(RE-)CONSTRUCTING THE MANAGER’S GENDERED SOCIAL ROLE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a qualitative analysis of how females perform the manager’s gendered social role. Referring to Acker’s understanding of the inherent masculine nature of organizations, this work argues that the manager’s social role is constructed according to male norms. As this work discusses social roles from Goffman’s perspective, the gendered organization is defined as front stage and thus as a constitutive part for a manager’s role performance. As supposedly female characteristics do not comply with social expectations towards the manager’s social role, this thesis aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how women in the management profession deal with this role incongruity. Semi-structured expert interviews with six female managers in different organizations were conducted. The analysis suggests that the inherent masculine nature is mainly subconscious to the interviewees. Further, women face inconsistent expectations towards their performances. They deal with it especially with three core elements in their performances: respect, communication and competence. It was concluded that female managers reconstruct the inherent masculine nature of the manager’s social role, as their performance challenges the masculinity related to this profession.
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1. INTRODUCTION

If someone is asked to describe the stereotypical manager, attributes like "strength", "purposefulness" or "self-confidence" are imaginable associations to be named. Looking up "manager" online shows plenty of pictures of mainly smiling white men in suits. Moreover, definitions of "the manager" in the literature will probably support this image.

Everyone has a distinct concept of what a manager is like in their head. Of course, these stereotypes often carry negative connotations because of their oversimplification. However, it is arguable that they somehow reflect and reproduce societal and collective images (Bordalo, Coffman, Gennaioli & Shleifer, 2016). These images help us to orientate in social life. Borrowing Karl Weick's (1995) terminology, it is arguable that they help us to make sense out of the ever-ongoing stream of experiences we face all the time. On the one hand, the collective social image of a manager does tell us what we expect to see. On the other hand, it helps individuals to enact this image of the manager in a socially appropriate way, in order to meet social expectations attached to managerial behavior.

This thesis critically examines the social role of the manager and argues for its inherently gendered nature. In general, social roles are historically grown and dependent on social and cultural norms, standards and expectations in their development. Women, as female managers, started to enter the professional field of management only a few decades ago, and the majority of managers in Austria are still male (Arbeiterkammer Wien, 2018). This historical development leads to the fact that supposedly male attributes characterize expectations and underlying assumptions about the appropriate social behavior of a manager (Gmürr, 2006). Thus, the critical point of this thesis is to understand how female managers deal with this inherently male-gendered nature of the manager's social role. An empirical qualitative research design delivers fruitful insight into the inter-subjective perspectives of six women who were interviewed regarding their performance and understanding as managers.

The theoretical foundation for this empirical inquiry, however, is an essential part of the general understanding of social roles in this thesis. Based on the idea of the sociologist Erving Goffman, this work sheds light on his theory of social roles, which he famously described in The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life in 1956. The sociologist drew his key terms from
dramaturgy and expressed his idea of social roles through the metaphor of a theater. Therefore, he states that we are all acting all the time. In daily social encounters, we take on various roles. For example, the role of the student is different from the role of an older sister or an employee. Different social expectations, norms, and values are connected with different roles. According to Goffman, we play our roles on the front stage, which is an essential point in his work. The front stage influences how we perform our role because we rely on this stage during our performance. An analysis from Goffman's theoretical point of view is fruitful to understand how an organization as the front stage is constitutive for the way individuals perform their role as manager on it.

Due to historical, patriarchally-structured power systems, organizations have been built and formed under mainly male circumstances. This proposition challenges the silent assumption that organizations are gender-neutral (Acker, 1990). Rather, organizations can be considered to be gender-biased stages. Evidently, this influences how individuals performs on them. Masculinity has become the subconscious norm in organizations and strongly influences the social construction of the management profession. This thesis will thus discuss the tension created as women perform a role which is initially constructed by and for men, on the gendered organization as their stage.

As this work aims to gain a more profound understanding of the way women perceive and perform their role as managers, a qualitative empirical research design is the most appropriate one. This approach ensures non-numerical data on the concepts, symbols and meanings females have regarding their performance (Gläser & Laudel, 2010). Six semi-structured expert interviews with female managers from different organizations are conducted. The interview guideline frames the conversations according to the critical points in the preceding theoretical discussion. Next, the data are analyzed through the qualitative-interpretative technique of content analysis. Within the scientific understanding of this method, categories are defined and matched with proper excerpts from the transcripts. The interpreted results are discussed in the context of the theoretical understanding of this work, as to describe in a critical way how the interviewees, who face this role conflict between their gender and the male-inherent nature of the manager's social role, perceive and perform as managers in their organization.
In summary, this thesis questions the *Think Manager – Think Male* doctrine (Schein, Müller, Lituchy & Liu, 1996). It attempts to shed light on gendered effects of the manager's social role construction, as it will be interesting to see how the role incongruity between the female social role and the manager's role is produced through a gendered organizational context and further how women deal with this situation as managers.

### 1.1. MOTIVATION AND PROBLEM DEFINITION

Father and son were driving in a car when they suddenly had a horrible accident. The father dies at the accident site. The son is gravely injured and must undergo surgery. A surgeon rushes into the OR and looks at the patient. The doctor immediately becomes white as a sheet and says: "I cannot do surgery; this is my son!". (KFG Technische Universität Berlin, 2015)

At first sight, most people would probably think of a male surgeon here. This short story is supposed to demonstrate how affected we are by social images that come to our mind before we start to think. They reflect how we perceive the world and shape and reproduce it in turn. Those social images are outcomes of societal constructions, which are reconstructed over time. Awareness about those social forces in the field of organization studies and practice holds much potential and plays an essential part in the discussion of this thesis.

As already mentioned in the beginning, this thesis wants to contribute to the understanding of the manager's gendered social role performed by women. Some critics might now say that gender equality is already guaranteed and that there is no further need for discussion because women work under the same formal conditions as their male colleagues. However, the *Austrian Chamber of Labour* shed some light especially on this topic. In February 2018, they published a report about women in supervisory boards – and the results were shocking. Only 18.5% of the supervisory board members in Austria's 200 most significant and lucrative organizations were female (Arbeiterkammer Wien, 2018). The reasons thereof are manifold: the glass ceiling, female care duties or reproduction work – to name a few well-known examples. Yet, the aim of this thesis is not to discuss barriers for women in their career paths, as there already is an extensive body of literature about this issue (Glass & Cook, 2016; Slaughter, 2015; Smith & Smith, 2015).

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1 Translation from German by the author
Instead, this thesis focuses on how female managers perform the social role of the manager when they finally get into those positions, as the following quote sums up perfectly: "You can't open the door to women, change nothing else, and expect women to do well" (Hochschild, as cited in Martin, p. 208, 2000).

Within the historical development of organizational theory, women and gender topics in management are an entirely new phenomenon. In general, the issue of the reconsideration of gender first appeared in the 1970s. Moss Kanter's (1977) work, *Men and Women of the Corporation*, was one of the first academic writings where gender was considered in the context of organizational theory. Also, the theory of the gendered organization by Joan Acker (1990), which is a fruitful source of discussion for this thesis, was a milestone that came up relatively late in the history of organization studies. It is thus arguable that most of the literature in organization and management studies have been written with a blind eye to gender dynamics; even though it is important to mention that the issue is gaining more attention in recent years (Acker, 2006; Calás, Smircich, & Holvino, 2014; Wilson, 2017).

Certainly, organizations and the management profession are still perceived as gender-neutral. However, a closer look at this topic does reveal the gendered nature of the management profession due to strongly male underlying assumptions. The scholar Virginia Schein therefore developed a descriptive index of 92 items to define sex role stereotypes and characteristics of successful management. The outcomes showed that successful managers possess traits which are more often ascribed to men than women (Schein & Müller, 1992). Other scholars have re-used this index over the past years, and also later studies proofed that assumption. Booysen and Nkomo (2010), for example, obtained similar results even decades later.

Organization studies and organizational practices are strongly biased by underlying gendered assumptions due to historically structured power relations, which are often pictured as genderless. As a consequence, female managers face the challenge to either adapt to those male influenced expectations or follow another approach, which is always connected to uncertainty and risk, like Schein and Müller further (1992) showed. Today, the manager's social role is erupted by the dynamic of gender, as it has never been before. Through the growing number of women in management, the call to rethink the manager's gendered social role has become extremely loud.
1.2. TARGET SETTING AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Managers do play a key figure in organizational life. Much of the employees’ well-being and thus organizational efficiency come from the way the organization is managed. Work "is a place where all our basic processes, including emotional processes, play out daily" (Weiss, 2002, p.1). According to this quote, it is undoubtedly a fruitful approach to examine the social expectations we have towards the manager's social role, as it is a powerful tool for creation in organizational life. However, at this point, it should be clarified that the purpose of this thesis is not to describe the ideal-typical manager, as such a description would be an oversimplification. Instead, it is concluded that tensions between the male-constructed social role of the manager and the social expectations towards female behavior exist. Besides the way in which female managers perform, it will be discussed how the further transform this social role. Following Morgan's (1980) definition of paradigms, this work is located in the interpretive one, which describes best how this thesis approaches the research topic:

… the social world has a very precarious ontological status, and that what passes as social reality does not exist in any concrete sense, but is the product of the subjective and inter-subjective experience of individuals. Society is understood from the standpoint of the participant in action rather than the observer. The interpretive social theorist attempts to understand the process through which shared multiple realities arise, are sustained, and are changed. (Morgan, 1980, p. 608/609)

This thesis aims to describe the observed processes of reality creation to contribute to a broader discourse about gender in organizations and social roles. The target set is orientated towards understanding rather than finding general explanations, as the latter is not expedient for this research topic. Considering all these thoughts, the philosophical background and the research interest, the research question is formulated as the following:

*How do women perform the male constructed social role of the manager in the context of the gendered organization?*
1.3. STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY

The present thesis comprises a theoretical discussion of the research topic and an empirical inquiry, which are eleven main-chapters in total.

After the already given introduction, the following five chapters bear the theoretical foundation for the empirical inquiry. First of all, the concept of the gendered organization as the front stage, where the role performance takes place, is analyzed in detail. This chapter aims to demonstrate that organizations are socially constructed entities, which have an inherently gendered nature that influences the construction of the manager's social role (Acker, 1990). The attention is then turned to the social constructivist approach, which is an essential point for the understanding of the given phenomenon in this thesis. In a further step, the topic of social role theory is introduced. The critical point discussed in the present section is that of role congruity, which refers to the work of Eagly and Diekman (2005). The main argument here is that role performance is positively perceived when the individual characteristics fit the performed social role. From this theoretical perspective, the perception of being female and performing the manager's social role is discussed. In the heart of the theoretical part of this thesis is the Social Role Theory of Erving Goffman (1956). In his work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* he famously discusses how social roles are created and performed. Certain core elements of his theory are adapted to the research topic and discussed accordingly. The last chapter in the theoretical part of this work provides an outlook on possible changes in the way the manager's social role is constructed and possibilities for reconstructing it.

The second part of this thesis looks at the research topic empirically. As a qualitative research design is chosen for this inquiry, six semi-structured expert interviews are the data source. The sample of interviewees consists of six female managers who work for different organizations. The findings are analyzed according to the method of content analysis. Then, the interpreted results are analyzed in order to answer the research question in the light of the previous theoretical discussion. Finally, limitations of this work, as well as possible outlooks for further research on this topic, are discussed.
2. THE GENDERED ORGANIZATION

In the field of organization studies, gender-related issues have caught more and more attention during the last decades. Much is said about gender, like female and male leadership styles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmid, 2001), the glass ceiling effect (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia & Vanneman, 2001) or barriers for women at the workplace, to name a few established examples. Certainly, there is a rich body of literature, which looks at the interconnections between gender and the organization from different angles (Alvesson & Billing, 1997; Powell, 1990 Wilson, 2017). Examples for the rising awareness of gender equality in an organizational context can also be found in practice. More companies are promoting gender diversity in their PR campaigns. Another example is the ongoing discussion about gender-quotes and whether they are useful or not. At least, there is evidence that societal awareness about the impact of gender on daily organizational life is increasing. As explained earlier, the organizational context is now addressed as a first step to analyze how women deal with the social role of the manager and its inherently male nature.

Regarding this issue, Joan Acker (1990) famously claimed that the nature of organizations is not gender-neutral, which she demonstrates in her theory of the Gendered Organization. In order to gain a deeper understanding for the research topic, it is crucial to discuss this gendered nature in detail, as organizations are a constitutive part for the construction of social roles, as will be elaborated on in the upcoming chapters from the theoretical viewpoint of Erving Goffman. Either way, before this discussion goes into detail, the concept of gender, the manager and the organization have to be clarified, as they are central points of discussion in this thesis. All of them are addressed in many different ways in the literature.

2.1. WHAT IS GENDER?

First of all, it is essential to define more precisely how this thesis understands the concept of gender. Sociologists have made a distinction between gender and sex since the 1970s. In general, this means that within social sciences, sex, as the biological difference between male and female, is distinctive from gender as the societally produced difference of being male or female (Holmes, 2007). Much has been written about these differences and the points of view are manifold. Judith
Butler (1991) formulated, for example, the perspective on gender as gender-identity and famously argued for the discursive creation of sex as a mechanism of patriarchal power. Others like Goffman (1977), even though his primary focus was not on gender, did argue for the existence of biological sex, but not as a basis for social stratification itself. He instead stated that our social form of organizing should not be guided by these rather small biological differences. More precisely, we should focus on questioning these differences as they are deeply institutionalized in our society.

However, the interest of this thesis is not to discuss in detail the sex-gender difference. What should be evident in the further usage of this term is that gender is a product of social construction of power relations. It somehow functions as a principle of order as we classify much more entities than humans as male or female. We talk about female or male leadership styles, body language or speech patterns. This work thus also discusses the gender of organizations in the following (Acker, 1990).

One more thing is essential to mention: Gender is often used to split up reality in two parts. This binary perspective, however, is something that makes everything in-between the supposedly male and female invisible. By using this gender-binary in this thesis, the intention is not to undervalue all other forms of gender identities. Instead, it is due to the limited capacity of this work that the main focus is on the male-female dynamic.

2.2. WHO IS THE MANAGER?

Secondly, the term of the manager needs a closer description. It is crucial, as this thesis will also mention leadership styles in the upcoming discussion, that the concept of leadership has to be differentiated from management. In 2016, The Forbes Magazine published a list of nine differences between leaders and managers. Even though the literature about similarities and differences is extensive, some main points shall be mentioned here. Leaders are, for example, associated with creativity and strong charisma, whereas managers are considered to be more goal orientated.
Further, leadership is often linked to taking risks, whereas management is more connected to controlling risks. Another distinction would be that leaders are mostly considered to have charisma and a positive appearance (Forbes, 2016). However, in this thesis, the term manager in the first place refers to the profession within an organizational hierarchy. The performance of this management role can be related to leadership styles, even though the theoretical differences of those concepts are very clear. The profile of a manager also differs, of course, depending on their hierarchical rank and the size of the organization. In this thesis, a manager is seen as someone who holds responsibility for a team in an organizational business setting. It is the position or social status of the manager which is crucial here, as certain expectations towards behavior and norms are tied to it. The further empirical discussion will go into detail about the organizational rank and context of the manager.

2.3. WHAT IS AN ORGANIZATION?

The last term which needs more detailed consideration is that of the organization. The answer to the question what an organization is would fall out too short in any case. Organizations can be business organizations, states, institutions or even a football team, to name a few examples. What they all have in common is their social nature, i.e. a group of people somehow organizing themselves towards a common goal. However, it would take a whole thesis to capture the nature of organizations, which has already been done in the literature (Clegg, Hardy & Nord, 2003). In this thesis, organizations are understood as workplaces with a form of hierarchical structure, where people are engaged in an employment relationship. Considering other forms of organization would be far beyond the scope of this thesis, which is why only organizations in a business context are addressed here.

The preceding discussion of the terms gender, manager and organization should serve as a theoretical starting point for this research topic. As this thesis deals with these broad terminologies, a closer definition should frame the topic. However, it is crucial to bear in mind that all those concepts can be distinguished by the finest nuances. As the understanding of the manager's gendered social role is the aim of this thesis, this discussion has hopefully offered an insight into the linguistic ivory tower of academia.
3. A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH

As organizations are the central referencing frame for the social role construction in the case of the manager, it is crucial to take a closer look at their socially constructed nature. In order to further discuss the existence of the manager’s inherently male connotations, it is indispensable to address the fundamental understanding of social reality in this thesis.

Organizations are an integral part of social life. Individuals spend most of their time learning, studying and working in organizations. So, they are a central point of reference for social as well as psychological needs. In day-to-day life, people hardly think about the way they make sense of the world that surrounds them. Reality seems to be something that objectively exists out there. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1991) famously questioned this assumption by asking questions like "What is real?" and "How is one to know?" in their work *The Social Construction of Reality*. In the tradition of the Sociology of Knowledge, researchers have understood individuals as self-producing and re-producing social entities. What individuals perceive as real or knowledge differs according to their individual, historical and cultural background. In a business context, for example, this became visible in Lewis’ (2018) work *When Cultures Collide*, in which the scholar observed cultural differences in language, in the way humor works and the relative nature of normal and abnormal. This example is fairly interesting because it shows how misunderstandings are not mandatorily caused by miscommunication but by different inter-subjective realities. The experience of a cultural collision is helpful to make those inter-subjective truths visible and to reveal their vulnerable nature. However, in day-to-day life, it is hard to break free and detect those processes of social construction because we all pretend that life takes place in an objective world.

The crucial point of this argument is that reality is inter-subjective and constructed through human action and interaction. Individuals jointly create meaning through linguistic and social interaction with others and objects in their lifeworld (Kim, 2001). Evidently, social interaction possesses great power to create and construct social reality. Awareness of these social forces, which lie within these constant processes of construction and reconstruction, on the one hand leads to a better understanding of social reality. On the other hand, it opens up new possibilities for change and (re)creation.
Based on these arguments, this thesis looks at organizations from the theoretical viewpoint of social constructivism. Arguing within this school of thought allows a discussion of organizational reality as part of a jointly created inter-subjective truth. Moreover, putting on the "ontological glasses" of social constructivism has the chance to question the way of the social construction of organizations according to their historical and cultural context.

The consideration of historical and cultural circumstances reveals that men have influenced organizational reality since the Industrial Revolution marked the birth of the modern world towards the end of the 18th century. In contrast, women just started to slowly enter the field of organizational reality a few decades ago. Even though the discussion about gender in organization studies started in the 1970s, gender is still not seen as an integral part of the social construction of organizational reality, but as an additional component in the discussion. This androcentric view highlights the male gender as a gender-neutral standard, whereas the female gender is gender-specific (Bailey, LaFrance & Dovidio, 2018).

The previous section has shown that individuals mainly subconsciously influence the production of social reality. In the light of the research topic, this has as a consequence that masculine values dominantly construct organizational reality. Of course, for a few decades, the number of women in higher organizational ranks has increased, which influences organizational reality to a certain degree. Nevertheless, organizations still function mainly according to this unquestioned male reality. In order to understand how female managers deal with this primary underlying gender-biased role conflict, the next chapter discusses how masculinity became the norm within this field and why organizations are mostly male phenomena.

3.1. THE ORGANIZATION AS MALE PHENOMENON

To say that an organization … is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. Gender is not an addition to ongoing processes, conceived as gender neutral. (Acker, 1990, p. 146)

This thesis aims to tie in with the discussion about the impact of gender on organizational reality to better understand how women perform and perceive the manager's social role. Organizations highly influence the process of social role constructions in management, as they are a central
point of reference to it. However, like Acker describes very well in the quote given, gender is nothing which scholars should add to organizational theory. Instead, it is crucial to raise awareness for the gendered nature of organizations themselves. Despite the growing number of publications about women in management, there is very little literature about the gendered organizational nature and how this social category fundamentally shapes the way organizations are created and developed over time. Since a deep understanding of the inherent influence of masculinity on the nature of organizations is essential, the next chapter examines the historical development of organizations.

3.2. HOW MASCULINITY BECAME THE NORM

A lot changed with the Industrial Revolution, starting back in the 18th century. The birth of the public sphere – as a place for discourse and exchange – is characteristic of that unique period; so is its counterpart, the private sphere. Due to societal power relations, the public sphere was dominated by men from the beginning. Even though the philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1990) stated that all citizens must be guaranteed access to the public sphere as a prerequisite to exist, even today it is hardly arguable that that is the case. Nancy Fraser (1990) made a point in her feminist revision of Habermas' definition when she argued that marginalized groups, and thus women, do not have the same access and further chance to contribute to public discourses. This means that women were excluded from discussions about ideas concerning management, leadership and organizational reality. At the same time, females characterized the private sphere, where issues about care-taking responsibilities and reproduction work found their home. This societal dualism established itself further in the logic of the gendered separation of the labor market in the later decades.

As a consequence, well-known modern organizations are historically constructed by male standards and were totally exclusive of women. It is difficult to question the underlying gendered assumptions of organizational life because an alternative to what we know is hard to imagine. Organizations reflect societal values, norms and expectations. The binary of the social spheres became prevalent in nearly every aspect of social life and in the academic sphere of organization studies as well. Concepts of gender came up in the field of organization studies only in the 1970s,
and as a consequence, many fundamental theories about organizations are blind to the gendered nature of organizations.

The binary of private and public sphere asserted itself in the field of professions and produced inequalities (Blackburn & Jarman, 2006). However, these binaries can be found in nearly every aspect of social reality. The basic point here is that what individuals perceive as the given social reality is strongly influenced by a gendered discourse on a meta-level. Organizations as an integral part of daily life reflect and reproduce these circumstances. It is crucial to gain insight into how and to which extent gender as a social force constructs organizational reality.

The core idea of the gendered organization reflects the longstanding distinctions between masculinity and femininity in the organizational structure (Acker, 1990). The organizational nature as a gendered phenomenon becomes evident while regarding the vertical as well as the horizontal separation of professions. Firstly, the segregation becomes visible in an occupational context. This means that not only organizations but professions themselves tend to have a gendered nature. Addressing this issue, the World Health Organization published their analysis of gender equality for the health care sector in 2019. By investigating the workforce in 104 countries, they confirmed that in general, an estimated total of 64% of people employed in the social and health care sector are female. In contrast to this, women are persistently underrepresented in technological professions, such as information technology, for example (Cohoon & Aspray, 2006). The reasons thereof are manifold and the literature on this is extensive.

However, there is not just the horizontal segregation between different sectors, but also vertical segregation within an organization. The observed phenomenon here is that although the majority of employees are female, higher positions, including management, are held in majority by men. This so-called glass ceiling phenomenon means that the higher the position, the harder it gets for female employees to move up in the organizational hierarchy.

As these examples demonstrate, both the vertical and the horizontal separations of professions does exist. This segregation between different professional fields and in the organization within the same field proofs the gendered nature of organizations and that this nature strongly influences social expectation and appropriate norms towards it.
In summary, it can be argued that organizations are social entities which are actively constructed in line with male norms due to historical and cultural reasons, which means that masculinity is inherent in the nature of organizations. A closer examination of the theory of the gendered organization was vital for further discussion because the organization here is the stage and thus, according to Goffman, the context in which the role performance takes place. Organizations strongly influence what individuals consider as appropriate behavior for their role. The next chapter approaches social role theory, before Goffman's theory is discussed in detail.
4. SOCIAL ROLE THEORY

How individuals live together is a question that has concerned social sciences since their birth. Until today, there is no theory or generally accepted explanation of how social reality can be explained. Based on this thesis’ interest in the performance of the manager's social role, it is fruitful to look into the meaning of social roles in general. They provide a framework in order to deal with the complexity of how individuals make sense of social reality; they also offer a helpful guideline in the discussion about women dealing with the manager's gendered social role (Schneider & Bos, 2019).

Much can be said about social role theory, and there is a considerable amount of literature on it. However, one of the first scholars to draw attention to this topic was the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnis. He already described first approaches towards social role theory in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* over hundred years ago (Opielka, 2012). One scholar who surely shaped the present discourse about social role theory was Ralph Linton. He abstracted the social role from social status, which he defined as "a position in a particular pattern" (Linton, 1936, p. 113). The social role is thus the individual interpretation of a certain status and contains values, social expectations as well as patterns of social behavior. Much of our understanding of social roles today is leaned on this understanding: They are a helpful frame in order to understand how we behave in certain situations and what is socially expected in order to be taken seriously. When it comes to these values and expectations, gender stereotypes do certainly play an important role, as they are a constitutive part in the formation of identity.

However, when it comes to social role theory, Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* from 1956 is undoubtedly one of the most popular and essential writings, which is also why it forms the basis for this thesis’ argumentation. But before his approach is introduced and applied, the next chapter takes a closer look at the social role of the manager.

4.1. THE MANAGER'S SOCIAL ROLE

After the gendered nature of organizations has been discussed in detail, this chapter now focuses on the manager's social role. There is a need to discuss this specific social construct, since it
reflects socially-expected patterns of the behavior of an individual holding a particular position within an organization.

In general, the social assumption exists that man and women differ according to their attributes, which seem to be persuasive and widespread concepts throughout western societies. Attributes which society typically ascribes to women are kindness, being helpful and communicative, whereas men are regarded as aggressive, independent, dominant and strong (Heilman, 2001).

To investigate how these stereotyped attributes affect the way a successful manager is perceived, Virginia Schein (1973) developed an index containing 92 descriptive items. The index has been used for decades by different scholars to shed light on the interconnection between the perception of successful management and gender. Over the years, the findings from different studies have stressed the interlinkage between supposedly male characteristics and successful management (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Schein & Müller, 1992; Schein & Davidson, 1993; Schein, Müller, Lituchy & Liu, 1996). Schein (2007) further states that even after decades of research on gender attributes and management, women are still seen less likely to possess characteristics which are required for being a successful manager. Duehr and Bono (2006) also used Schein's index to find out if the perception of gendered attributes and successful management has changed. Even though the results revealed that successful management is rated to be more congruent with femininity than 30 years ago, men, in general, tend to consider supposedly female characteristics less suitable for successful management than male ones. Mai, Büttgen and Schwarzinger (2017) looked at this issue empirically from a socio-psychological perspective and came to the conclusion that women are affected by the stereotypical role understanding in two ways: Firstly, women are confronted with gendered expectations bound to leadership and management positions. Secondly, women are expected to perform stereotypic male patterns of behavior, even more than their male colleagues.

This short overview highlights what the theory of the gendered organization states, namely that masculinity is the subconscious norm inherent in management. As made evident by the previous discussion, in the case of the manager's social role, masculinity as well as the attributes and characteristics associated to it are seen as the prevailing norm behind the construction, too.
The implications for female managers described here are that successful management is perceived to be more congruent with male characteristics than female ones (Mai, Büttgen & Schwarzinger, 2017). At the same time, there is the argument that something like a feminization, hence the extension of characteristics connected with femininity, takes place in the field of management (Lewis & Simpson, 2016). For further discussion of the research question, it is thus essential to shed light on this argument.

Feminine characteristics are indeed gaining more attention during the last years. The Female Leadership Advantage is a narrative which can often be found in the literature (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Especially the concept of Transformative Leadership is often linked to female characteristics, as it is about empowering employees and addressing their intrinsic motivation in order to ensure great individual achievements together with others (Shields, 2010). Fostering participation and motivating employees are concepts which are becoming more important for management and leadership development in recent years. This now seems to argue for the development of the manager's social role towards a similar concept for both men and women. However, a closer examination of this topic suggests that female characteristics have found their way into management and leadership style, even though this is not informative about how women perform the manager's social role. Yet, what the so-called feminization of management does is taking in female characteristics without reflecting the inherently gendered nature of the management profession, its social role or the organization itself. What becomes visible here is that female managers face a fairly challenging situation when it comes to performing the manager's social role, as patterns of behavior and social norms are tied to this position, which again is constructed according to male norms.

4.2. ROLE INCONGRUENCY

The previous section has shown that role expectations towards female characteristics and towards successful management seem to conflict. This is somehow what Eagly and Diekman (2005) described as the phenomenon of role congruity. They argue that role performance is positively perceived when the individual's characteristics align with the social role. Based on the previous discussion of the gendered organization and the male characteristics of the manager's social role,
the argument here is that an inconsistency between female managers and the manager's social role exists.

This inconsistency represents a mostly invisible disadvantage for women in their professional careers. Female managers thus face a double bind in their role performance. Bateson, Jackson, Haley and Weakland (1963) developed the double-bind theory, which can be applied to still present inequalities concerning gender and management. The theory states that an individual has to deal with two different messages, which are contradictory in their nature and mutually exclusive. On the one hand, female managers are expected to behave according to their gender, which stands in contradiction to characteristics which are connected to successful management, as various studies have proofed by applying Schein's descriptive index (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Schein & Müller, 1992; Schein & Davidson, 1993; Schein, Müller, Lituchy & Liu, 1996).

4.2.1. Damned if you do, doomed if you do not

When Margaret Thatcher was prime minister of the United Kingdom in the 1980s, the press used to give her the nickname "The Iron Lady". Her narrative was not one of a woman being a pathfinder for her sex, but merely one of a politician with a job to do (Campbell, 2011). However, even though she tried to divert attention away from her being a woman, Thatcher was given her nickname obviously because of her harsh way of doing politics, especially for her gender. In contrast to Thatcher, nobody had the idea to attach characteristics similar to "iron" to David Cameron, even though he pursued the same kind of conservative policy. In fact, he was not given a nickname in line with Thatcher's although his policies were even harder to some extent: His role in the events leading up to Brexit have earned him the rather positive nickname of "Father of Brexit"; most likely because his male gender is congruent with the role of a harsh leader.

This short excursion into British politics demonstrates that expectations, especially towards gender and the social role, are deeply anchored in western culture. Shields (2002), for example, states that women are generally perceived as more emotional than their male colleagues. Therefore, people expect female leaders to be more sensitive, empathetic or understanding. However, if women do behave in accordance with the expected role of a typical manager, but not
with the stereotype of the female gender, they are regarded to be less feminine, *iron, cold* or *bossy*. The Thatcher-example confirms this argumentation.

Interestingly, emotions such as anger and pride are strongly associated with masculinity (Plant, Hyde, Keltner, & Devine, 2000). The argument here is that the established social role of a manager, with specific characteristics that the individual should possess for success, which again are associated with masculinity and played on the gendered organization as front stage, is a limitation for the profession itself. By the (slowly) growing number of female managers in supervisory and executive boards of organizations, this double-bind is getting more and more attention, because of its limiting nature. This issue is of high relevance because it highlights the urgent need for the redefinition of the managerial role due to its limitations for female characteristics in the profession.

However, in order to resolve these gender injustices, it is crucial to understand the processes of how social roles are constructed in the way they are. This thesis now enters into a closer discussion about the nature and relevance of social roles from the theoretical viewpoint of Erving Goffman to develop a deep understanding of social role construction.
5. A DRAMATURGICAL APPROACH TO ORGANIZATIONS

What has become obvious so far is that the male norm sets the standard in organizations (Acker, 1990). This means that not just organizations are structured and built up according to this male norm: Appropriate social behavior and expectations for role performance of individuals in management and leading positions are formed under the same invisible gender-biased circumstances. This means that not just organizations are structured and built up according to this male norm: Appropriate social behavior and expectations about role performance of individuals in management and leading positions are formed under the same invisible gender-biased circumstances.

From a historical perspective, one can see that women in high organizational ranks are an entirely new phenomenon (Schein, 2007). Powell, Butterfield and Parent (2002) argued that as a consequence, women bring different characteristics into the organizational field, which clashes with the previous status quo due to the managerial role construction. They state: "… there may be a sufficient amount of new information disconfirming the belief in a good manager as masculine since the mid-1970s to cause a rethinking of managerial stereotypes" (p. 181). Their argument is that the construction of social roles, and in this case, the social role of the manager, is nothing naturally given or static. Instead, this construction is subject to constant reconfiguration. The pre-socratic philosopher Heraclitus described "change" as something that is in constant flux, as panta rhei, which means everything flows. This ontology of becoming leads the paradigmatic understanding of change that underlies the theoretical discussion of the social construction of the manager's role.

Thus far, this thesis has demonstrated how grave the underlying masculine assumption as the prevailing norm in organizational reality is, indeed. Yet, since more and more women do perform this exclusively male role, the potential of role-reconstruction is heavily stressed. This leads to the following question: What are the consequences for the formerly male role construction, arising thereof? In order to answer this and other questions, the following sections look into the role performance of managers. However, this thesis states that the reconstruction of the manager's role will not just affect women, but every individual, regardless of gender, when it comes to appropriate social performance as a manager.
The theoretical discussion aims to explore and understand how the role definition of the individual as a manager has been constructed so far under the prevailing male norm, and the challenges female managers thus face. The micro-sociological theory of social roles by Erving Goffman provides this thesis’ theoretical frame. Goffman wants to understand social interaction and how the world is organized by it in everyday life. Moreover, his theory is associated with Impression Management, which suggests that individuals manage which kind of information they share in order to control the behavior of those around them. Similarly, self-presentation is a specific strategy of social behavior in front of others. This theoretical understanding of social behavior and self-presentation is a useful tool to understand the construction of the social role of the manager better (Goffman, 1956). Following Goffman’s theoretical understanding, the interactionist perspective is a fruitful way to understand how individuals make sense of organizational reality.

In order to understand the phenomenon of role construction and reconstruction in this sense, an outline of relevant excerpts of Goffman's theory is necessary. The aim here is to discuss the development of the manager's role constructed as a male one and to show that gender neutrality is nothing but a modern myth. This role reconfiguration produces consequences for what we understand as good management and is thus an important matter of discussion.

5.1. GOFFMAN'S APPROACH

Evidently, Erving Goffman is one of the most influential sociologists of the 20th century. In 1998, the International Association of Sociology labelled Goffman's work (1956) *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* as one of the ten most influential writings in the field of sociology. Remarkably, Goffman's theories are still widely discussed nowadays when it comes to micro-sociological inquiries. For a better understanding of his way of thinking, it is helpful to know that he was deeply influenced by the Chicago School of Sociology. At an early age, he was inspired by theories of Symbolic Interactionism, whose core idea is that individuals are acting according to the meaning they attach to things and others (Snow, 2001). Goffman directed his scientific interest towards a theory of face-to-face interaction embedded into a dramaturgical principal. Even though he was born in Canada, Goffman is one of the central figures in American sociology
(Jacobsen, 2010). Other sociologists such as Ann Branaman and Charles Lemert (1997) titled his legacy with the following words: "Erving Goffman is the quintessential sociologist of everyday social life" (xlv). A crucial point for the general understanding of Goffman is the notion that behavior is relational and nothing that is comes solely from an individual’s within. Accordingly, human interaction is always influenced by and operates on perceptions, expectations and previous experiences, which have to be negotiated in social encounters based on the information about ourselves we share with others. Obviously, this carries complexity but, at the same time, also the beauty of social interaction on which Goffman spent his academic life.

5.1.1. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life

We are all just actors trying to control and manage our public image, we act based on how others might see us. (Goffman, 1956, p. 22)

The quote given reflects the core idea of Goffman's most famous work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956). He metaphorically describes social reality as a theater in which individuals are performing different roles, depending on the specific situation. Every theater has a front stage, where the actual play takes place, and a backstage. Goffman describes that individuals perform according to the impression they want to give to others on the front stage. The backstage is the place behind the front stage, where the actors prepare themselves for their performances, unseen by the audience.

Further, the scholar states that our primary interest in everyday social encounters is to avoid embarrassment. For that reason, the appearance that the individual makes on the front stage has to be controlled and managed. Goffman differentiates between expressions given and expressions given off. The information actors share *consciously* is supposed to tell the audience something about the desired image individuals wish to create. This is what Goffman calls expression given. Expressions given off are the opposite: These are the pieces of information the actors do *not* intend to pass on to the audience, but which are subconsciously given away (Goffman, 1956). All these metaphors, borrowed from dramaturgy, are used to make the processes behind human face-to-face interaction and behavior more vivid and easier to grasp, even though Goffman's understanding of interaction is complex and manifold. To apply some more borrowed
dramaturgical vocabulary, the spotlight is now directed at what happens when the curtain rises and the actors enter the front stage to start their performance.

Every performance needs an audience, which implies at least one other individual being present. One always enters the stage with a particular interest in mind. For example, the actors might wish to be perceived as professional scholars, competent co-workers or devoted mothers. The selection of the proper role depends on the desired expression. How individuals play those roles is deeply linked to what they think is socially appropriated in this situation. To believe in the part one is playing is of crucial importance. Goffman (1956) describes it as the following:

When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses these attributes that he appears to possess … . (p. 10)

As an outcome, two different scenarios can be described. The first one is that the individuals are enraptured by their role and convinced of the kind of reality that is staged. In this case, the audience is convinced of this kind of reality, too, and the definition of the situation is the same for both the performers and the audience. The second one is that the individuals are not convinced of their own performed part. The audience might then observe this performance as cynical and inauthentic (Goffman, 1956). Obviously, individuals always try to make the first scenario happen. In other words, the aim of the performance is to "control the conduct of others, especially their responsive treatment" (p. 2).

To be taken seriously in the performed role is crucial when it comes to the manager's role in an organization. If the performing individual has the feeling that the role does not fit, the audience will feel the same. This thesis argues that especially female managers struggle with this male role performance. The next section discusses different aspects of the construction of the manager’s role in detail. The synergies between the manager's role construction and gender as a social frame for behavior are discussed in particular.

5.2. ORGANIZATION AS STAGE

The front stage is one of the critical elements that individuals rely on for their performances. It is the place where the actors perform their roles, where the audience watches them, and the whole
play takes place. Every stage has its back, and there is always an off-stage area. This thesis does not want to undervalue the importance of these two concepts; however, the front stage is the most constitutive part of social role construction and is therefore focused on now.

Inspired by Moss Kanter's (1977) argumentation for the importance of organizational structure when it comes to gender differences, this work wants to shed light on the organization as a specific front stage. As was mentioned earlier, Goffman was deeply influenced by theories of the Chicago School of Sociology and Herbert Blumer's micro-sociological work of Symbolic Interactionism. According to this theory, individuals act in reference to the meaning they attach to things and other persons, and this meaning is socially negotiated in interaction (Snow, 2001). Based on this idea, a closer look at the setting of the stage is a fruitful way to better understand the manager's social role. It is essential to know that the front stage consists of different elements. Every stage has a setting, which includes "furniture, décor, physical layout and other background items which supply the scenery and stage props for the space of human action played out before, within or upon it" (Goffman, 1956, p. 19).

The following sections discuss the concept of the setting in detail. This thesis aims to reveal how the manager's role is constructed by means of these elements, which are crucial for the performance. Further, it stresses the existing interlinkage to gender and how its dynamics challenge the former construction of the manager's role to develop itself and the understanding of the manager further.

5.2.1. Architecture, Organization, and Gender

Goffman (1956) describes the front stage's physical layout as crucial for the role an individual performs. To understand the importance of this concept, the light is now shed on the gendered, physical nature of organizations.

Every form of organizational architecture can be understood as something that expresses value and that can be read as a form or text that conveys a deeper meaning (Dörhöfer, 2003). Even though it seems possible to understand the architecture of an organization as gender-neutral, when considering the concepts of inclusion and exclusion and the previous discussion of the
gendered organization, one might look into the issue from a different perspective. If one shifts the focus towards properties of architecture in the public sphere for a moment, one might gain the impression that "women are perceived as having very little to do with public spaces" (Borden, Penner & Rendell, 2002, p. 2). Especially women in their role as mothers are handicapped in public space, but further, parenthood in general faces barriers. In public space, for example, there are nearly no spots where breastfeeding is not eyed suspiciously; most diaper-changing tables are located in the ladies’ restrooms, and there is a rather high number of barriers for baby strollers. Also, childcare facilities in organizations are the exception rather than the rule. Of course, the problem stems from the still prevailing norm of caring duties of women. However, the consequence is that women and "female duties" in public space are still seen as the deviation from the status quo or as something additional, but nothing natural.

Organizational architecture is deeply interwoven with male norms and reflects how deeply implemented androcentrism is. In other words, most organizations are like "a societal system organized around men and evident in both individual biases and institutional policies" (Bailey, LaFrance & Dovidio, 2018, p. 2). It is arguable that organizations, as objects located within the public sphere, are often subconsciously constructed on the basis of an inherently male assumption. Further, this means that managers, regardless of their gender, are acting upon a clearly male-dominated physical setting. For those with caring responsibilities, the situation might become tough to deal with, because these caring duties are still clearly located in the private sphere. The physical manifestation of the male norm in organizational architecture is a historically grown barrier which shows that organizations are no gender-neutral place. Instead, they convey a clear message of male role expectations, as the theory of the gendered organization states.

5.2.2. The Manager’s Personal Front

For Goffman (1956), setting does not only include the physical component, but it comprises the personal front, too. He describes that individuals…

… refer to the other items of expressive equipment, the items that we most intimately identify with the performer himself and that we naturally expect will follow the performer
wherever he goes. As a part of personal front we may include insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age [...] posture, speech patterns, facial expressions bodily gestures and the like. (p.14)

This personal front is something we bring with us, to then combine it with the given physical front to play our role. To develop a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of this concept, the different components of the personal front will be discussed in the following.

5.2.2.1. Clothing

Paul Watzlawick's axioms of communication are rather famous, especially when we try to better understand human behavior in certain situations. Certainly, the scholar is particularly known for his axiom "One cannot not communicate" (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967). In other words, the transferring of meaning is not just about verbal communication; instead, there is plenty of other ways we are expressing ourselves. The way we dress is undoubtedly an important one, especially in the world of business and organizations, where dominant expectations about right and wrong are omni-present. Of course, dress codes are different for each organization. A start-up might have a more informal dress code than Goldman Sachs does, for example. However, clothing plays an important role, and it expresses very clearly how individuals want to be seen and which story they want to tell others about themselves. Diana Crane (2012) wrote about how people use clothing to express a specific form of culture and their interpretation of it. Further, clothing is one of the most prominent points of reference when it comes to gender and the symbolization of class. Following this argumentation, clothing is something that "includes strong norms about appropriate appearances" and is "one of the most visible markers of social status and gender" (Crane, 2012, p. 1).

In most cases; business casual is the given dress code in organizations. For men, this means wearing a suit, tie, and a shirt, so one can say there is a certain suit-rule for men. However, for women, these kinds of strict dressing rules are not observable (Blaha & Kuba, 2012). Despite the business casual dress code, there is not the same suit-like rule for women. This absence is due to historical reasons: Women are relatively new in management positions, so consequently, there are no similar established expectations when it comes to women’s clothing (Knaths, 2007).
Clothing, as part of the personal front, is essential for performing the manager's social role. The male norm of the profession is also imprinted in dress codes. This fact shows that it is still not easy for female managers to meet the requirements of the appropriate visual enactment of their role. What becomes evident here is how unusual women still seem to be in this social role.

5.2.2.2. Sex

Goffman (1956) also names sex as an essential part of the personal front. The discourse about sex and gender is manifoldly discussed in the literature, to which Judith Butler’s (1991) Gender Trouble contributes an important part. Her concept of social construction – not just of gender, which is as a certain kind of behavior, but also of the biological sex – is still radical today. However, Goffman also looks into the concepts of sex and gender in his essay The Arrangement between the Sexes (1977).

In contrast to Butler, he argues for the naturally given existence of sex. A man cannot breastfeed, menstruate or gestate due to biological conditions, so this is nothing socially constructed. Goffman instead argues that these physiological differences exist because of human nature, but that the consequences derived from them result in inequalities made by humans. In his essay, he states: "For these physical facts of life to have no appreciable social consequence would take a little organizing, but, at least by modern standards, not much" (p. 301).

That sex and gender play an essential role in a manager's performance is obvious and constitutes the main focus of this thesis. What became clear in this section is that sex and the social form of it, i.e. gender, are also immensely vital categories to consider when it comes to the performance of social roles in general.

5.2.2.3. Age

According to Goffman (1956), age is a further element of the personal front. The following section sheds light on mechanisms of age-based discrimination. The term ageism addresses this issue and emerged in the 1990s in public discourse, especially in the UK (Duncan & Loretto,
The discussion about whether ageism is a distinctive form of oppression or in line with other constructions of inequalities is manifold in the literature. The question of to which degree ageism and gender inequalities, specifically in an organizational context, stand in relation to each other is a matter of debate. Bytheway (2005), for example, argued for the importance of ageism as a distinct concept, especially when it comes to issues of employment and retirement. Others like Sontag (1972) already argued for the correlation of gender discrimination and age decades ago. She states that age "is the social convention that … enhances a man but progressively destroys a woman" (p. 285). Although Sontag did not address an organizational dynamic here, these contributions show how rich the discourse about age and gender is.

That an interrelation between age and gender does exist becomes apparent, especially when we look at examples of younger women entering the labour market. Often-discussed issues concerning age, gender and career are mainly dominated by matters of family and caring. The question about pregnancy and childbearing references is not allowed in Austria, but evidently, this still is a topic concerning younger women. It is arguable that the subject of parenthood is still a female one in general, even though this seems to be slowly changing. For example, the lack of women in high leadership positions is the case partly because the management profession is a full-time job, making it difficult to raise children at the same time. In other words, the compatibility between work and family indeed is a mainly female issue in the public discourse, still (Habermann-Horstmeier, Bierfreund, Kempf & Stoll, 2009). Thus, the question of how female managers deal with their role as mothers and managers is under debate. In contrast, one will hardly hear someone wondering about the compatibility between family and work when its about fatherhood. As the chairwomen of the Austrian NEOS party became pregnant in 2018, Austria’s most-read daily newspaper KRONE carried the headline: "How is this supposed to work, Ms Meinl-Reisinger?" (translation by the author). On the other hand, when the chairman of Austria’s Freedom Party FPÖ took a one-month paternity leave in January 2019, the Austrian press did not ask him how this is supposed to work, but celebrated his action as a special one.

Of course, there is much more to say about age and gender; however, one of the most critical points of discussion is the one about work and parenthood, especially when it comes to leading positions. Organizations seem to perceive women more in danger of becoming mothers, than men of becoming fathers, which is path-breaking for career success.
5.2.2.4. Bodily Gestures & Posture

The ways individuals communicate nonverbally in social encounters are potent weapons. That women and men differ in body language is an often-discussed topic. Decades ago, Ray Birdwhistell (1970) famously described gender differences in nonverbal communication as tertiary sexual characters. These characters are of interest in this thesis when it comes to organizational reality. As previously stated, male norms dominate the public sphere, and these norms lay down the rules for organizational communication and thus, of course, for nonverbal communication too.

Marion Knaths (2007) observed that the pre-eminence of female communication is content, whereas male communication is deeply influenced by negotiating and thus by acting upon hierarchical ranks. Numerous examples of these nonverbal gendered forms of communication can be found within organizations. Female patterns of body language tend to evoke a feeling of neediness, insecurity and a strong focus on social relationships. This is observable through unstable body posture, putting one’s legs closely together or crossing them, symbolic downsizing by keeping the head to one side and arms held closely to the body. In general, female body language seems to follow the goal of making oneself look small. In contrast, male body language signs convey the message of dominance, determination, and sense of superiority. This is characterized through a straight posture, extensive gestures or powerful motion (Gitta Mühlen Achs, as cited in Blaha & Kuba, 2012).

In summary, nonverbal symbolization of power, which is an inherent part of the management profession, happens by taking up physical space. This can be done through posture and body language such as described above, or through the length taken for speaking, for example.

These descriptions of body language are, of course, generalizations. Body language is something individual, so it also expresses parts of one's personality and it is something that individuals can train. However, the named attributes of posture and the like are socially constructed and can be traced back to the early stages of socialization. There, individuals subconsciously learn how to behave according to social norms. Consultants often call that phenomenon of taking much time in conversations "airtime", and it is much more likely to observe it in men than in women (Knaths,
It will be interesting to find out how female managers use speech patterns in the context of their role as manager through this thesis’ empirical findings.

5.2.2.5. Speech Patterns

Managers often seem to be luminaries of speaking. One can observe that their body talk and language convey a feeling of strong self-esteem, authority, competence, and intellectuality. Certainly, this lies within the nature of the profession itself, as managers find themselves in competitive situations daily, where constant negotiation and assertiveness are required. The topic of speech patterns in the management profession, as part of the personal front, gets interesting when we consider gender dynamics. Language reveals how individuals see the world and shape the perception of reality at the same time. Thus, it is one of the most powerful tools to create the reality upon which individuals act.

In the 1970s, the attention concerning the interplay between gender and linguistics increased. Different scholars began to approach this topic from different angles and with contradictory opinions. One of the essential works within the discourse is that of Robin Lakoff (1973). The scholar states in her essay, *Language and Women's Place* that speaking patterns differ because of gender. However, according to the scholar, women weaken their arguments subconsciously with phrases such as "I think", "I guess", "I believe" and so on. Further women often search for affirmation when using tag questions like "isn't it?". The list goes on. However, the point Lakoff makes here is that women subconsciously convey triviality, uncertainty and also lacking in clarity in what they say (Thorne, 1976). Lakoff argues that the socialization of little girls in particular plays an essential role in the reproduction of gendered language. When girls use speak patterns perceived as male ones, they are often rebuked by parents, relatives, friends, teachers and society as a whole. Already decades ago, Lakoff (1973) made a point, when she wrote that the consequence of gendered socialization is that a woman is "unable to speak precisely or to express herself forcefully" (p. 47). Even though this is an oversimplified description, it does convey an immensely important message when it comes to gendered speaking patterns, namely the following:
So a girl is damned if she does, damned if she doesn't. If she refuses to talk like a lady, she is ridiculed and subjected to criticism as unfeminine; if she does learn, she is ridiculed as unable to think clearly, unable to take part in a serious discussion. (p. 48)

Others such as Anthony Mulac (1999) approached the topic of speech patterns and gender empirically – which was not the case in Lakoff's essay – and found out that there is empirical evidence for gendered linguistic differences. However, Mulac argues that linguistic behavior due to gender is a manifold and complex issue. It is important to consider that the use of speak patterns does not just depend on gender. From the perspective of intersectionality, it becomes clear that categories like class, level of education, age and the concrete speech situation influence our linguistic behavior as well.

Indeed, the question of to which degree gender influences speech patterns is a complex one. However, what the literature clearly reflects is that these patterns differ and that there is scientific proof for that. Speech patterns are a tool for reality construction and a part of the personal front stage. Connecting the concept of gendered linguistic behavior to Goffman's theory – that individuals take on specific roles they think are socially appropriate in a particular context – once more shows that the former clearly male constructed management profession is challenging for women. How do female managers, with female socialized speech patterns, perform in a profession where male linguistic behavior is required, and how do they deal with that struggle? Thus far, this thesis has argued that the status quo is being challenged and it will be interesting to see what the consequences for the manager's role construction are.

5.2.2.6. Facial Expressions

It might seem far-fetched to look at connections between facial expressions and gender when we want to understand the performance of the manager's social role. However, the argument here is that facial expressions, as one central part of Goffman's concept of the personal front, are an essential source of information. What is especially interesting here is the human smile. Hall and Halberstadt (1986) observed that women are smiling significantly more often than men.

Additionally, women smile more often when it comes to social tensions. One important reason for this is that women are more concerned about politeness. There is evidence that women try to
relax tensed situations through smiling (Blaha & Kuba, 2012). This image of smiling women is an element that fits into the general western female stereotype.

When it comes to organizations, this thesis argues that the facial expression of smiling is something that does not signal power and sovereignty. Especially smiling in combination with a tilted head is a sign of submission – an attribute of female body language. Therefore, it is recommended, especially to female managers, to control their facial expressions in terms of smiling and to train how to use a poker face (Knaths, 2007).

How managers express power, authority, and sovereignty through facial expressions is an issue that is closely linked to gender. In an organizational context, this means that female managers either have to control their facial expressions to be perceived as strong and competent leaders or take the risk not to be taken seriously in their role. Blaha and Kuba (2012) discussed the consequence that often follows when women imitate male behavior: In this case, the female manager runs the risk to be considered bossy or cold. It is nearly never the case that someone describes a male manager with such properties. Facial expressions as part of the personal front do play an important role when they are discussed in terms of gender, as this chapter illustrates with the smiling example.
6. PERFORMING THE MANAGER

When an actor takes on an established social role, usually he finds that a particular front has already been established for it. (Goffman, 1956, p. 17)

When F. W. Taylor published his theory of scientific management in 1911, he laid the foundation for what is known as modern management. Nowadays, the social and economic environment has become as complex as never before. For that reason, managerial skills seem to be required far beyond professional life. On the one hand, this shows the ever-growing importance of the management task.

On the other hand, it is a fact that management as a profession and the scientific discourse about management are widely constructed under the mostly subconsciously underlying assumption of masculinity (Collinson & Hearn, 1996). For that reason, a closer understanding of the front stage has just been given, in order to understand the interlinkage between the front stage and the social role. This thesis now sheds light on the individuals performing on the organizational stage in their role as managers.

Referring to Goffman's quote given above, the front stage sets the frame for the performance taking place on it. Thus, social expectations, standards and societal norms concerning the appropriate performance of the role are closely interwoven. This thesis already argued that gender is more than attributes individuals possess: It is a social category constitutive of the perception of reality and of how individuals refer to those social constructs build upon it. On this male constructed front stage, where masculinity sets the standards for the performance, female managers are challenged to the extreme to play their role authentically. To trust in one’s own performance is crucial for successfully convincing the audience of the staged reality (Goffman, 1956). In an organizational context, this means that female managers face specific barriers in performing their social role as manager.

6.1. CHANGING THE GAME

Based on the previous discussion of organizations and management, the dominant underlying assumption of masculinity has become evident. Nevertheless, organizations are nothing static. Organizations influence their environment and vice versa. Women are entering the field of
management more often, which leads to the urgent need of the reconfiguration of the manager's role in the organizational stage.

The focus of the following empirical inquiry is to see how female managers perform the manager's social role. In the end, the results are expected to reveal how the interviewed managers perceive and perform their role. This thesis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of female role performance as managers. In order to tie in with the present discourse, the chosen empirical approach guarantees fruitful insights into the inter-subjective nature of female managers.
7. RESEARCH DESIGN

As the research aim of this thesis is to contribute to a deeper understanding of the performance of women in the male constructed manager's role, the theoretical discussion is supplemented by empirical research. Semi-structured expert interviews are chosen, because "it is not 'just the facts', but rather the understanding one has that are specific to the individual" (Dilley, 2004, p. 128). This qualitative methodological approach is most suitable to gain a deep insight into the dynamics between social expectations towards the manager's social role and gendered norms and values concerning individual behavior. Since this thesis regards reality as an inter-subjective truth, the nature of qualitative research promises fruitful insights into this field of interest.

7.1. DATA COLLECTION: SEMI-STRUCTURED EXPERT INTERVIEWS

The overall goal with interviews is to use them as key to closed worlds of knowledge. (Manz, 2016, p. 36)

Interviews are one of the oldest research methods. Their uncomplicated nature of the interplay between question and answer is characteristic of this research tool. Everyone, consciously or subconsciously, conducts interviews in daily life when gathering information or interpretations of others in social encounters. However, in the context of social sciences, interviews have to be more systematic than in daily situations in order to address the research question fruitfully (Vogt, Gardner & Haeffele, 2012).

Interviews, as tools for data collection in a qualitative research approach, allow the researcher to gain an in-depth insight into the interviewee's lifeworld. Thus, the results obtained do not assert objectivity and general validity for a whole population. The focus here is on fostering a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon. The data derived from the interviews are understood as a contextual and relational source of knowledge, which is traced back to the collective processes of the social construction of inter-subjective realities.

In order to discuss the research topic of female managerial role performance, semi-structured interviews with experts are the appropriate tool for data collection. This qualitative way of communicating differs from quantitative standardized questionnaires, as a quantitative approach
would limit the data collection in the case of this thesis, because of the restricted possibilities to respond for the interviewee (Aghamanoukjan, Buber & Meyer, 2009). Expert interviews allow insights into the interviewee's perceptions, experiences and individual performances in their social role as managers, as the inter-subjective and contextual point of view is the main characteristic of qualitative, semi-structured interviews (Helfferich, 2011). The aim of this qualitative method is to generate data in the form of interview transcripts, which are then analyzed in the following chapters according to their content, considering the preceding theoretical discussion.

Moreover, the term expert needs a closer description, as it seems to be a blurred and broad one, and the literature contains many different opinions on the definition (Rosenthal, 2015). This thesis defines experts as elites holding certain functions who possess the knowledge in demand due to their position. Further, expertise is not only related to science but also depends on the relevance of the interviewee’s experience (Gläser & Laudel, 2010). The definition of expertise thus depends on the research interest. As it is the aim of this thesis to look at the performance of the male constructed manager's role by women, these female managers are regarded to be experts. The desired knowledge stems from their practical experience and perception as female managers in specific organizational functions (Meuser & Nagel, 1994). However, this thesis does not aim to gather information about the manager’s expertise concerning the profession itself. Rather, it is about the way female managers perceive certain situations, how they deal with them, and which kind of narrative they use.

Regarding the structure of the interviews, the term expert interview relates to the localization of the interviewee's specific status in society. Semi-structured further defines how the interview is conducted (Helfferich, 2019). As expert interviews are a unique form of guided interviews, semi-structured interviews are chosen to avoid shortcuts or limitations by a strict guideline. However, a guideline is vital as it leads the conversation in the right way to obtain the desired information while it still leaves some openness to the interview situation. The guideline used for this thesis is structured according to five thematic areas. Moreover, thematically ordered questions are designed to ensure a rich data collection. As it is not expedient to ask the interviewees directly about the way they perform the manager's social role, questions about different topics have been
formulated to gain the required data for answering the research question. At the same time, the interview structure intentionally leaves space for explanations and possible contingencies.

7.2. THE INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

The guideline serves as a roadmap through the expert interview. It contains critical themes taken from recent literature and research, which were translated into interview questions. As every interview is a specific form of social interaction, it is not just important to give the interviewee the right direction, but also to leave space for unexpected narrative reports. The questions should motivate the interviewee to share detailed experiences, impressions and knowledge about their role as female managers. The overall goal is to design the guideline to be a tool for gathering data which helps to reconstruct the interviewee's perception of social reality regarding the research phenomenon (Forschauer & Lueger, 2003). One of the main challenges is to translate the research interest into concrete interview questions, as this is hardly supported by any methodological principles (Gläser & Laudel, 2009). Moreover, the questions targeting are formulated very openly, as to yield long and extensive answers.

Based on the literature review and theoretical discussion of the research topic, five thematic categories are defined, which cover fields of interest that the interviewer wants to address. The guideline is structured in Position and Biography, Competition, Leadership Style and Behavior, Organizational Environment and Men and Women in Management Positions. These categories address the interviewee's role performance as managers on different levels, as to get a deeper insight into the way the interviewed woman constructs social reality.

As the order of the thematic topics is a critical point in the interview structure, the first category Position and Biography focusses on the individual (Gläser & Laudel, 2009). It addresses, in a broader sense, the interviewee's biography and current position. This part of the interview already contains interesting information, as it is meaningful how women recount how they have become managers. The category Competition expands the scope in order to see how the interviewees describe themselves in competitive situations and how they perceive competition in general. Leadership and Behavior further takes organizational dynamics into consideration. It aims at topics such as self-perception, relationships to other employees, and how they regard their way of
managing. The next category *Organizational Environment* looks at the whole organization, its organizational structure and how it empowers individuals. This is especially interesting due to the following discussion, which ties in with Goffman's theory on role performance, where the organization plays a vital role as front stage (Goffman, 1956). The last category is about *Men and Women in Management Positions* and contains questions about challenges and benefits for women in the manager's social role. As the interviews are conducted in German, the interview guideline is attached in German too.

The logic behind the interview structure is to start very narrowly with the individual and then expand the scope step by step to create a specific cognitive context which evokes as many memories, impressions and experiences as possible in the interviewee's mind (Gläser & Laudel, 2009). In the end, the expert has the opportunity to ask additional questions or to add something that is missing for her. Formalities such as the permission for audio-recording and the anonymization of the interviewees and their organizations were dealt with at the beginning.

As the research interest is to see how female managers handle the male constructed social role of the manager in the context of the gendered organization, it is essential to cover a defined scope of topics in the guideline. The questions are formulated openly in a structured way to leave enough space for individual narrative while staying in the thematically relevant field. With the help of this guideline, qualitative data are collected, as to discuss the social role (re)-construction of female managers on the gendered organization as Goffman's front stage.

### 7.3. THE SAMPLE

The used research design aims to "discover shared understandings of a particular group" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 317). In the case of this thesis, the empirical inquiry addresses the understanding of the manager's social role shared by female managers. As it is known, the selection of the interview partners strongly influences the quality of the interviews. Thus, it is crucial to be aware of who can deliver the desired data qualitatively, as this point of the research process is essential for a fruitful discussion (Gläser & Laudel, 2009).
For this empirical inquiry, a homogenous group of interviewees is selected, who share critical similarities regarding the research question (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). As the last chapter already defined the characteristics of the relevant expertise, the chosen interview partners can bring in their experiences, perceptions and knowledge as female managers (Gläser & Laudel, 2009).

As this thesis aims to gain a deep insight into the field of inquiry, six experts are chosen. The determination of the right number of interviewees is something that cannot be standardized, but can only be done for every research project individually. For this thesis, all interviewees share critical characteristics. However, they differ due to their organizational context and biographical background. The chosen sample of interviewed experts thus covers the field of interest of this thesis.

The selection of the interviewees is based on three criteria; firstly, the organization itself, as it highly influences role performance as front stage, as stated in the theoretical discussion of this thesis (Goffman, 1956). Although the literature considers a variety of social entities as organization, this text already clarified that business organizations are meant by this term. All six organizations employing the interviewees are structured according to a classic bureaucratic and hierarchical design; this is crucial for the discussion of gendered organization. Moreover, all of them are located in Tyrol, even though some of them are internationally distributed as well. The organizational size varies between 50 to more than 400 employees.

Obviously, the second criterion for the selection process is gender. All six interviewees are female managers. The reason, therefore, is located in the research interest, as it is the aim to shed light on female managerial role performance.

The third criterion addresses the organizational rank, as management is a rather broad concept. As explained earlier, this thesis understands the manager as an individual with responsibility for employees. Further, the requirements for the interview partners include a position which holds responsibility for a respective department or the whole organization.

According to the three requirements above, the quest for the appropriate interview partners started with contacting two networks which support and connect women on a professional level.
The prerequisites for being an interviewee were defined in a one-page PDF file and then sent out to the networks. The managers who replied to the appeal were asked additional questions about their position and organization to ensure that the necessary criteria were met. Additionally, specific organizations, which fulfil the requirements, were contacted. Five out of six interview partners agreed to take part in the research by directly contacting the respective organization while one interviewee was found via one of the networks.

Even though the process of finding appropriate interviewees was challenging and took five weeks altogether, the search for the desired sample was successful: All of the six female interview partners hold management positions with staff responsibility in hierarchically structured and bureaucratic organizations in Tyrol.

Five out of six interviews took place in the managers’ offices. The interviewer required the office as interview location, as this contributes to the role awareness. One interview had to be conducted at a public place for practical reasons. All of the six interviews were carried out in face-to-face interactions and anonymized due to data protection directives.

### 7.4. TRANSCRIPTION

The conducted interviews are the raw data, which this thesis processed in a further step. Because the six managers had expressed their approval, all the conversations were recorded. For further analysis, the recordings were converted into text. This means that text transcripts are a prerequisite for this assay: Transcription is the translation of the spoken word into a written form to make it analyzable. Scientific transcripts, in contrast to journalistic ones, capture every spoken word during the interview. The advantage of this approach is that the dramaturgical structure of the conversation becomes clear, as well as mental leaps and the way the interviewees introduce new thoughts into their narratives (Fuß & Karbach, 2019).

Depending on the research interest, different ways of interview transcriptions are possible. This research inquiry followed Udo Kuckartz’ (2014) rules of transcription. The interview language is German, but all interviewees have a specific dialect when speaking. According to Kuckartz, the dialect should be transferred into standard language. The spelling is in line with German
orthography, whereas syntactical mistakes are transferred into the transcription (Fuß & Karbach, 2019). Intonations above the average are marked; however, the focus is on the content, so as a consequence, intonation patterns in general are not considered.

Further, the interviewees are marked in every transcription with their number (B1 to B6) as this allows a structured description and discussion of the findings later on. The interviewer is tagged as I1. Further, sentences which are unfinished are marked with three points at the end "(…)". All interview transcripts can be found in the appendix.

7.5. DATA PROTECTION AND ETHICS

The handling of the data gained from the individuals involved in this research project is in compliance with a research-ethical framework. Aspects of behavior, perceptions, experiences and knowledge of the interviewees are analyzed in the context of this inquiry, which requests the protection against potential consequences for the participants (Kinder-Kurlanda & Watteler, 2015). For that reason, names, as well as other personal data, are anonymized. The interview partners have all been informed about the purpose of the data collection and analysis in the context of a master’s thesis and gave full consent to the process.

7.6. ANALYSIS OF DATA

The next step in this research process is to analyze the collected and transcribed raw data gained from the expert interviews in order to interpret and discuss them regarding the research question. As the material is present in text form, the analysis aims to extract the content in order to get the therein-contained information. The content analysis used for this is a set of methods which have been applied for more than 100 years. Max Weber spoke about this method already in 1910, which in a way marked the birth of content analysis as a research tool in social sciences (Kuckartz, 2018). Over the last decades, many different approaches to analyze content have been established, such as the qualitative, the quantitative or the integrative content analysis. Even though all of them differ, they share the idea to take pieces of information out of the text, to convert them into an appropriate format and to process them, separately from the original text (Gläser & Laudel, 2009).
The quantitative and integrative content analysis, in contrast to the qualitative one, address questions like "Are characteristic A, B and C present in certain texts?" or "To what extent are characteristic A, B and C present and how they are distributed?" (Früh, 2017). These approaches use the research question as filter for the selection of relevant parts of the present conversation. In contrast, the qualitative content analysis looks for a different kind of outcome. In the tradition of hermeneutics, it is a method to structure both latent as well as manifest content.

Compared to other approaches, the qualitative content analysis does not aim to quantify certain elements from the analyzed texts. This particular method wants to understand rather than explain. The usage of the qualitative content analysis, thus, is a suitable method to analyze the content of the transcribed expert interviews, as it allows a deconstruction of the inter-subjective nature of the research topic.

7.7. QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

The qualitative-interpretative techniques of the qualitative content analysis were developed in the context of a research project in the 1980s. The research team interviewed unemployed teachers over one year, which yielded more than 10,000 pages of transcriptions. In order to analyze the material, the researchers looked for a method which does not only enumerate the relevant text passages but also allows an interpretative analysis. Therefore, they developed some basic principles, which are the building blocks of qualitative content analysis (Mayring & Fenzl, 2014). The core element of this method is the systematic and rule-based analysis of the content. Mayring (1994) later defined the four basic axioms of the method: the gradual approach, categories, content-analytical units of analysis and quality criteria.

7.7.1. Classification of the Communication Model

Mayring (2000) stated that in the first step, the communication model has to be classified. This means that the context of the text production, the situation in which the material is produced, and the sociocultural background of the interview partners need a closer description. The classification of the model of communication is thus the reconditioning of the material
(Ramsenthaler, 2013). As described previously, after systematically selecting the interviewees, this thesis collects data by means of semi-structured expert interviews.

### 7.7.2. Rule-Based Approach

Its systematic procedure is what characterizes the qualitative content analysis. It is also the main criterion which distinguishes it from other research methods. The focus of this systematic approach lies in the development of a category system. Moreover, it is this rule-based logic that guarantees the inter-subjectively traceability of the categories, as it guarantees that various researchers can work with this method on the same project (Ramsenthaler, 2013). The material is dissected into units of analysis, which makes it possible to analyze all the pieces of information contained in the text and prevents the researcher from missing important parts (Mayring, 2007).

### 7.7.3. Category System

The development of the category system is the centerpiece of the analyzing process. Categories are understood similar to codes in grounded theory - like terms, concepts or short formulas. They are the units of analysis on which the further interpretation of the material is based (Mayring, 2012). The development of the category system follows an inductive as well as deductive approach: It is inductive because the categories are derived directly from the material. On the other hand, they also contain deductive elements, since they can already be defined by the researcher a priori (Ramsenthaler, 2013). Whether the development of the categories follows a rather inductive or deductive logic depends on the kind of content analysis used for the research, as Mayring (1997) described.

### 7.7.4. Quality Criteria

The content analysis needs to meet certain quality criteria to ensure reliable research results. This means that not just the usage of the categories has to follow these specific quality criteria. Also, the process of constructing the categories has to follow them (Mayring, 1997). For the content analysis, the required quality criteria are traceability, triangulation and intercode-reliability
(Mayring, 2000). Traceability is guaranteed through the pre-defined process-model of the content analysis, which makes the procedure transparent (Ramsenthaler, 2013). Triangulation means that the results should be comparable to the outcomes of similar studies and research projects and intercode-reliability, addresses reliability in general (Mayring, 2000; Ramsenthaler, 2013).

Of course, to meet the quality criteria in research projects is crucial. However, primarily qualitative methods of analysis are often subject to critique in this matter. For that reason, it is of great importance to ensure the fulfillment of these quality criteria, in order to guarantee scientifically relevant assertions about the analyzed material.
8. PROCESS OF ANALYSIS

The material for the content analysis within this thesis contains six transcripts of the conducted semi-structured expert interviews with female managers working in different organizations. The choice of the sample, the guideline as well as critical characteristics the interviewees as experts should possess, were already defined in previous chapters.

In order to detect the parts of data which contain relevant information for the discussion of the research question, the development of the category system is central for the further process. This system functions as a kind of search grid through which the interview is analyzed. The category system contains main- and subcategories: The main categories describe in each case a central aspect for answering the research question, whereas subcategories split up those main aspects to facilitate a closer and more detailed analysis of the material. However, not every main category includes subcategories. The decision of whether or not subcategories are defined depends on the context, as they are not obligatory (Vogt & Werner, 2014).

8.1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CATEGORY SYSTEM

There are different approaches to develop a category system. According to Mayring (2000), it is possible to either follow a deductive approach, which means that the categories are derived from the theoretical discussion of the research topic. The other possibility is to follow an inductive approach, where the categories are defined according to the actual material. Gläser and Laudel (2010) propose to combine these two approaches. The scholars recommend building the deductive categories derived from theory in a first step. While coding the material, the researcher can modify the categories, and it is also possible to define new categories inductive out of the material. In order to analyze the given material in this thesis, an inductive-deductive approach, like Gläser and Laudel (2010) argue for, is a fruitful approach to gain relevant data for an enriching discussion of the research question.

This work looks at the phenomenon of social roles in the context of the gendered organization from Goffman’s theoretical perspective. In this thesis, looking for key elements which cause the role incongruity female managers face in performing their social role is an essential part of the
research process. This focus, of course, inevitably influences the definition of the categories for the analysis, which are formulated in detail beforehand. Yet, they will possibly be changed inductively while analyzing the transcripts.

Based on the preceding theoretical discussion of the research topic, the main categories are now defined as a first step. The following section will do so in detail, resulting in a total of six main categories and five subcategories.

**Main Category I: Perception of Gender**

As the aim of this thesis is to understand how female managers perform the male constructed social role of the manager, it is of great value to consider the interviewees' perceptions of gender and gender differences in an organizational context. Gender is a concept that varies in the degree of consciousness as part of the one’s identity. This category identifies critical images, stereotypes and assumptions the interviewees connect with femininity and masculinity. As a consequence, this category needs to look for general formulations about men and women in order to understand how the interviewed managers perceive gender and gender differences in the first place. However, it is essential to mention that the data collected within this category refer to abstract descriptions of what the interviewees regard as male or female. It does not look for information about the interviewees self-description in connection to gender, as this an individual category.

**Subcategory I.I: Femininity as Disadvantage**

The analysis of the material collected in the category *Perception of Gender* shows that additionally to the described differences between male and female behavior, femininity is evaluated as a disadvantage in an organizational context. Because of the importance of these results, this subcategory was defined after a first analysis as to shed light on how this issue is represented in the data. This category thus considers data about the connotation of femininity to specific attributes and their interpretation.
Main Category II: Organization and Gender
This category looks for data concerning the connection between gender and the organization. As the issue of the gendered organization has already been an essential part of the preceding theoretical discussion, it is crucial for this thesis to see what the interviewees’ inter-subjective perceptions on this topic are like. For that reason, this category makes out assumptions concerning gender and organizational reality.

Main Category III: Feminist Engagement
This category comprises information about feminist engagement. As there is data concerning the way the interviewees engage in feminist projects in the context of their organization, it is vital to provide this category. For further discussion, it will be of interest how the female managers try to improve gender equality and what projects they regard as necessary to support women in an organizational context. Data about feminist engagement can also be an indicator for the interviewees’ gender awareness within organizations.

Main Category IV: Core Elements in Own Managerial Performance
For this thesis, it is essential to see how the interviewees would describe their performances as managers. This category is crucial for the research process, as it looks for data which helps to foster an understanding of core elements of the interviewees' managerial performances. Information is collected regardless of how the interviewees describe the influence of gender on their performance. Overall descriptions of the core elements in their daily reality as a manager are essential. This category helps to draw a detailed picture of the role performance of the interviewees, as it shows how the interviewed managers rate specific tasks and also the way they are addressed and performed. How the interviewees define and characterize what is important to them as a manager is revealing about the underlying perceptions of the manager's social role.

Main Category V: Organizational Barriers for Women
The category Organizational Barriers for Women was created as it is indispensable to cover all issues in the material concerning gender in an organizational context. Moreover, this category contains essential information about the challenges and inequalities female managers face, and which are directly caused by the gendered nature of the organization. An example derived from
the preceding theoretical discussion would be motherhood and childcare facilities in organizations.

**Main Category VI: Perception of Gender in Own Managerial Performance**

This category analyzes how the interviewees perceive the influence of gender on their own performances. The first analysis showed that due to the complex nature of this category, subcategories are helpful in order to sort and interpret the data.

**Subcategory VI.I: Gender Does Not Influence Performance**

The first subcategory comprises data about gender-neutral perceptions of their own performances as managers. As the myth of gender-neutrality in the process of social role construction has been discussed in the foregoing theoretical discussion, such perceptions are valuable material as well.

**Subcategory VI.II: Self-Description as Feminist**

When it comes to the influence of gender on their own performances, the data contain information about the self-description of some managers as feminists. This subcategory thus collects relevant material about this self-image, as it is undoubtedly a clear statement and shows a particular awareness concerning the description of the one’s identity.

**Subcategory VI.III: Masculinity in Role Performance**

This subcategory was defined for data concerning the influence of masculine norms, expectations and perceptions for performing the manager's social role. Therefore, this category focuses on indicators that connect masculinity and the interviewee's description of her role performance.

**Main Category VI.IV: Femininity in Role Performance**

As the previous subcategory looks for masculine characteristics of behavior described in the interviews, it is also essential to collect also data concerning perceived femininity in the interviewees' role performances, as to draw a holistic image of the influence of gender on the managers’ performance.
9. RESULTS
This section discusses the outcomes of the analyzed data. As described in the former chapter, the categories are defined according to the research inquiry and preceding theoretical discussion of this thesis. However, the categories are open to adjustment and new categories can be created during the analyzing process based on the material, as the relevance of specific categories might become apparent during the analyzing process.

Role construction and performance are mainly subconscious processes. For that reason, the category system addresses specific aspects which are indicators for the way the manager's role is performed according to gender, which has already been highlighted in the theoretical part of this thesis. In a further step, the results are embedded in the overall discussion of the research topic.

9.1. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS
The material collected from the interviews is analyzed by means of the described category system. For each category, the core findings are presented and illustrated with examples from the transcripts. As the interview language is German, the author translated selected quotes into English. Contextual information which is not contained in the quote itself is added in square brackets. It is essential to highlight once more that all assumptions and interpretations of the results reflect the inter-subjective truth of the interviewees and are thus not representative of all women performing the manager's gendered social role. Moreover, not all interviewees answered in the exact same way, because the open interview questions can be perceived slightly differently. However, the results represent a specific insight of gender in organizations and of role performance and experiences in an organizational context, which is essential for deepening the understanding of women’s performances of the manager's gendered social role.

Main Category I: Perception of Gender
What the interviewees regard to be feminine and masculine is crucial for the final discussion of the research question. The material revealed that masculinity and "what men do" differ immensely from what the interviewees perceive as classical female behavior or characteristics.
This assumption becomes evident when taking a closer look at specific key phrases in the interviews, which reveal how the interviewees see men and women in organizations.

First of all, the interviewees associate masculinity with self-confident appearance. In an organizational context, men are used to "taking what they want" and highlighting their qualities. Moreover, male managers are described to be more precise when they formulate their needs. Further, the data suggests that men and masculinity are connected to a strong performance mentality, like the following quotes from the material illustrate:

B4: "I do observe a strong performance mentality by men. Who is the best, who is the greatest? That is less the case with women. However, women have, of course, their ‘games’.

B2: "Men are used to highlighting their good parts. Women tend to say ‘I am not perfect’ and ‘I can do that better’ [...] instead of saying ‘I can do that!’."

The interviewees described men in general to be more confident about what they want and how they get it. This assumption is highlighted a few times in the material concerning the negotiation of salary as well.

The two given quotes above further show that masculine behavior is, in most cases, directly compared to female behavior. In most examples, the interviewees connect femininity in general with insecurity, such as females being less self-confident about their qualities and qualifications or their right to speak up when negotiating their salary. Moreover, one interviewee related femininity to a social aspect:

B2: "Women concentrate more on the social element. They look after the team. Being more social."

All in all, the results imply that the interviewees have very distinctive ideas about what they regard as female and male. Feminine performance, in an organizational context, is mostly connected to insecurity. The material suggests that men, in contrast, are perceived as outgoing, self-confident and taking what they want. Of course, these descriptions are oversimplifications to a certain extent and strongly related to gender stereotypes. However, for a fruitful discussion of
the performance of the manager's gendered social role, it is indispensable to understand the
general image of femininity and masculinity that the interviewees have.

Subcategory: Femininity as Disadvantage

According to the data, there are not only different descriptions of masculinity and femininity, but
the latter also seems to be a disadvantage for the managerial performance. Even though none of
the interviewees stated this directly, there is empirical evidence for such an interpretation of the
material. The following examples illustrate this assumption:

B4: "The more ‘female’ – in inverted commas – or... I never did that. [...] I have always been met
with a certain basic human respect."

B5: "Yes, this is something I do not want. This is being submissive if you gain access to certain
organizational areas through a feminine appearance."

Because of this and similar results, it is arguable that femininity has rather negative connotations.
So, based on the data, the image of "femininity" seems to be connected to behaving submissively
or being treated disrespectfully in return. However, quotations like those above show that
femininity is, in some way, regarded as a disadvantage in an organizational context by the
interviewed managers.

Further results concerning this issue brought the aspect of "age" into the discussion. More
precisely, age seems to influence the authority of the female manager:

B4: "I mean, now I am older, but when I was younger, I was seen as ‘wifey’." 

It can be argued that female managers feel more respected in their role when they are older. Of
course, this can have several reasons. However, it is interesting to see that age is connected to
female gender in a way that this interviewee felt more respected in her role as manager when she
became older. On the other hand, these results could also imply that younger female managers are
more challenged than their male colleagues.
The interpretation of the results suggests that femininity is seen as a disadvantage. It is connected to attributes like submissiveness, which does not fit with the expectations the interviewees have towards their performance.

Main Category II: Gender and Organization

What became evident was that the sector the organization is located in influences the number of women in management positions. There is no statistical proof for this assumption in the material, of course, as this is not the research aim of this thesis. However, this assumption comes from the inter-subjective perception of organizational reality, which is discussed in this category. For example, one interviewee stated that:

B6: "[In leading positions, there are] six men, thirteen women – this is the education sector."

B2: "There is no other female head of department. We are a very technical company. For that reason, there are fewer women in leading positions."

Evidently, the interviewees perceive the organizational field as a direct indicator for the number of female managers. Further, the data reflect particular awareness of the managers towards the influence of gender on organizational reality. It is possible to interpret these results in a way that the more female an organizational sector is regarded, the easier it is for women to gain certain positions in the organizational hierarchy. Specific environments thus seem to be more or less supportive of women, like B2 explained regarding the technical sector.

The material shows that the interviewees describe a certain kind of awareness concerning gender on organizational reality on a macro-level. It can also be argued that to some extent, the interviewees describe a particularly gendered nature of their organizations. In conclusion, the organization's “gender” seems to be a critical determinant for women and has an influence on gender diversity in the organizational hierarchy.

Main Category III: Barriers for Women

Regarding the obstacles for women that the interviewees perceive in the organizational context, four out of six interviewees described that they observe male networking, which indirectly
hinders females, since these incredibly supportive elements mostly help men in organizations. The material further illustrates this:

B1: "I think men are more cooperative and networking. As I see, this way of networking just starts to develop by women."

B2: "Networks are extremely important. This is still a male domain."

B4: "Yes, male networks are extremely supportive for men."

Male networks are obviously a part of organizational reality that seems to concern the interviewees. These networks are exclusive elements in organizations and, in this case, the exclusion is based on gender. A possible explanation for this exclusiveness is, referring to the previous theoretical discussion, that masculinity is so inherent in the manager's social role that even though females perform that role, they are not entirely accepted in their social role as managers, which leads to processes of exclusion based on gender.

A further barrier for female managers is (possible) motherhood and childcare. Interestingly, nearly every interviewee described challenging situations concerning these topics. First of all, it became evident that childcare is still a female issue. To start with, management positions in general are no part-time jobs, which is the first barrier for women, as they are still seen as holders of childcare-responsibilities. Further, one interviewee described that she had to clarify that she will not have a child within the next years in order to be considered for promotion:

B3: "I had to articulate directly as a woman: ‘No worries, if I get the job, I will not plan to become pregnant within the next two years’."

Besides, it can be argued that childcare is generally seen as a female issue, since the material reveals that female managers who are mothers often have to provide explanations for being a working mother.

To sum up, besides male networking effects, female managers are still associated with their (possible) role as mothers because of their gender. As a consequence, females have to be more precise and open about their very personal family planning in an organizational context, in order
to be considered for promotion, for example. In other words, female managers do not just have to negotiate their role according to male or female attributes, but they also have to deal with their "potential" role as a mother and actively show that this would not restrict them in a management position. As the quote of B3 above shows, some women even feel they have to openly choose a management position over having children.

**Main Category IV: Feminist Engagement**

The material showed that four out of six interviewees engage in projects which support gender equality in different ways in their organizations or their organizational environment. First of all, two of the interviewees support initiatives which focus on female networking. As the category "Barriers for Women" already showed, the interviewees perceive male networking as a tremendous obstacle. It became clear that this process of exclusion functions unreflected based on gender. Therefore, it is interesting to see that efforts exist where female managers actively try to connect women on an informal level. B3 stated the following:

B3: "This was a club where we hosted events for women to foster networking."

Besides female networking, some interviewees described that they launch projects in their organizations to strengthen gender sensitivity. For example, one of the interviewees said that she and her organization consider integrating International Women's Day into their strategic planning concerning gender equality in their organization to increase awareness for these topics. Another interviewee stated that in her organization, there are some training sessions for employees to promote gender and diversity sensitivity.

All in all, one can see that most of the interviewees actively try to engage in feminist projects in their organization and organizational environment. A prerequisite for such an engagement is awareness about the challenges women face in organizations. The results here are interpreted in a way which makes gender dynamics in the interviewees' awareness visible. One can thus argue that feminist engagement and awareness for gender-sensitive issues are part of the female performance of the manager's social role. It is imaginable that such awareness comes from own experiences where the female gender is an obstacle to women in their organizational performance.
Main Category V: Core Elements in Own Managerial Performance

As this thesis aims to foster a more in-depth understanding of the way female managers perform their social role as managers, it is crucial to discuss what is essential to the interviewees in their role as manager. The results thereof showed that respectfulness between them and their colleagues and employees is central for the managers. Nearly every interviewee highlighted the core element of respectful interaction as essential to their performance and the way other organizational members treat them in their role. The following quotes illustrate this assumption:

B1: "So, practically, to meet colleagues on an equal footing, uhm with respect and appreciation."

B4: "It is very important to me, very important, that colleagues treat each other respectfully and that they share their knowledge. [...] It is very important to me that I feel respected in my role as managing director."

What was mentioned besides the core element of respect is meeting other organizational members on an equal footing. Of course, respect and equal footing seem to go along. However, it is interesting that in five out of six interviews, the interviewees highlighted that it is crucial to minimize the impression of hierarchy when it comes to issues like respect.

A further important core element of the interviewees' performances as managers is that of communication. Also here, it is the case that all interviewees highlighted, in their own way, the tremendous importance of open communication for their performance as managers. “Feedback” also plays an important role here as a specific and direct type of communication, since it seems to be essential to better understand how other organizational members see and perceive organizational reality:

B3: "As it were, I want to understand, and I want to feel managed well. And that was when I realized that the issue of ‘Feedback’ is so important to me."

A third characteristic which was repeated by five out of six interviewees was that of competence. For the female managers, a core element of doing their job seems to be performing in the most professional and competent way. Additionally, the interviewees highlighted that it is also crucial to them that others perceive their performance as professional as well, as the following example illustrates:
Other interviewees argued for the importance of a detailed preparation before meetings. Although this should be natural for managers, the interviewees seem to feel that it is even more important for them than for their male colleagues in order not to be criticized. All these arguments point out the fact that females have to legitimize being a manager through very ambitious behavior.

In summary, the results show that the female managers’ emphasis is on respectful interaction and open communication, especially feedback, and on being perceived as professional and competent. That the interviewees highlighted these elements, more or less in a congruent way, leads to a crucial assumption: Respect, communication and professionality are critical so that others perceive the role performance as authentical and believe the part is well-played on the front stage. The results, therefore, show that female managers highlight those elements, as they are challenged to negotiate their role in a different way than their male colleagues are, since men do not face the same difficulties of role incongruity between gender and the manager's social role as women do. Of course, this does not mean that men are not professional, do not foster open communication or appreciate respectful interaction. However, the female managers underlined those elements as such an essential part in their managerial performance so that this assumption about communication, respect and professionality as tools to foster role authenticity and to deal with the role incongruity seems to be valid, based on the results.

**Main Category VI: Perception of Gender in Own Managerial Performance**

The first category "Perception of Gender" described elaborately what the interviewees regard as feminine and masculine, especially embedded in an organizational context. This category now discusses the results which address the way the interviewees describe the influence of gender on their own performance as managers. As the interpretation of these results is very complex, it is helpful to define subcategories to capture the whole complexity of this category.

**Subcategory VI.I: Gender Does Not Influence Performance**

The first assumption concerning the influence of gender on the interviewees' managerial performance shows that four of the six female managers regard gender as an irrelevant factor for their performance. Interestingly, this is the case even though the descriptions of masculinity and
femininity on a general level gave a clear image of gender differences. The following quote illustrates this assumption:

B2: "To me [gender] does not influence [my personal way of managing] at all. [...] It is more the case... If you have a certain competence, then it does not matter if you are a man or a woman."

The interviewee stated here that qualities like competence matter and that thereby, gender becomes irrelevant. This argumentation is interesting as it describes the own performance detached from gender and bound to certain qualities. These results are relevant for the following discussion, as they show how inherent gender in social role construction is. Gender seems to become invisible, even though it is perceived as an influential factor for organizational reality, as other parts of the material revealed.

Further, the interview-guideline contains questions about how competition is perceived also concerning gender differences. The aim was to see if the interviewees would recount their performance in connection to specific gendered attributes like they had described them already on a general level. However, the interviewees report nearly congruent experiences with competition and gender in their careers:

B5: "Hm, I have to tell you that I never paid attention to competition. I have another approach to it."

B6: "I have never experienced (gender-specific behavior in competition). I do not know if I am outstanding there and if others had other experiences, that is something I cannot evaluate, but I have not experienced them at all."

The data showed clearly that most of the interviewees would not describe their performance according to feminine or masculine characteristics. Going a step further in this interpretation, one can say that the own perception of the performance seems to be gender-neutral in some way, as gender seems to have no influence at all. A possible explanation for this gender-neutral perception of the own performance is that masculinity is so inherent to the manager's social role that it seems to be a blind spot for the interviewees. However, even though the material shows that the interviewed managers are aware of how gender influences organizational reality and how men and women perform differently, they somehow exclude their own performance from this
argumentation, which is undoubtedly an interesting point, especially concerning the described discourse in the literature about this topic.

**Subcategory VI.II: Self-Description as Feminist**

The results in the formerly described categories illustrated that there is much sensitivity for feminist issues throughout the organizations. Four interviewees described themselves clearly as feminists, even though there was no direct question about it.

B5: "I am feminist, I am well informed [...]"

B4: "Uhm I have to say, me as a feminist, if I might describe myself as this [...]"

However, it is important to highlight those results regarding the self-description of the interviewees as feminists, as this shows that there indeed is awareness about societal inequalities regarding gender and gendered organizational dynamics. Arguably, the self-description as feminist reflects a particular understanding of one's actions and opinions in order to foster gender equality. However, the overall implications of gender for processes of social role construction, like the preceding subcategory showed, seems to be invisible, even though the high awareness about gender as a social force is observable.

**Subcategory VI.III: Masculinity in Role Performance**

Interestingly, there is also empirical evidence about the way female managers deal with problems of being taken seriously in their role as manager. Of course, this can be traced back to role incongruity, which has already been discussed in detail in the previous theoretical discussion. However, one interviewee described how she uses gender as a tool to gain authority:

B5: "You have to be strategic [as a woman]. Otherwise, you will not make it [as manager] for a long time. [...] A woman has to sell yourself as a man. [...] If they consider me to be a poser, that is perfect. Because that guarantees you respect and [...] the same rank."

In this case, the interviewee described that she uses masculinity consciously as a tool to be taken seriously. She thus tried to comply with the social expectations towards the manager's social role by highlighting what she thinks are perceived as male characteristics in her performance. Of
course, it would be an oversimplification to say that all interviewees use masculinity in such a conscious way to gain respect from other organizational members, especially male ones. However, it is interesting that the such an extreme form of performing masculinity is needed to be taken seriously as a female manager, according to the perception of this interviewee.

**Subcategory VI.IV: Femininity in Role Performance**

The data showed that the interviewees also performed according to female characteristics, even though it seemed to happen mainly subconsciously. Therefore, indicators are that some interviewees described their way of engaging in discussions as very cautious and they only contribute to them when it is vital:

B2: "I always tried to contribute only in a substantial way, that I only say something relevant and do not interrupt anyone."

The way four out of six female managers described their speech patterns complies with what was already considered as a feminine way of communicating in the previous theoretical discussion. Others, for example, stated that it is not essential for them to "be first in line" or to get attention. These assumptions somehow fit with what is perceived as femininity by the interviewees and further in the overall discourse. Even though the interviewees are possibly unaware of most of these supposedly female characteristics, they indicate some critical assumptions for embedding the results into the discussion of the research topic.

Evidently, the results in the category "Perception of Gender in Own Managerial Performance" are very sophisticated and complex. The most interesting point here is that it seems to be hard for the interviewees to make any reliable statements about the influence of gender on their own performance, neither about female nor male characteristics. To quote an interviewee at this point of argumentation should illustrate this deep and probably mainly subconscious insecurity about gender and the own performance:

B3: "[Question about emotions in her way of managing] Ahm, relatively less. Therefore I wonder if I trained this down, because men constantly surround me or if it is just me."
In summary, the results showed that the interviewees regard the influence of gender for their own performance as rather insignificant. However, the interviewees are aware of some gendered characteristics, even though gender seems to be quite a subconscious part in their role performances.

9.2. CONCLUDED FINDINGS

After the findings are discussed separately in their respective categories, it is vital to give a short overall conclusion of the empirical results. The most striking aspects will now be presented separately.

First of all, it is interesting that the image of femininity and masculinity is a very clear one to the interviewees. Men as managers are regarded to be outgoing and self-confident in their role performance, whereas women are often described to be more cautious and even insecure. Men are perceived to have more natural security in performing the social role of the manager, as the results showed.

Furthermore, a remarkable finding is that the interviewees are aware of different gender dynamics in their organizational realities. Gender has huge influence regarding the perception of feminine or masculine sectors which organizations are located in. This influence is directly connected to the number of women in management positions in the respective organization. Moreover, there is high feminist engagement visible among the interviewees. Barriers for women in the organizational environment are described in detail as well. Especially younger women have to deal with (potential) motherhood, which leads to particular challenges based on the female gender.

However, even though there is such great awareness for gender dynamics in organizations, the influence of gender on their own performances as managers is, in most cases, negated. Where gender becomes visible is when masculinity is used as a tool for gaining respect in front of (male) colleagues. The results further showed that femininity is even regarded as a disadvantage for managerial performance and that the interviewees try to refuse to represent a too feminine image.
Even though the managers argued for their awareness of gender in organizations, it seems to be hard for them to describe their own performance according to male or female characteristics directly. It is arguable here that masculinity is so inherent in the social role construction of the manager's role, that gender became the underlying basic assumption in the process of performing this profession. That the interviewed managers highlighted core elements such as respect, communication and competence support the assumption that females especially address these aspects as to be taken seriously in their role as managers and therefore try to reconstruct the manager's gendered social role.

The following discussion will now embed these findings in the overall discourse and highlight the interconnections of the findings to the literature. They will be discussed in the light of the research question, as to contribute to a deeper understanding of how women perform the manager’s gendered social role.
10. DISCUSSION

The aim of this discussion is to summarize the key findings and interpret them to answer the research question. Furthermore, this chapter sheds light on the implications of this work and critically discusses its limitations as well as recommendations for further research.

This thesis argues that women face specific challenges in performing the manager's social role, as masculinity is inherent in it. Eagly and Diekman (2005) argue in their theory of role incongruity that individuals face problems when their personal characteristics do not correspond with the expectations towards their social role. As this is the case when women perform the manager's gendered social role, the empirical research part in this thesis examined this problem. The data suggest that masculinity is still deeply inherent in the manager's social role and its performance, but mainly in a subconscious way, even though there is a high awareness of gender dynamics in organizations to the interviewees. In order to deal with this role conflict, the interviewed female managers highlighted respectful interaction, communication and competence as core elements in their performances, as to be taken seriously in their role as female managers. However, it is essential to give an overview of the correlations and connections in the results to understand this answer to the research question and to embed into the existing discourse in the literature.

First of all, it is arguable that the theory of role incongruity by Eagly and Diekman (2005), which is discussed regarding the problem definition in this thesis, holds true in the findings. The preceding theoretical discussion assumed that social expectations towards the female gender and the manager's social role in general do not match because masculinity is so inherent in this particular social role. The analysis of the data showed that every interviewee performed the manager's social role differently according to expectations towards their female gender. Some of them described their way of acting more due to female characteristics, others more to male ones. For example, one interviewee explained that she has the feeling that she has to "sell herself as a man" in order to be taken seriously. This thus implicates that she rather relies on supposedly male behavior in her interaction with colleagues, such as to take much time in conversations, for example. Other interviewees highlighted their female gender in their performances: One woman described that it is important to her to speak only during meetings when she can substantially contribute information and that she actively avoids unnecessary discussions, which is a kind of
characteristic that can be connected to femininity, as it was already discussed in the theoretical section of this work. Furthermore, another interviewee described that other colleagues might want her to act more dominantly, which she consciously refuses to do. The claimed role incongruity becomes visible through both kinds of performances. On the one hand, the interviewees argued why they rather behave according to their female gender and tried to legitimate being a woman and a manager at the same time. On the other hand, some interviewees justified their male-orientated behavior as necessary for them to be taken seriously in their role as manager.

Howsoever, regardless of whether the performance is guided by a specific gender, the interviewees have the feeling to justify their way of performing. The urge for explanation is derived here from Eagly and Diekman's argument that characteristics associated with the female gender do not match with characteristics expected from the performed social role as manager. These results are extremely interesting in connection to the theory of role incongruity, as they empirically support the relevance of the research inquiry of this thesis.

Furthermore, the data suggest that the interviewed managers have a high awareness of gender dynamics in general as well as within their organizations. Two of the interviewees explicitly highlighted their self-perception as a feminist. Additionally, most of the interviewees engage in feminist projects in their organizations, and the material revealed that the interviewees very clearly distinguish the images of femininity and masculinity. They stated that men are more outgoing, goal oriented and have a strong focus on performance. Women are described as more cautious, more social and even as more insecure. A surprising result was that some interviewees connected femininity directly to submissiveness and insecurity, even though their own sensitivity for gender dynamics was described as very high by most of the interviewees. For instance, one interviewee explicitly stated that she does not want to perform as "wifey", even though she performs the managerial role in a very feminine way. This suggests that there is a particular image of femininity, which is related to mainly negative attributes and regarded as unfitting for the performance as a manager. Further, one interviewee said that women should stop to "whine" as this is a female deficiency.

These perceptions by the interviewees can be explained in reference to Virginia Schein's (1973) Descriptive Gender Index. Her own and several more recent studies, which are already mentioned
in the former theoretical section of this work, confirmed that characteristics perceived as necessary for successful management are still strongly connected with masculinity.

Even though those images of gender are very clearly described, and the awareness for gender inequality is given, nearly all interviewees stated that their own gender does not influence their performance as a manager. The interviewees described several gender-specific attributes in their performance but still perceive their way of performing as gender-neutral in most cases. These findings are in line with Acker's (1990) argumentation that masculinity is something which is so inherent in organizational reality and expectations towards the manager's social role performance that it becomes nearly invisible. However, this masculine nature became apparent in the cases where the interviewees especially highlighted their female attributes. Therefore, it is arguable that the more feminine the performance is, the more obvious the masculine construction of the manager's social role becomes, as conflicting social expectations are co-existing with the performance. Interestingly, this phenomenon can be connected to what Lewis (2018) described as culture collision: This means that certain things become obvious when their natural status quo is challenged. This seems to be exactly what happens when female managers perform the manager's gendered social role. A situation which points at the inherent masculine nature of the management profession is when women are automatically associated with their role as a (potential) mother, which illustrates how deeply rooted in gender-images the manager’s role is. Additionally, male networking was named as an obstacle to women in nearly every interview. The informal exclusion based on gender further strengthens the argument of inherent masculinity to organizational reality as well.

Acker's argument of the myth of gendered-neutrality, and also the gendered nature of professions as the managerial one, is central to this thesis. The analysis confirms that masculinity is still inherent in the social role construction of the manager. This becomes apparent in the case of a more feminine performance of the managerial role, as the contradictions and consequent challenges concerning the female gender and the expectations towards the male social role get stronger.

All these findings underline the need for a more profound discussion of the inherent masculine nature of the manager's social role. As the initial question in this research is how female managers deal with that male constructed role, the material revealed strategies female managers
use to be taken seriously in their performance. The importance of being taken seriously is also highlighted in Goffman’s (1956) theoretical approach to social role theory, which forms the theoretical frame of this thesis: It is crucial for the individual performing on the front stage to be taken seriously by the present audience. In this case, the front stage is the organization, the performed role the one of the manager and the audience are other organizational members. As the interviewees face the described role conflict in their daily reality, the material revealed that core elements in their performances are respect, communication and competence. Regardless of whether the interviewed women highlight more female or male characteristics in their performances, nearly all of them considered those core elements as vital. Embedded into Goffman's theory, it is arguable that communication is used by the female managers to negotiate the role conflict with the audience, as it is crucial that other organizational members perceive the performance as authentic. Feedback was mentioned a few times during the interviews, which is a very active form of negotiation: The performing individual appreciates feedback as means to know how the audience perceives the performance in order to fulfil social expectations and avoid embarrassment.

Furthermore, the results showed that the managers actively request respect and that they are very concerned to treat others respectfully as well. The active demand for respect indicates that the interviewees actively request their audience to take them seriously in their performances. Arguably, there seems to be a lack of respect concerning the females’ performances, as nearly all interviewees actively highlighted demanding respect as central to them.

The third core element mentioned by most of the interviewees is competence. This thesis argues that a high professionalism additionally legitimizes females in their managerial performances. In most interviews, the line of argumentation was that as long as one is competent in their professional field, gender does not matter. This finding indicates that the interviewees are very concerned to always be highly prepared when attending a meeting and highlighted the importance of proper education as well. Competence is thus seen as an additional formal criterion for the acceptance in their role as manager.
When embedding the results into the theoretical discussion of gender in an organizational context, it becomes evident that gender is still not perceived as an integral part that is constitutive of organizational reality, but something that is added to it. The findings of this empirical inquiry are thus in line with Acker's (1990) argumentation of the inherent masculine nature of organizations. Further, Bailey, LaFrance and Dovidio (2018) described the serious problem of androcentrism, because it "positions men as the gender-neutral standard while marking women as gender-specific" (p. 1). The empirical findings support this argumentation in several ways, as was shown in this discussion.

Furthermore, the findings imply that women have to reconstruct their social role as managers and find a new way of performing it because their personal characteristics, based on their female gender, do not comply with the social expectations towards the manager's social role. Women do so by actively negotiating their performances with their audience and consciously demanding respect. Additionally, they see the urge to legitimize their performance as a female manager through a very high and self-imposed claim of competence and professionalism.

10.1. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

What was not possible to discuss concerning the empirical findings was whether the inherent masculine nature of the organization is changing or not. Interviewees stated that organizational fields such as education are more female, whereas other sectors, like the technical one, are seen as more masculine. However, what would be interesting to uncover is if the organizations "gender" is really changing in specific fields and to see how this influences the female role performance, as it is likely that due to the changed front stage, the expectations towards the role performance change as well. Unfortunately, these questions are not answerable with the empirical material of this research but would surely be interesting to consider for further research.

Another limitation of this thesis is that all the data are gained from interviews. Even though they were an essential source for information, they do only reflect a tiny part of social reality, and some statements of the interviewees were contradictory, which complicated the interpretation of the results. Not every outcome is representative of all interviewees in the same way. The outcomes described visible tendencies in perceptions and performances. Whether these self-
descriptions reflect their actual daily performances or not can just be guessed, as there are no additional, more objective observations included in this research project.

Furthermore, gender is a very complex and manifold part of an individual’s personality which cannot be captured to the fullest in a research project like this. Therefore, this thesis treats gender surely as less complex as it is. However, the purpose was to use gender as a vital category of analysis, even though the author is conscious that gender can never be analyzed in total due to its complex and partly subconscious nature.

In summary, the most important recommendation for further research based on this master thesis is to uncover the inherently gendered nature of organizational reality. Such research topics open new ways of seeing and understanding organizations due to their socially constructed nature, and thus also highlight the inequalities caused by these structures, which could eventually be changed for the better.

10.2. REFLECTION OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

At this point of discussion, this master thesis is now set for a conclusive evaluation. It is especially important to shed light on the relevance of the research question, the research design, as well as the final outcomes.

First of all, what became evident during this whole writing process was that research does not follow a linear logic. Even though the idea and interest of the research topic were defined in the beginning, the literature review revealed the limitations of this project and opened new opportunities at the same time. By reading through the literature, it became apparent that gender is playing a more and more crucial role in organizational reality. However, the perspective from which gender is discussed in the context of the organizational theory is significant for the whole thesis. Acker, who argued for the inherent nature of gender in organizations, was incredibly inspiring in order to find the right theoretical viewpoint within the overall discourse in this work.
At the end of this thesis, it is a valid claim that the literature was well chosen as to give the following empirical inquiry the right frame. As the research question addressed an issue which is nothing visible at first sight, the expert-interviews allowed the researcher to contribute to a deeper understanding of the struggle concerning role incongruity female managers face and how they deal with it. It is essential to highlight the inter-subjective nature of the outcomes of this work, as gender is such a complex and mainly subconscious part of the interviewees' personalities. Thus, the findings are very strongly bound to individual perceptions of social reality.

Interpreting the results was one of the hardest parts of this research process. The challenges faced here were to extract a sort of shared understanding of elements and perceptions of the managerial role performance by the interviewees and to respect and acknowledge the differences in the performances at the same time. Further, embedding these results in the overall discussion of the topic was demanding as well.

Nevertheless, the findings supported the relevance of this research and made the described problem of role incongruity in an organizational context visible. Even though it was not the initial purpose of the empirical inquiry to proof the research relevance, it is a very fruitful outcome and confirms the initial choice of the research goal of this thesis. The interviews justified the claim of an inherent masculine nature of the manager's social role construction and organizational reality and how firmly it is established. Further, the results helped to better understand the way females perform the manager's gendered social role and thus made it possible to answer the initial research question. The core elements of their performances are additionally embedded and explained through Goffman's role theory.

In the end, it is evident that this thesis did not only shed light on female role performance as managers but also highlighted the importance to reconstruct the manager's gendered social role, because gender is never an additional, but a constitutive aspect for the social construction of reality.
11. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to contribute to deeper understanding of how women perform the manager's
gendered social role on the front stage of the gendered organization. Based on the qualitative
analysis of female role performance by means of expert interviews, it can be concluded that
masculinity is still a constitutive part of the social construction of the manager's role. The role
incongruity females face when they perform this specific role became evident during the analysis
as the interviewees legitimized their performances as managers in nearly all cases. They justified
their behavior regardless of whether they performed in a rather masculine or feminine way. These
empirical findings supported the relevance of the research topic tremendously.

Furthermore, the findings revealed three core elements of the females’ role performances, namely
respect, communication and competence. Embedded into Goffman's understanding of social
roles, this thesis argues that these elements are used as mechanisms by the interviewees in order
to negotiate the performed role of the manager with the audience. For Goffman's approach, it is
essential for the individual performing on the front stage to be taken seriously in their role. As
women face the challenge of role incongruity, they have to reconstruct the manager's social role
to have their performance approved. Respect, communication and competence are thus central to
the research question’s answer.

Regarding the overall discourse of gender in organizational theory, it became apparent that
Goffman's understanding of social roles was a fruitful choice to gain a deeper understanding of
female role performance in the case of the manager. Moreover, Goffman's argument that the front
stage strongly influences the individual's role performance became especially interesting as
Acker's understanding of the inherent masculine nature of organizations was used to understand
the way organizations are socially constructed as front stage. Further, Eagly and Diekmann
completed this theoretical discussion by defining the problem of competing expectations towards
a social role, which was exactly the case for the female managers. Using Goffman's theory
allowed to see that this role incongruity is present in nearly every aspect of the personal as well
as the physical front stage. The literature supported these conflicting elements in organizational
reality in every point Goffman refers to: the physical front, clothing, sex, age, bodily gestures,
speech patterns and facial expressions.
The qualitative methodological design, where semi-structured expert interviews are chosen, allowed insights into the inter-subjective reality of female managers. While the nature of this qualitative research design limits the generalizability of the results extremely, the approach provides a deeper understanding of individual lifeworlds. Generalizability was never the aim of this thesis; however, it is essential to mention it to consider the relatability of the findings to a broader social reality, which has been done in the discussion.

This research clearly illustrated the inherently gendered nature of organizational reality and discussed its practical implications for females performing the manager's social role. The findings are embedded in the overall discourse of gender and organizational theory, as they supported the theoretical discussion of this thesis and further helped to answer the research question.

Based on these conclusions, people involved should consider the importance of gender, especially in the field of organization studies, where there is a risk to perceive several aspects of the organizational nature as gender-neutral. The great danger here is to simply add gender to the discourse of organizational theory, because this would support a line of discourse where masculinity is the standard and femininity gender-specific (Bailey et al., 2018).

Further research is needed to determine the gendered nature of the organization and the female role performance, as the findings point out a change in the gendered nature of organizations in specific fields. However, this must be a subject of further research, as the empirical findings and the general research aim of the conducted study in this thesis focuses on the issue of female managers’ role performance.

In the end, what is left to say is that the awareness of social inequalities is the most important step to change them. Organizations are essential parts of all our lives. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the way humans create them and which power lies in daily social dynamics, as organizations are social and psychological points of reference to everyone. This thesis hopes to spread more awareness of the gendered nature of female managers’ role performances. Femininity has to become an integral and equal part to masculinity in the social role construction of managers, as to allow individuals to perform this role authentically to their truly human nature.


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APPENDIX

Interviewleitfaden

Gruß
- Vorstellung Interviewerin
- Kurze Vorstellung des Themas
- Grobe Übersicht über Themenblöcke

Position & Biografie
- Sie sind in der Position XY. Können Sie mir etwas über Ihren beruflichen Weg erzählen und welche besonderen Meilensteine gibt es für Sie gegeben haben? (z.B.: Familie, Auszeiten, ...)
- Wie würden Sie Ihre jetzigen Aufgaben und Pflichten beschreiben?
- Wo sehen Sie die Schwerpunktsetzung in Ihrer Position?

Konkurrenz & Wettbewerb
- Mit dem Erreichen einer Führungsposition geht auch immer der Wettbewerb mit anderen KollegInnen einher. Wie haben Sie Konkurrenz in der Arbeitswelt wahrgenommen?
  - Konkurrenz zu weiblichen Kolleginnen: Wenn Sie diese empfunden haben, wie? Wie sah das Konkurrenzverhalten aus? Welche Themen prägten das Konkurrenzverhalten?
  - Konkurrenz zu männlichen Kollegen: Wenn Sie diese empfunden haben, wie? Wie sah das Konkurrenzverhalten aus? Welche Themen prägten das Konkurrenzverhalten?
  - Welchen Taktiken bedienen sich Ihrer Ansicht nach Frauen in Konkurrenzsituationen um sich durchzusetzen und welche Männer?
  - Ist der „Gender-Aspekt“ im Konkurrenzkampf am Arbeitsplatz etwas, dass Sie als präsent wahrnehmen oder in bestimmten Situationen wahrgenommen haben?
  - Welche Taktiken empfinden Sie als besonders hilfreich, um sich durchzusetzen, welche weniger?
  - Gab es Situationen, wo Sie Schwierigkeiten hatten sich durchzusetzen? Wenn ja, in welchen Situationen und wie haben Sie sich verhalten? Wenn nein, woran würden Sie Ihre Durchsetzungskraft festmachen?

Führungsstil & Verhalten
- Wie würden Sie Ihren persönlichen Führungsstil beschreiben?
  - Auf was legen Sie besonders Wert?
Welche Situationen empfinden Sie als besonders herausfordernd?
Wie würden Sie die Beziehung zu Ihren Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern beschreiben?

Welchen Platz nehmen Emotionen in Ihrem Führungsstil ein? Welche Stellung hat Empathie, Wut und Stolz?
Wie werden diese Emotionen in Folge wahrgenommen?

Welches Bild von sich in der Rolle als Managerin möchten Sie transportieren?
Wo sehen Sie dabei Herausforderungen?

Wie bewusst achten Sie (z.B. in Meetings) auf Ihre Körpersprache (Mimik und Gestik)?
Welchen rhetorischen Instrumenten bedienen Sie sich und warum?

Würden Sie sagen, dass öffentliche Bild von ManagerInnen hat sich in den letzten Jahren/Jahrzehnten verändert?
Wenn ja, inwiefern?
Wenn nein, sollte es das?

Organisation & Umfeld
Wie würden Sie die Organisationskultur beschreiben, auf was wird Wert gelegt? Wie sieht ihr Umfeld am Arbeitsplatz aus?
Empfinden Sie Ihre Organisation als hierarchisch und/oder bürokratisch? Wie würden Sie die Organisationsstruktur beschrieben?

Gibt es in Ihrer Organisation Programme, welche gezielt Frauen fördern?
Wenn ja, welche und zeigen diese Erfolg?
Wenn nein, warum nicht?
Haben Sie früher Erfahrungen mit solchen Programmen/Initiativen? Wenn ja, wie haben Sie diese wahrgenommen? Wenn nein, würden Sie solche als zielführend betrachten?

Gibt es familienfreundliche Programme/Initiativen in Ihrer Organisation? (z.B.: Betriebskindergarten)
Wenn ja, welche und werden diese in Anspruch genommen?
Wenn nein, warum nicht?

Männer und Frauen in Führungspositionen
Wie hoch ist der Anteil von Frauen und Männern in Führungspositionen (ungefähr)?
Wodurch bedingt sich dieses Verhältnis?

Gab es Situationen in ihrem Arbeitsumfeld, wo Sie das Gefühl hatten größere Barrieren als Ihre männlichen Kollegen überwinden zu müssen?
Wenn ja, wie sahen diese aus und wie sind Sie damit umgegangen?
Wenn nein, warum glauben Sie war das so?
• Welche Dinge müssten sich Ihrer Einschätzung nach ändern, um einen Ausgleich der Geschlechter in Führungspositionen zu schaffen?

• Gibt es Vorteile für Frauen? Wenn ja welche? Wenn nein, welche würden Sie sich wünschen?

• Welchen Rat würden Sie Berufsanfängerinnen geben?

• Was müsste sich ändern um Ausgleich zu schaffen?

Abschluss
• Haben Sie noch Fragen?

• Gibt es etwas, dass Sie mir noch gerne mitteilen würden?

Danke für das Gespräch und Ihre Bereitschaft, bei meiner Masterarbeit mitzuwirken.
Eidesstattliche Erklärung

Ich erkläre hiermit an Eides statt durch meine eigenhändige Unterschrift, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel verwendet habe. Alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder inhaltlich den angegebenen Quellen entnommen wurden, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht.

Die vorliegende Arbeit wurde bisher in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form noch nicht als Magister-/Master-/Diplomarbeit/Dissertation eingereicht.

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Datum                                          Unterschrift