investors and Location Management". For her, striving for a successful career and having children at the same time are possible but require a lot of flexibility, and organizational talent which somebody definitely needs when being in a leadership position. Her parents were keen on her education and academic career and always supported her when it came to personal development, and in combination with a liberal and open child education, she could benefit a lot from her early childhood. There was no classic role model, but rather an open approach to topics and the parents rather supported the ideology that you can achieve everything if you are focused and work hard enough for it. Person 1 has the perception, that in general in top management levels, it is a profusion of men, which not necessarily has to be a disadvantage or a bad thing. She often made the experience that it can make co-working relationships easier and the emotional impact does not play such an important factor when it comes to confrontations. She did not experience any inequalities so far, as she was also chosen for her current working position over a man.

8.1.2. Person 2:

Person 2 moved to Austria with 18 years in order to attend a University of Applied Sciences with a focus on Export-oriented Management. Within her master studies, she joins a start-up in the position as a CFO and later switched to the IT sector where she worked for the biggest High-Tech-Incubator in Austria. After that, her career led her to a company that is focused within the sector of Venture Capital Funds where she is the active Principal of the company. For her, the thought of having kids is not a decisive factor and is not in the way of her successful career. She also states, that the key factor for the combination of a successful career and having a family is flexibility since it is essential to be in constant communication with the company (emphasize of online communication) and also being able to take care of your child. Her childhood was rather laid back and shaped a lot by her family. She stated that gender never played a role and she had no limitations when it came to her hobbies and activities, such as playing football or video games with her brother. She perceived these memories as important, as she states that "the activities made me more flexible and did not put me in certain categories, where you are supposed to be as a young girl."

In her career, she never felt discriminated or treated unequally by men and rather sees it as an advantage to work in a very male dominant sector when it comes to opportunities and networking but also states, it might be different in a larger corporation where you have to climb the career ladder.

8.1.3. Person 3:

Person 3 started her education with an apprenticeship as an industrial clerk and then went to evening school in order to finish her A-levels. She started to work in the branch of customer care and eventually stayed with the same company for almost 40 years. Within her career, she raised 2 children but never came to the point where she had to decide between career or family. This was a lot due to the flexibility of the company which made it possible to concentrate on both. After

working for a long period as the IT-customer care manager she accepted the role of the sales channel manager within her company. She emphasizes the fact, that she would not be there where she is today if she would have fully stopped working after her pregnancy while being on maternity leave and urges out to every mother, to do the same. Another important factor in her opinion is that the enterprises should also always stay in connection with their employees on maternity leave and should always offer opportunities in order for the women to engage themselves. This does not only create trust and good relationships but also builds a loyal employee who feels supported by her company. What also helped her in her professional career was the external help and support she received in her environment. She stated that especially the grandparents were an enormous help for her, which made it possible that she would never have to take a day off at work because her children were sick and because of that support, she could join every meeting possible organized by the company. When it comes to her goals concerning her professional life an essential factor, which definitely shaped and motivated her, was her family background. As she came from a very patriarchal family, where the father earned the money and the mother was at home raising the children, she witnessed the financial dependence of her mother. She promised herself to always owe her own money and she did not want to end up in the same situation as her mother from a monetary point of view. A big problem she noticed within the field she works is, that not enough women apply for these types of jobs in the technology sector. She states that inequality actively does not play a role, but there exists this enormous gender imbalance due to that fact, that simply not enough young women are interested in working in this branch. Not enough females are being encouraged by our society to find their interests within the technical field and she thinks that the problem is in the education system and the lack of networks for women who encourage and support each other when it comes to entering male-dominant niches and jobs.

8.1.4. Person 4:

Person 4 finished her academic career in die fields of "Mathematics" and "Physics" and additionally in "Business Administration". This combination of studies helped her to find a job in the steel industry where she started to work as a key account manager. After that, she climbed up the career ladder and became the managing director of a daughter company in South-Eastern

Europe. After that, she accepted the role of the managing director in a Western Europe Country and eventually came back in the role of the managing director to Austria. Her personal perception is that the thought of having kids has an enormous impact on the career since you have to be really flexible in terms of time and location, which is definitely not easy once you have to raise kids. Moreover, she also states, that women within top management positions are more consequent in separating the private life from professional life since otherwise, it can happen that the whole situation will be too stressful. A huge impact in her life was the fact, that her parents always pushed her development when it came to education, She also stated, that her mother stayed at home when she was growing up until she was 12 years old, looking after her sister and her. Although she made the experience of her mom doing a great job when it came to childcare, she promised herself to do it differently not seeing her future self as a housewife and being dependent on somebody else in a financial aspect. Within her work, the topic of gender equality always played an important role, since she found herself often in board meetings being the only woman represented and therefore also having the feeling of being a minority. For her, there is definitely a change visible when it comes to sectors like Research & Development or in the production, but especially when it comes to the jobs in higher hierarchies, she notices a strong gender imbalance which definitely affects her, sometimes also unconsciously. When it comes to salaries and paychecks, she never experienced inequality in her professional career, and so far, only made good experiences within her organization.

8.1.5. Person 5:

Person 5 started her academic career in the field of "Mechanical Engineering" and accepted the position of the transformation manager in the metal industry. Before that, she started as a young engineer in the aerospace branch, where she later built up the product development department with a focus on innovation but also on culture. From there she switched to the sales branch and eventually ended up in the corporate department of her company, where she develops strategies for the aviation branch of her company. She also stated, that as a woman she is very rare in her field. For her, you have to make a clear decision of either having children or having a career, because without the right partner and the right models of childcare it is impossible to manage both at the same time. Austria, as a country itself, is for her too traditional concerning values and can be a big career blocker if you are a woman and if you choose to build a family. Often, she observed that within her organization, the needs of fathers related to family issues and family

planning are taken very seriously but when it comes to the needs of mothers in top management positions concerning this these issues, there is still the general opinion that she should decide whether she wants to have a career or a family. On one side, her father taught her in her early years that if you want something and you work hard for it, you can achieve every goal you set yourself, meaning that she got raised in a very liberal way. On the other side, her mother always made sure that she maintains the value of family. Person 5 witnessed that within her sector there exists not only gender inequality but there are also hierarchical and formal issues. Often, she made the experience, in board meetings, where she is in many situations the only women surrounded by many older men, that innovative and new approaches are often just blown away. Furthermore, the longer you talk in these meetings, the more superior you are in the company and the higher you are in the hierarchy. In meetings, she experiences situations, where she has to listen for hours and most of the time, the other men attending these meetings forget that she as a woman also has an opinion. Moreover, she stated that the glass ceiling is very low within her organization and she often experienced how less qualified men with less experience all of a sudden became her superiors while she was not even being considered. When it comes to leadership positions women are either not seen at all or are being perceived as a threat.

8.1.6. Person 6:

Person 6 started her academic career in the field of "International Business Administration" and later changed her studies to "Commercial Economics" which she also finished successfully. As she already gained experience in internships, she started her professional career in the railway sector where she eventually became the department director 2 ½ years ago. In her opinion, the desire of having kids never stopped her from making a career or prevented her from deciding to have a career. An important factor for her is, that the financial situation has to be given in order to become a mother within a leadership position because without the financial means it is impossible to have both. Furthermore, she experienced many times within the teams she was in charge of, that mothers, who just came back from maternity leave, needed around one or two years to find back in their jobs and work as effectively as they used to do before. For her, this is due to the additional stress they are exposed to. She also experienced that when the children of these mothers come to school, the mothers go through a really positive development, also at

work, they look more about themselves again, are more stable again. Additionally, she noticed that they are very strengthened afterwards in crisis management and conflict management and that the pregnancy and following years definitely had a positive influence on the working performance of the mothers. Person 6 spent a lot of time in her childhood with her grandparents and therefore, was already used to being very organized and independent at an early age. The inequality plays a big role in her organization and often arguments are used, such as that women are not interested in technology or that someone is needed who is strong enough when it comes to the low number of females in the company, which is a role model for an old industry that is no longer up to date.

8.1.7. Person 7:

Person 7 started her academic career in the field of „International Management" and after her graduation found a job in the tech sector as a product manager. From there she developed herself further and climbed the career ladder all the way up to her current position, head of the production. In her opinion, the thought of having kids does not affect the career but she also has a general perception, that not too many women, who are simultaneously raising kids, are in leadership positions. For her, this is not due to ambitions but rather due to the fact, that mothers, in general, accept jobs, where they have their personal freedom and flexibility in order to balance out the family life and the working life. Also, in retrospective to this, she emphasizes, that for the combination of having a family and being in a leadership position, it is essential to be in a good financial position in order to afford Au-pairs or nannies. Since she grew up in a former communist country, she never really experienced a big gender difference, but nevertheless, was raised in a rather traditional way, where the father brings home the money and the mother takes care of the children. This never stopped her parents from supporting her educational career and telling her to always try to pursue her personal goals. Within her company gender equality plays a role, but as she is one of the only women in the management board, the imbalance is definitely remarkable and influences her, often even in a very unconscious way.

8.1.8. Person 8:

Person 8 was originally born in Russia, moved with the age of 6 years to Austria and after that left the country to continue her life in London. She started her academic career with a bachelor in „Fashion Design and Marketing" and by choice decided not to continue with a master´s program. Instead, she started to work in the fashion industry and eventually ended up founding her own company and lifestyle brand. In her opinion the society is putting a lot of pressure on women and a lot of women making career decisions based on if they want to have kids or not and when looking at the creative industry, a lot of women try to achieve as much as they possibly can and pressure themselves as well until the age of 30 so they can finally have the time for themselves to start a family. Furthermore, she emphasized the fact, that within the creative industry only a small percentage of the leadership positions are staffed with women. She also stated, that within those leadership positions, a lot of women are too scared to go on maternity leave, spend some time with their families or even take time off, because they have the fear of being replaced if they do not dedicate themselves fully to their job. In her childhood, person 8 was raised in a very balanced way. On one hand, she was shaped by the very traditional gender roles which existed in UDSSR, but on the other hand, she also witnessed how her mother managed the whole family life and activities which showed her already in her early years that independence plays an essential role. In her perception, gender inequality definitely plays a role in the fashion industry, because most of the consumer are female, most of the workers are female, most of the manufacturing site employees are female but only a small number of top management positions is represented by women and therefore the gender imbalance is always present and affecting the companies enormously.

8.1.9. Person 9:

Person 9 started her academic career in the field of „Business Administration" but after her graduation found herself being active in the sector of journalism, but eventually joined her current company, where she is today the Head of Corporate Communications and Investor Relations. Generally, she does not believe if a woman decides to pursue a career, that the first thing she thinks about is whether that would contradict a potential desire for children. But if women actually desire to have children, or have a child as she has, then they have to sometimes reject opportunities that come their way because in her opinion it is not compatible with the family. In her case, she is not referring to time but rather to the flexibility and to possible location

57

changes. Moreover, she has the perception that if a woman earns very well and can afford childcare, then it is not a problem to be a mother who is active in a leadership position, but also only if the partner supports you. In her childhood, Person 8 has been socialized by her parents and raised in a very gender-neutral way and with the mindset that every woman can be successful in her job. Within her company, she perceives that the major issue is not gender inequality but rather inequality in the functions so when it comes to career opportunities, a person has to come from the technical branch to climb up the career ladder to the top.

8.1.10. Person 10:

Person 10 started her academic career in a college in the field of "Marketing". After completion of her studies, she started to study journalism but eventually switched from studying to full time working in the technical field. Today she is the "Director of Sales" in her company, where she is working since last year. For her, the thought of kids was never a determining factor for the progress of a mother and she always pushed her career forward and it didn't stop her from advancing her career opportunities. Overall, she made the experience within the companies she used to work for, that it is often very difficult to have the professional life and the private life balanced out because mothers often feel that they are not able to achieve what they want in both areas, and this often leads to noticeable uncertainty. Sometimes it seemed to her that a lot of mothers, and especially mothers in leadership positions, are very stressed out, which is often caused by a lack of flexibility and the inability to balance career and childcare. While growing up she had more of a conservative role model in the family, where the father brings the money home and the mother stays at home. In any case, it didn't stop her from studying and rather motivated her to do it differently. Especially when it comes to the hiring process in correlation to leadership positions, she noticed a lot strong gender inequality on the Austrian market or generally related to the fact that decisions were made based on gender which was not fair, where the qualifications were not assessed in the first place, but rather a decision was made based on gender

8.1.11. Person 11:

Person 11 successfully graduated in „Applied Geoscience" with a focus on geophysics. After 6 years of working for an international service provider in the oil and gas industry, she spent 3 years on a seismic ship on rotation with an office in England and then 3 years in the office in India, where she supervised the ships and analyzed data in correlation to geophysics. For 6 years she is with an enterprise in the oil- and gas industry and is working as the head of the laboratory. In her opinion, when it comes to flexibility and time management the whole act of balancing as another between family and career is an additional stress factor. She noticed this especially with mothers working part-time, around 32 hours, wherein most of the cases these mothers are as productive as if they were working 38 hours, it still often happens that appointments are made later, around 6 or 7 p.m. which makes it very difficult for mothers who are in management positions and it is difficult to. Furthermore, the financial part also plays an important role for her, because mothers who only work part-time are also more dependent on their partners which builds up additional pressure. In her childhood, she always had the support of her parents since her father was a technician too, who motivated her and helped her to find a passion for physics and mathematics. Her mother also always made sure she would understand that financial independence is incredibly important for a woman and with this, the foundation stone has certainly been laid for a very gender-neutral childhood. In her professional environment, she works in a very male-dominated area because it is a technical area. That means there are very few female role models she can look up to and she is often the only woman in a leading position in meetings. Within her company, she states that often everybody underestimates this, even though everybody is aware of the fact that females and males are all equal, she still feels often like the outsider, which makes her react differently or makes her simply feel different and this sometimes creates a certain inequality that is ideally compensated by management. Unfortunately, this doesn't always work, because it is often not even conscious.

8.1.12. Person 12:

Person 12 was originally born in Iran and moved to Austria for her studies, which she successfully finished in the field of „Electrical Engineering". After that, she started working in the field of telecommunication, had plenty of different roles and eventually became a system manager. After 8 years shed changed to the financial services sector, and since 2006 she has been working for an innovation and technology group. There she started as a software engineer, then she became the head of the department for R&D, also vice president for this department.

Furthermore, she was interested in an MBA study, which she had successfully finished in the context of Entrepreneurship and Innovation. Eventually, she climbed up the career ladder and became the Executive Expert Operational Excellence for global improvements, strategy implementation and cultural improvements within her international corporation. In her opinion, the thought of having kids plays an important role for many women when it comes to deciding on the career. In her case, she adopted a child, so for her, it wasn't as time-consuming as an infant, but then she saw that over the years it was more and more important to her to concentrate on the family and less on the career. Later, in her career, she saw that it is the same for many other women. In her opinion, many women do it differently and she thinks it's a lot of times about the attitude of the females, so she advises a lot of women who don't have children, who think that they have to have children first before they can have a career, to overthink that. The partner naturally played an important role as well in her experience, but for her, the company is also an important factor. According to her, if women in management positions can stay in part-time positions, this is a huge advantage for the women, but this requires a lot of organizational talent, perseverance and a little bit of persistence. In her childhood, she was very influenced by her mother, who taught her to always focus on getting a job, since she was a housewife and mainly stayed at home and took care of children. Also, the culture had, in any case, a big influence on her, because she also grew up in Iran and within her culture, the household and raising children were very much attached to the women. Due to the fact, that she works in a very male-dominant sector, she noticed that there are still very few women in technology, and that means that the male values are more present. She experienced in her career that if a woman shows emotion, it is seen as weakness, if a man hits the table, it is seen as a strength. When men communicate in short sentences, it is seen as effective, when women like to tell more it is seen as very inefficient and not competent and for her, these values have been built up over the years. Over the years, she has seen in some cases when it comes to the application process when a woman and a man apply for the same job, the man most of the times gets selected, and this based on the fact, that often the company does not want to deal with the emotions of the woman.

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61

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