

ISSUE 08

»»THE EXCEPTION, THE BAD MOTHER, THE FIGHTER««

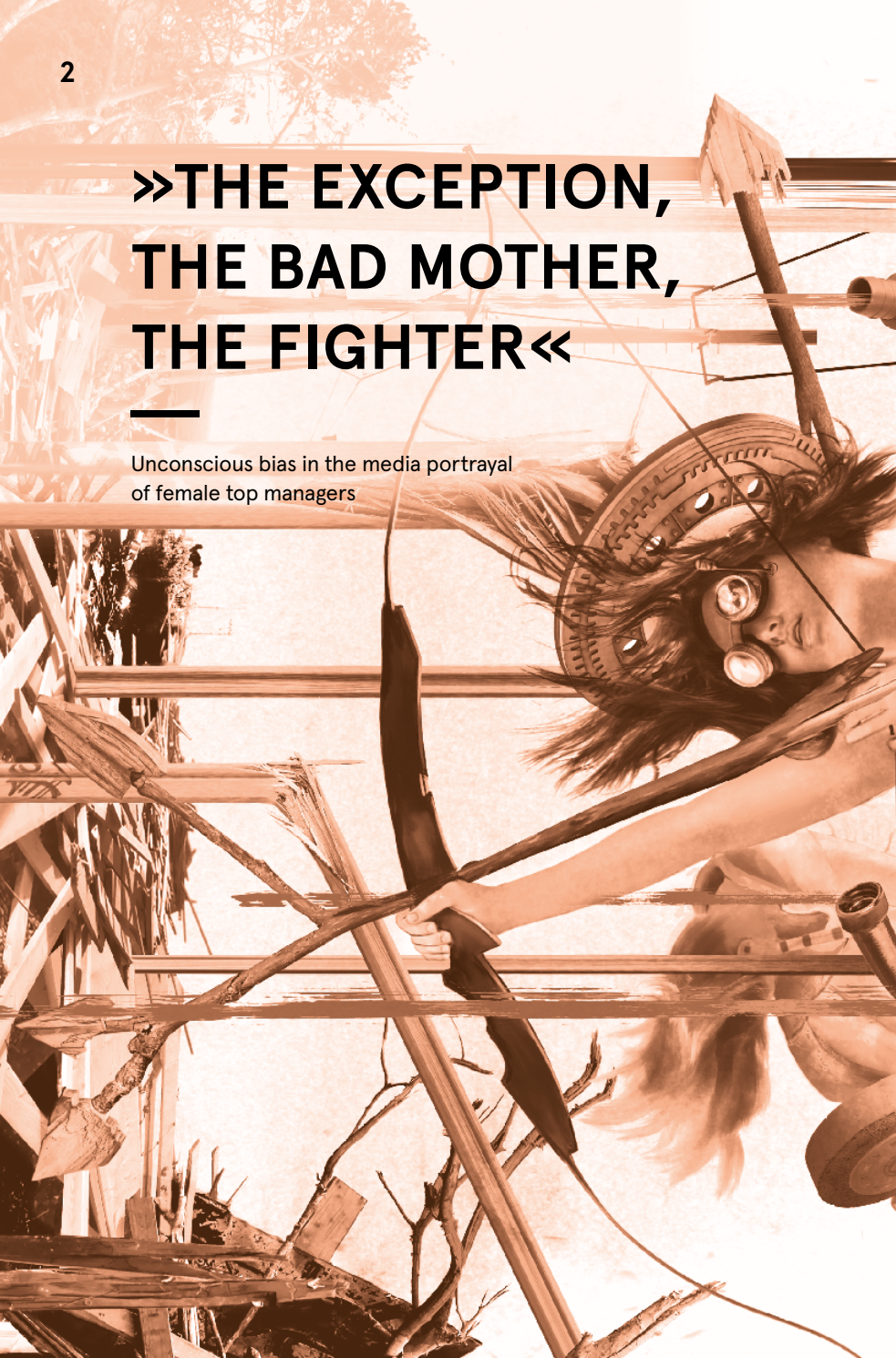
Unconscious bias in the media portrayal
of female top managers

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»THE EXCEPTION, THE BAD MOTHER, THE FIGHTER«

Unconscious bias in the media portrayal
of female top managers

A woman with long dark hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a headband with three circular goggles. She is holding a bow and arrow, looking towards the camera. The background is a dense, sunlit jungle with many wooden poles and branches. The overall color palette is warm and monochromatic, dominated by shades of orange and brown.



On the first day of the job, Thomas Meyer is wearing a sophisticated suit in royal blue. The cut suits him perfectly, accentuating his muscular physique and large, blue eyes. He exudes elegance. The unspoken question can be read in the curious faces of bystanders: How did he make it to the top echelons of a multinational corporation? Even as a child, he was known for being particularly industrious and ambitious. “My mother once said to me, ‘Believe in yourself, and you can achieve anything,’” he says, explaining his drive. Many years of hard work and the right contacts finally led him to the position of CEO of Alpha Corp. Ultimately, it was a systemic crisis that enabled his meteoric rise to the highest position in the company. After it was revealed

that the company had doctored revenue figures, some top-level executives were replaced. The company’s stock price fell precipitously, and the CEO position became increasingly unpopular. He has a mentor. “He was in the right place at the right time,” she states. Now he must prove whether he can withstand the pressure. Thomas Meyer should be good at dealing with stress. In addition to his full-time job, he’s also a father. He definitely thought long and hard about having children, since he didn’t want to put his career on the line. He was in his mid-thirties when his daughter was born, and he is no longer in a relationship with the mother of his children. There is a new love in his life. When he travels for business, a nanny takes care of the kids.

Sounds strange? Definitely. What does the CEO's suit color matter when a company is in crisis? What counts is the will to succeed, expertise, and a can-do attitude. Hardly anyone writes about men in top leadership positions in this way. But they do about women.

In fact, the scene described above is not made up. All snippets of this text are based on excerpts from published articles about top female managers in major German publications—only the name and gender were changed. How can that be? What does the clothing worn or the desire for children say about the abilities of a woman in the corner office that it doesn't about men? Are these one-offs or is there more than meets the eye?

How does the media portray female executives?

It's true: Men are not women, and women are not men. So, differences in media coverage about female and male managers shouldn't come as a surprise. Naturally, the topics of interest, focal points, or the perspective on things differs. In a society that strives for diversity, this is actually desirable.

And the fact that there is more interest in women on the executive floor can be explained relatively easily: Unfortunately, female executives are still more of an exception than the rule. According to the Allbright Foundation, just 9.3 percent of German management board members in 2019 were female. Or, put

differently: More than 90 percent of executives were men¹. Women in leadership positions are still rare. So, the fact that women are being reported on is less surprising than how women are being covered in the media. Only because women are underrepresented in the upper echelons does not explain the differences in the way top female and male managers are portrayed in the media.

What are the major differences? And how can these be explained? What does this mean for perceptions of female executives? And how can these be confronted?

This study seeks to answer these questions. First off, the objective is to identify possible differences in the way in which men and women in leadership positions are portrayed in the media. What is the extent of the differences? Are these differences purely descriptive? Or might they provide insight into unconscious bias and stereotyped gender roles? In order to achieve this goal, our study takes a multi-method approach comprising a quantitative content analysis and six semi-structured expert interviews with businesswomen and female journalists.

The quantitative analysis involved the review of 850 articles in major German daily newspapers and business magazines² to determine how they depict female and male management board members and company and division managers. We were not primarily interested in identifying how the players present themselves. The focus of our research was on how they are portrayed by others and the qualities attributed to them at the discretion of journalists. Having said that, we did not concentrate on interviews, but instead reviewed reports, profiles, and features in which female and male managers are described. Based on a codebook derived from research results to date, the content analysis offered the

opportunity to validate and quantify subjective perceptions. The codebook includes 82 variables, including a focus by the media on the appearance, love life, family life, or childhood of (male and female) managers. We additionally analyzed the professional role dimensions defined as typical based on the CEO Navigator³ along with the tone and weighting of each in the articles.

DEUTSCHLANDS
HÄRTESTE
MANAGERIN*

* "Germany's toughest executive"

The title of a story in manager magazine's June 2019 issue on Tina Müller

When “being a woman” makes headlines

Both our quantitative study and our interviews corroborate the impression that there are major differences in the portrayal of female and male executives in the media. Statements like “the first in her position,” or “a rare sight,” emphasize the scarcity of women in leadership roles, but are still based in fact. However, the contextualization and highlighting of “otherness” often creates the impression that women in these positions are still perceived as unnatural or out of place. The consequences of this are anything but trivial. After all, whenever we question the equal treatment of groups of people, something known as an “unconscious bias” comes into play. Here, stereotypes shape the discourse—not without borrowing from popular clichés or even prejudices. As a result, neutral and fact-based journalism is often drowned out by a more judgmental approach, as Janina Kugel reports: “Coverage of women is often much more judgmental than that of men. Women are gauged not only on their performance in carrying out their responsibilities, but also on their personality.”

This type of assessment is explicit in only the rarest cases, as is typical for gender stereotypes. Acknowledging equality between men and women as a societal goal would also be very difficult to square with the aims of most media leaders. Instead, this type of value judgment is subtle and often not expressed consciously.

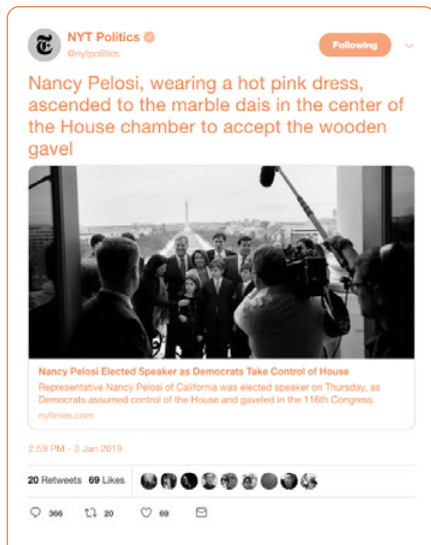
Even the framing, interpretation, characterization, as well as the choice of certain focus themes, have a direct impact on the way women in leadership positions are perceived and judged.

This is most clearly evident in the depiction of how female and male managers, respectively, tackle challenges, in other words, situations in which their leadership skills are tested. The assignment of character traits reinforces existing stereotypes, Simone Menne emphasizes, “Interestingly, attributes such as ambition, purposefulness, and assertiveness are only ascribed to men.” Women are instead supposedly communicative, empathetic, and hard working. “There are clear stereotypes, and that’s one of the reasons so few women make it to the executive floor,” states Simone Menne. Such attributions are not always entirely harmless either, Ariane Reinhart adds, “When a man is said to be tough, it always sounds good. When it’s a woman, though, it’s suggested that she’s bitchy.” This subconscious grouping has extremely negative connotations and particularly emphasizes the disadvantages of “otherness,” as Tina Müller also describes: “A newsletter recently reported that one of the Novartis executives exchanged two-thirds of his top-level management staff in a single year. This earned him the title of ‘golden boy.’ In a similar situation, I was called ‘the tough manager’ when I put together a new team. So, a man is considered assertive, a go-getter, a driving force, someone who forges ahead. When it’s a woman, it’s often said that she’s overly ambitious and harsh.”

Even when seemingly harmless topics are put on the agenda, the impression of a normalcy of traditional gender roles is confirmed. For instance, the results of our study indicate that a woman’s appearance takes up 50 percent more space in articles than a man’s—an observation that Tina Müller confirms. “Almost every article starts this way: ‘Her dark, curly hair; her red lipstick;

her this and that and the other thing...’ Hardly any coverage fails to discuss my outer appearance.” It’s a common phenomenon that isn’t limited strictly to Germany. On the day Nancy Pelosi assumed her position as Speaker of the US House of Representatives, The New York Times published a tweet. It said: “Nancy Pelosi, wearing a hot pink dress, ascended to the marble dais in the center of the House Chamber to accept the wooden gavel.” The tweet was later deleted with the justification that it was “poorly framed.” This kind of reflection is rare, however, and the interest in outer appearance remains strong. Whether it’s Fränzi Kühne, whose undercut hairstyle is always mentioned, or Ariane Reinhart, who was described as reminiscent of “a very attractive Barbie”⁴ in a manager magazin article—the focus on women’s outer appearance noticeably takes the place of more noteworthy discussions.

New York Times tweet in January 2019, deleted shortly thereafter



Aside from putatively stereotypical characterizations and superficialities, the contextualization of career paths and lifestyles is also striking. Women who make it to the top often appear to have external factors to thank for this, like luck, family connections, or their networks—and only to a lesser extent their own abilities. The results of our study also indicate that the external factors affecting the career trajectories of men are judged more positively than those of their female colleagues. “The idea behind this is that a woman who reaches this type of position must have a personality that is not par for the course. When men have successful careers, however, they fall completely within the norm,” Tina Müller says, confirming these impressions. Similar observations can be made about recurring and more or less traditional gender roles, which are assigned a value judgment, for instance, by way of specific questions about marital status and the desire for children. Family life takes up around 2.5 times as much space in coverage of women as it does for men. Janina Kugel agrees: “In interviews with women, short profiles always include more information about children and partners. Family background also plays a role, even if it wasn’t discussed in the interview. That’s different (...) for men.” The impact this has should not be underestimated, because ultimately the questions or descriptions often segue into judgments. “Women are made out to be bad, uncaring mothers or have to tolerate being asked how much time they have left to spend with their children,” she says. In the media’s portrayal, and at conferences, in panel discussions, or in interviews, women are repeatedly asked how the two can be balanced: mother and professional life, woman and leader, sympathy and assertiveness. It’s as if there is no way to fit women into existing categories. At the same time, stereotypical gender roles and their consequences are brought to the fore more than

ever. Ultimately, the resulting conflicts that arise between ambitions and imposed responsibilities will only exist as long as the underlying stereotypes continue to exist.

Essentially, it can be said that the media's depiction of female executives largely affirms classic gender stereotypes. The image of a "woman at the top" is trivialized by a heightened focus on family life, appearance, and supposedly gender-specific characteristics. However, ascribing intent to the media is not something that our results support. A well-meaning media report generally does not have the contrary impact until it draws on unconscious bias. Every day, we all fall prey to unconscious stereotypes, ones that we have been exposed to our entire lives and form an integral part of our understanding of the world. But, as our study indicates, this precisely is where the danger lies. As long as truthfully practiced equality fails to be depicted as normal due to media reportage, even the loudest calls for equality by leading media representatives will remain no more than lip service.

Tweet by Renate Künast
in November 2019



Redefining gender roles

Against this backdrop, our study ties in our desire to advance the much-needed debate on how women are portrayed in the media and the media's resulting responsibilities. As such, we expressly join Janina Kugel in her proclamation: "It's time for societal views of gender roles and responsibilities to change."

However, the opportunities provided by the media should not be overestimated, as Marion Horn rightly emphasizes: "The media can't build a new world. But it can amplify or downplay trends and cement or dilute images." The media is therefore a key player, particularly in societal debates. It sets the agenda for how and about what the public thinks about and discusses. The media can therefore identify deficiencies, moderate discourse, and give certain topics gravitas. "That's what the media should take responsibility for," says Marion Horn. After all, women are not a fringe group—they make up "half the world." At the moment, however, men explain the world to men far too often, a finding evidenced in numerous studies. For example, a study commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth indicates that women are still grossly underrepresented among the ranks of editors-in-chief in major German media companies. In regional media outlets, there are only eight female editors-in-chief on average for every 100 male editors-in-chief.⁵ And a study on audiovisual diversity by the University of Rostock confirms the dominance of men in the day-to-day media business. Experts asked to give statements to the media, for instance, are male in four out of five cases.⁶ Our research also indicates how much impact this

can have on clichéd reporting. For instance, male journalists focus on the love life of female interviewees significantly more than women. The same is true for female managers' families or childhoods. Marion Horn advocates for starting with this issue. Ultimately, little will change, she says, "as long as mostly only men are given the chance to speak on television and in newspapers." The fact that this can work was proven by the media in the United Kingdom. The UK's *The Guardian* newspaper underscores the necessity of men and women's equal representation with its tagline "If she can't see it, she can't be it."⁷ Similar goals are being pursued by the *Financial Times* and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The latter even launched a voluntary 50:50 project. The goal? Ensuring that women account for 50 percent of the workforce in as many departments as possible. Within just one year, more than 500 teams at the BBC analyzed their programs to voluntarily give women the same opportunities as men. The result: Women totaled around 27 percent of reporters and programming heads in mid-2018. Within one year, this figure tripled to approximately 74 percent.⁸

In addition to the necessity of a considerably more balanced representation of women in media operations, our interviewees also highlighted the personal responsibility of those working in the media. Diversity training, which has become commonplace at the management level, is highly advisable for both female and male journalists in training as well. On this topic, Tina Müller says, "First of all, we must precisely identify the extent to which bias exists in interactions between men and women and in mixed teams. This type of training raises awareness of how biased we ourselves are and the clichés we can fall back on."

Directing this appeal solely at the media is hardly sufficient, however, as most of our interviewees confirm. Ultimately, there is nothing gained by the media providing women with more opportunities if there are not enough women who know how to make use of it. Against this backdrop, it's also the responsibility of female executives to reflect on their own role, confidently point out deficiencies, and leverage media attention for themselves.



Twitter profile of
Janina Kugel in April 2020

Janina Kugel's Twitter profile confidently states that she is a "woman and mother." Her rationale: "Because I am a role model, an example for other women." She believes this allows her to reject common misconceptions regarding ambitions and roles and reinforce the notion that "what some apparently do not yet consider normal has already become normal," in other words, balancing your career and private life. "Hopefully, I can contribute to normalizing diversity," she states. Simone Menne is in favor of professional training the likes of media training: "Women have to be smart enough to present themselves in a way that diverges from any stereotypes. Those who want to can get their message in the paper."

A statement reinforced by Marion Horn as well: “Women have to learn to help write the rules of the game. (...) If you want to be treated professionally by journalists, you have to deal with them professionally.”

In particular, the desire for greater visibility and the rejection of an exaggerated fear of the media are absolutely necessary to encourage a feeling of “normalcy”: “Successful women should step onto the stage and show themselves. Learn from bad press and be better prepared the next time. (...) Because it’s important. If you don’t talk, you won’t be heard.” Janina Kugel herself is an impressive embodiment of this statement. A little more visibility, she says, “could do wonders for equality.”

¹ Allbright Stiftung, Entwicklungsland – Deutsche Konzerne entdecken erst jetzt Frauen für die Führung (Developing Country – German Companies Only Now Placing Women in Leadership Positions), 2019.

² Included in the media sample: Die Zeit, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Handelsblatt, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, and Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung (Sunday edition), manager magazin, Die Welt and Welt am Sonntag (Sunday edition), WirtschaftsWoche, Börsen-Zeitung.

³ Jan Hiesserich, Der CEO-Navigator: Rollenbestimmung und –kommunikation für Topmanager (The CEO Navigator: Determining and Communicating Roles for Top Managers), 2013.

⁴ manager magazin.de, Andreas Roses Stilcheck: 22 Wirtschafts-Spitzenfrauen in der Modekritik (Andreas Rose’s Style Check: Fashion Critique of 22 Top Female Business Managers); May 2, 2017.

⁵ ProQuote Medien e.V., Welchen Anteil haben Frauen an der publizistischen Macht in Deutschland? Eine Studie zur Geschlechterverteilung in journalistischen Führungspositionen (How Much Power Do Women Have in Publishing in Germany? A Study on Gender Distribution in Executive Positions in Journalism), 2019.

⁶ University of Rostock, Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Prommer and Dr. Christine Linke, Audiovisuelle Diversität? Geschlechterdarstellungen in Film und Fernsehen in Deutschland (Audiovisual Diversity? Gender Portrayals in Films and Television in Germany), 2017.

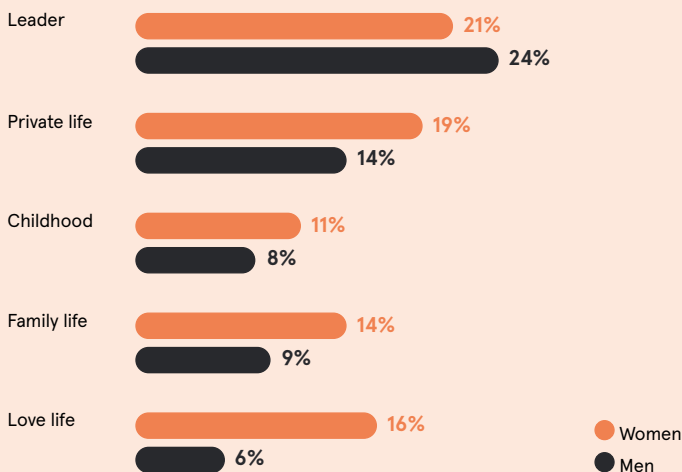
⁷ The Guardian, ‘If she can’t see it, she can’t be it’: why media representation matters, 2013.

⁸ BBC, The BBC announces results of 50:50 Project which reveals big increase in female representation; May 15, 2019.

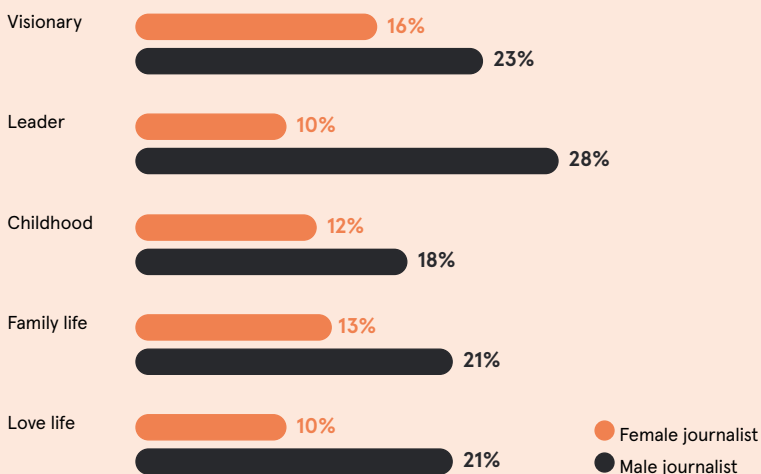
HAVE A LOOK AT THE FIGURES!

The following key takeaways from our content analysis are based on a sample of 850 articles in major German daily newspapers and business magazines¹. The codebook for the analysis covers 82 variables, which range from organizational and media-specific qualities to characteristics related to personality and professional role dimensions, while also looking at the tone and weighting of individual variables within an article. For purposes of clarity, we added quotes to specific attributes as examples.

How much coverage is awarded to articles that focus on a certain attribute?



What share of articles by female and male journalists focus on an attribute in connection with female managers?



The gender of journalists matters

In articles about female executives, the topics covered often differ depending on whether a man or a woman is writing about them. Male journalists focus significantly more on the romantic life as well as family life or childhood of female managers than their female counterparts. Male journalists also ascribe the role of leader and visionary to female decision-makers considerably more frequently than female journalists.

How much coverage is awarded to gender-specific attributes?

FAMILY LIFE TAKES UP AROUND 2.5-TIMES MORE COVERAGE



In reporting on women, family life plays a much more important role than for male executives, taking up 2.5-times as much coverage. And this is true although research has found that nearly everyone values family more than work, regardless of gender.²

Our results indicate that the topic of family life appears much more frequently in articles about female executives (14%) than male executives (9%). Moreover, articles about female managers give 50 percent more space to this issue.

(Hiltrud Werner's) son grew up "alongside" her career, she explains. And her daughter was born "sometime in between." *Zeit Online* (08/2018)

LOVE LIFE AS A COMMON TOPIC



The romantic relationships of female managers are covered much more often (16%) than those of male managers (6%). When love life is a topic, it takes up one-fourth more space in articles about female executives. On the whole, the love lives of female managers accounts for 3.5-times more reporting than that of their male counterparts.

(Janina Kugel) became a mother in her mid-30s. She and the father of her children soon broke up, but they still continue to live close to each other. There is a new love in her life. *manager magazin* (12/2018)

TWICE AS MANY MENTIONS OF CHILDHOOD



Female and male journalists mention the childhood of female managers more frequently (11%) than that of men (8%). Taking into account the accentuation of the issue, the childhood of female managers takes up more than twice as much space as that of their male counterparts.

Did you (Tina Müller) ever have a wild phase in your teens where your parents had to say, 'Stop, Tina!'? *Stern* (05/2018)

The tone used to describe the childhoods of men and women also differs greatly. Men's pasts are generally viewed much more positively than those of women.

Her mother had already lived by example, showing (Ariane) Reinhart that women can fight their way through anything. (...) She was still in elementary school when her parents separated. (...) Her mother, who worked, bought her a pony and paid it off in installments.

Zeit Online (08/2018)

MORE DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS OF PRIVATE LIFE



Women's private lives (19%) were more often reported on in our media sample than those of men (14%). Private life is defined as the activities of female or male managers in their private sphere, and their role in their families and circles of friends.

Art has always been her passion and a way to relax. (Simone Menne) has been painting for decades, mostly strange birds, parrots and such. Handelsblatt (08/2018)

"No more free time, starting now," she says, answering a question about her hobbies. The statement is followed by a winning smile that could be described as typically American. Then she explains that she's a big fan of yoga and Peloton. Peloton is a new form of exercise originating in the United States where participants pedal a stationary bike at home while being connected online with other people. Süddeutsche Zeitung (10/2019)

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES MENTIONED LESS OFTEN, BUT MORE EXTENSIVELY



Men at the executive level are ascribed the role of leader somewhat more often (24%) than their female colleagues (21%). In articles that mention leadership qualities, these are described less extensively for men than women. All told, coverage of female and male managers' leadership qualities is therefore fairly balanced.

(Erich) Sixt stands by his beliefs and principles. He often feels vindicated in this stance. A mixture of cockiness, courage, and caution has made him a successful entrepreneur.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (05/2018)

(Hiltrud) Werner, it can be said right off the bat, is not uncontroversial as a leader; her leadership culture and – yes – strictness have often been the topic of public debate.

Zeit Online (08/2018)

FEMALE MANAGERS MORE FREQUENTLY PLAY THE ROLE OF CHANGE AGENTS



A change agent is considered a driver of change or is responsible for preparing a company for the medium to long term. For both genders, the role of change agent is assigned an almost exclusively positive connotation in the media. When held by women, this role is given 1.5-times more coverage than their male counterparts. The

will to change things is somewhat more often ascribed to women (19%) than to men (17%), and it is reported on in greater detail.

She (Janina Kugel) uses her influence to push new issues. She launched the “Zukunftspakt” (“Pact for the Future”), a EUR 100 million program to train employees for the digital workplace.

manager magazin (12/2018)

Inga Beale is now head of Lloyd’s of London. The English native has no intention of following old traditions.

Süddeutsche Zeitung (03/2018)

MALE MANAGERS AS THE BACKBONE OF ORGANIZATIONS



The role of administrator or preserver signals continuity and evolution rather than revolution, both within and outside of companies, and is more often a topic associated with men (4%) than with women (3%). Articles that mention the role of preserver report on this in more depth for female managers than for their male counterparts. However, this role is described as much more positive for men than for women.

At the automotive supplier ZF Friedrichshafen, turbulent times have come to an end for now: Mahle CEO Wolf-Henning Scheider is the new strong man at the Lake Constance-based company.

Handelsblatt (01/2018)

Supervisory Board Chairman Gerd Krick considers the appointment of Stephan Sturm, whom he reportedly sees as the “ideal successor” to Schneider, as a sign of continuity in the company’s leadership. Handelsblatt (06/2016)

FEMALE MANAGERS MORE OFTEN SEEN AS CORPORATE CITIZEN



Female managers (9%) are more frequently defined as corporate citizens than male managers (4%). Corporate citizens assume community and representative responsibilities and are the public face of the company. In view of the extent to which they are assigned this identity, the role of the corporate citizen is nearly twice as important for women as for men. This identity is also viewed much more positively in the case of female executives than for male executives.

The manager (Christiana Riley) is tasked with improving a strained relationship with regulators, while calming customers and communicating the new strategy to employees. Handelsblatt (01/2020)

(Tanja) Rückert favors public transparency. Her new employer has good products, “but we don’t talk enough about our innovations.” Süddeutsche Zeitung (12/2018)

THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL FACTORS ON PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS



In reporting on female managers, external reasons for promotions are described in greater detail than in articles about their male colleagues. While 7 percent of articles about female executives discuss external circumstances affecting their climb up the career ladder, only 5 percent of articles about their male counterparts do the same. The tone is particularly notable: The external factors affecting the career trajectories of men are more positively weighted than those of their female colleagues.

And third, (Tina Müller) is one of only a few women in Germany who have reached the top on their own merits, and has even done so without family connections. *Handelsblatt* (12/2017)

As in the case of many women (...), it was also a systemic crisis that allowed Hiltrud Werner to successfully make a rapid ascent to the top job in her company. *Zeit* (08/2018)

MORE DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF APPEARANCE



Men's appearance (10%) is written about somewhat more frequently than women's (8%). However, the outer appearance of women is described in greater detail than that of their male colleagues. Accordingly, women's looks are awarded 30 percent more coverage than men's.

But her nails! They sparkle to an extent rarely seen among women who have reached such a high rung on the corporate ladder. Small crystals are a sophisticated addition to the accent nails on her thumb and ring finger. The modesty of (Hiltrud) Werner's clothing is matched only by the eccentricity of her nail design. *Zeit* (08/2018)

WOMEN MORE FREQUENTLY DESCRIBED AS EXPRESSIVE-CHARISMATIC INTELLECTUAL



SOCIAL



EXPRESSIVE-CHARISMATIC



Around half of the articles reviewed rated the personalities of female (55%) and male (49%) managers in intellectual terms. This means that they reported more or less equally on how competently men and women performed their roles and whether they were successful in meeting certain goals and fulfilling their purpose.

The social mode, or, the depiction of an executive against the backdrop of societal norms, fairness, and social responsibility, plays an equally important role in the coverage of women (7%) and men (6%).

The difference between the genders is starker in relation to the characteristics and individual idiosyncrasies (expressive-charismatic mode) of the individual described. The charisma, authenticity, and attractiveness of female leaders is a topic in the media 43 percent of the time, much more frequently than it is for male leaders (30%).

Charisma, social media visibility, and a good dose of instinct for power. HR executive Janina Kugel has made herself into a brand.

manager magazin (12/2018)

¹ Included in the media sampling: Die Zeit, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Handelsblatt, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung (Sunday edition), manager magazin, Die Welt and Welt am Sonntag

(Sunday edition), WirtschaftsWoche, Börsen-Zeitung.

² Robin Ely & Michael Kimmel, Thoughts on the Workplace as a Masculinity Contest, 2018.



TAKE ACTION, NOW!

Key Takeaways

1. **Female executives** are often portrayed as being exceptions, and the high level of media interest reflects this. This reporting often particularly highlights female leaders' individual idiosyncrasies.
2. **Women in leadership** roles are usually confronted with outdated gender stereotypes and societal expectations in their media representation.
3. **Women's appearance** takes up a third more space than men's in the media content reviewed. Female managers also feel that their looks play a more decisive role.
4. **On average, the media discusses** women's families, private and love lives, and childhoods twice as much as those of men. Our interviewees confirm that their professional accomplishments take a back seat.
5. **Stereotypically "male" leadership qualities** are assigned to both genders—but often carry a negative connotation for women.
6. **In media coverage**, female managers often drive change, while their male counterparts are seen as preservers, upholding the status quo.
7. **Female executives** see themselves as media role models for other women. Our interviewees encourage their female colleagues to deal with the media confidently and to follow a clear strategy.
8. **The media** has a social responsibility to question its own biases and break down traditional gender roles.

Tips for Female Managers

- 1. Don't hide!** The media offers a highly relevant platform for communicating your message and beliefs. One thing to remember: If you reject a certain view it doesn't necessarily minimize the risk of being misunderstood by the media. In other words, the power to control the interpretation is beyond your control.
- 2. Prepare!** Professional treatment calls for professional preparation. Before an interview, it's important to consciously set your goals and expectations and develop your own agenda. Media training is recommended, because this will help you focus on your objectives and build awareness of your personal impact.
- 3. No false modesty!** Whether an interview, a panel discussion, or a presentation, any interest in you as a person should be regarded as an opportunity. Actively take charge of the conversation and highlight your accomplishments. Don't just agree to seeming conflicts between ambitions and imposed responsibilities, for instance about balancing your family and career. Instead, call them out as such and raise awareness to role expectations. Similar advice applies to seemingly trivial questions regarding looks or the contents of your purse. It's okay to ask a direct question in return: "Would you ask a man that?"

