

GENDER

DIVERSITY

AND

BEHAVIOURAL

INTEGRATION

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Gender diversity and behavioural integration

Master Thesis

“We must not only learn to tolerate our differences. We must welcome them as the richness and diversity which can lead to true intelligence.”

- Albert Einstein –

“For a woman to be taken seriously as a man she must be three times as effective. Happily, this is not difficult.”

- Simone de Beauvoir –

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Preface

During the past few years, I have closely followed the discussions about a focus towards more gender diversity at senior management level. This focus is driven by the national regulation of a women's quota for a minimum number of top positions to be held by women to reach a minimum of a third of women in supervisory boards (*Evenwichtiger verhouding tussen mannen en vrouwen in bestuur en raad van commissarissen*, n.d.). Companies have placed gender diversity on their strategic agenda. As the Female Board index illustrated (Lückerath-Rovers, 2020), it led to a 'record' number of 12,5% women in Dutch top management positions in 2020. The 'old boys' network' is still strongly present with regards to management roles. Substantial research has been carried out into the benefits of gender diversity of top management. Diversity is so much more than a number. It increases the perspective on alternatives, enhances creativity and fosters innovation. There is limited insight on how various female executives actually operate in a male-dominated Top Management Team. Especially when this team is striving to stay ahead of the competition by innovating and optimising its daily operations. With this thesis I would like to provide new insights in how the experience of gender diversity impacts behavioural integration of TMTs in the context of ambidexterity. This might lead to substantiation of the benefits of (more) women in TMTs.

I would like to express my gratitude to some people for their support. First, I would not have been able to finish this two years Master program without the understanding of my family and friends for the many concessions I had to make at the expense of my private life. Secondly, this thesis would not have been possible without the interview respondents. I want to thank them for openly sharing their stories. To lift this thesis to a higher level, my coach Jurriaan Nijholt conducted challenging discussions with me about the central research question and research design, for which I am very grateful. Furthermore, I would like to thank my co-reader Stephanie Maas for reviewing this thesis. Both have contributed greatly to the scientific level of this thesis. A special word of thanks to my sister-in-law and father for their help during this process. Finally, a word of thanks to my fellow students for the interactive discussions and sharing experiences of ups and downs during the research process. The Master program has enriched my life!

Eveline van den Bosch, September 2021

Disclaimer

The views stated in this thesis are those of the author and not necessarily those of the supervisor, co-reader, Rotterdam School of Management or Erasmus University Rotterdam. Text and work presented in this document is original and no other sources than referred to have been used. RSM is only responsible for educational coaching of the work but not for the content.

Abstract

The Upper Echelons Theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) claims that the shared values and collective cognition of Top Management Teams (TMTs) guide the corporate future and set the strategy for organisations. There is an increasing representation of women in TMTs (Schneider & Bellard, 2010; McKinsey & Company, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2020). This has been positively associated with organisational ambidexterity (Almor et al., 2019) and performance (Carter et al., 2003; Krishnan & Park, 2005; Lückerath-Rovers, 2011), but also with potential for destructive conflict (Carson et al., 2004; Jarzabkowski & Searle, 2004; Jehn, 1995; Pelled et al., 1999). To overcome the ambiguity of gender diversity, a TMT needs to be able to share a vision and act collectively to reach strategic decisions of superior quality (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006; Hambrick, 1994; Simsek et al., 2005). This study opened the ‘black box’ of behavioural integration (Hambrick, 2007; Lawrence, 1997; Priem et al., 1999; Roh, 2019) through in-depth interviews with female executives. Results revealed a relation between the sociocultural experiences of gender diversity and the responsive actions that female executives undertake, impacting behavioural integration. The key role of responsive actions is emphasized in this context. Responding to the experiences of gender diversity affects behavioural integration. It leads to harmonised team behaviour, making common cause and imposed commitment. The latter may act as a double-edged sword, rather than gender diversity itself. This explorative study provides new insights into two major streams of literature, gender diversity of TMTs and the theory of behavioural integration.

Keywords: Gender diversity, Top Management Teams/upper echelon, behavioural integration, ambidexterity

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1 Introduction

A recurring theme in organisational science is that successful organisations are ambidextrous. Organisational ambidexterity has emerged as a research paradigm in organisation theory. It can be defined as an organisation's ability to be aligned and efficient in its management of today's business demands while simultaneously being able to adapt to changes in the environment (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Levinthal & March, 1993; March, 1991; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Being flexible and continuously adapting to opportunities in the market creates competitive advantages (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). It drives opportunities for innovation of exploration as well as exploitation of the business (Benner & Tushman, 2003). Organisations that balance exploration and exploitation can expect superior financial performance (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; He & Wong, 2004; Lubatkin et al., 2006; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Uotila et al., 2009) and have a higher survival rate (Levinthal & March, 1993; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013).

Ambidexterity is generally driven by a Top Management Team (TMT). This team deals with conflict, contradictory strategic agendas, and ambiguity (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004; Carmeli & Halevi, 2009; Lubatkin et al., 2006; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Smith & Tushman, 2005; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). The TMT resolves inherent tensions in balancing explorative and exploitative activities. It makes decisions regarding organisational structure, strategies, cultures, and resource allocation processes, which impact organisational ambidexterity (Benner & Tushman, 2003; March, 1991; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). The upper echelons theory supports the insight of organisational outcomes as a result of the collective perceptions and values of top managers (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). The variety of cognitive resources can predominantly be predicted through the proxy of observable demographic characteristics of the executives (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). The TMT is an important locus for ambidexterity.

Diversity of a TMT influences the team's contributions to organisational ambidexterity (Buyl et al., 2012; Li, 2013; Talke et al., 2010). Diversity of demographic characteristics of a TMT, such as gender, age, tenure, experience, and knowledge, brings a broader range of ideas. This generates greater creativity and quality of novel problem solving (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Schneider & Bellard, 2010). Diversity of the dominant coalition has a dual impact, as there is a significant potential for destructive conflict (Carson et al., 2004; Jarzabkowski & Searle, 2004; Jehn, 1995; Pelled et al., 1999). Diversity has an ambiguous nature and can be seen as a double-edged sword (Almor et al., 2019; Triana et al., 2014).

To overcome the dual impact of demographic diversity, a TMT needs to be able to operate as a coherent, collaborative information processing and decision-making unit (Hambrick, 1994). "Behavioural integration is the degree to which the group engages in mutual and collective interaction" (Hambrick, 1994, p. 188). A

behavioural integrated TMT cooperates and shares information, as well as decisions, committing each TMT member to a shared vision (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006; Hambrick, 1994; Simsek et al., 2005). The mechanism of behavioural integration mediates the relation between a diverse TMT and organisational ambidexterity (Carmeli & Halevi, 2009; Venugopal et al., 2020).

The majority of diversity research of TMT's has looked at the demographic variables versus organisational outcomes, i.e., the actual intervening mechanism by which the team's composition affects its organisational outcome can only be assumed or attributed (Hambrick, 1994). The question is what actually happens inside the 'black box' of the behavioural integration processes (Hambrick, 2007; Lawrence, 1997; Priem et al., 1999; Roh, 2019), as these processes drive executive collective behaviour (Hambrick, 2007) and TMT diversity can have an impact on these emergent team processes (Roh et al., 2019).

Within the field of TMT's diversity research, there is a strong focus on gender diversity (Kagzi & Guha, 2018). In Western society, there has been a slow -but steady- progress of the share of women in mostly male-dominated TMTs (Schneider & Bellard, 2010; McKinsey & Company, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2020). There is a general focus towards more gender equality at management level in both the public and private sector (Deloitte, 2019; Pande & Ford, 2011; Rijksoverheid, 2020; SER, 2019; Sojo, 2016). Female presence in TMTs encourages short term exploitive and long-term explorative behaviour (Almor et al., 2019) and is positively associated with effective organisational performance (Carter et al., 2003; Krishnan & Park, 2005; Lückersch-Rovers, 2011), especially in innovation-driven organisations (Dezsö and Ross, 2012). Gender diversity is, however, not just a proxy variable of the nominal categories of gender (sex). It is time to move beyond positivism and statistics. Diversity suggests that individuals in a group feel being different in important ways from one another and relative to one another. It is a subjective experience of social structures which might influence the intervening mechanism, as its meaning and responsive actions vary (Cannella & Holcomb, 2005; Ely, 1995; Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003).

To really understand the ambiguous nature of gender diverse TMTs, further empirical research within the 'black box' on a micro level is indispensable. There is a lack of understanding of how female executives experience gender diversity and act accordingly to influence what is going on around them. The relation between experiencing gender diversity and the mechanism of behavioural integration has not been studied. This leads to the research question:

How does gender diversity, experienced by female executives, affect behavioural integration?

As the aim of this thesis is to create a better theoretical understanding of how feeling different and being different impacts the collaboration, shared decision-making and information exchange processes, the study

is of qualitative nature. This study brings new insights in a process direction and fills an important knowledge gap in the field of the upper echelon theory (Pettigrew, 1992). Opening the black box (Hambrick, 2007; Lawrence, 1997; Priem et al., 1999; Roh, 2019) by exploring the specific processes of behavioural integration helps to obtain a fuller picture of diversity implications (Roh, 2019). It is essential for improving the insights on how female executives might react to potential biases associated with their diversity (Hambrick, 2007). This study is unique in its kind, as it provides understanding of the impact of gender diversity from in-depth interviewing a group of female executives with limited accessibility (Pettigrew, 1992). Identifying the process through which individual-level diversity manifests at group level is critical (Cannella & Holcomb, 2005). Experiencing gender diversity might influence how female elites are engaged in TMT interaction (Finkelstein et al., 2009) and behavioural integration (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003; Pettigrew, 1992). Diversity of a TMT is a crucial enabler to foster organisational ambidexterity. The mechanism of behavioural integration mediates the relation between a diverse TMT and organisational ambidexterity. Exploring the experiences of gender diversity is crucial for understanding of how this may be beneficial or detrimental to behavioural integration.

From a managerial perspective, the results of this study will provide important novel insights into professionals. Ambidexterity has received great attention within companies to stay ahead of competition and develop competitive strengths. A TMT needs to make deliberate decisions on explorative and exploitative investments and how to manage contradictions effectively. Gender diversity of a TMT contributes to organisational ambidexterity (Almor et al., 2019). There is still only a representation of 12.4% for women in executive director roles within The Netherlands (Lückerath-Rovers, 2020). Advancing gender diversity on the executive level is subject of increasing focus in societal and political debates. This study may lead to arguments for a compelling business case for more gender diverse TMTs, which can steer organisations to become more ambidextrous.

Furthermore, this study will contribute to one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiated by the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, namely gender equality (SDG5). The official wording of SDG-5 is "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (United Nations, 2017, p. 9). One of the targets of SGD5 is to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life" (United Nations, 2017, p. 10). Empirical research can provide organisations a better understanding of what role they can play to mitigate and overcome the barriers of gender inequality. This study provides actionable insights into organisations in how to act towards a more inclusive workplace (George et al., 2016).

2 Literature review

This chapter will provide the theoretical framework for this study to provide insights on the concepts of the research question. The first paragraph will give an overview of the upper echelon theory, as this constitutes the foundation for this study. The TMT has a central position in this perspective. It describes the relation between diverse TMTs and organisational performance, however, there is also critique towards the missing link between the two variables, known as the ‘black box’ of behavioural integration processes. The second paragraph will cover the phenomenon of ambidexterity. Ambidexterity provides competitive advantages as ambidextrous organisations may expect superior performance. Balancing the contradiction of exploration and exploitation can foster ambidexterity. A diverse TMT can pursue an optimal balance and manage this paradox. A specific type of diversity of particular interest for this study is gender diversity, as women are increasingly advancing to TMT level. The third paragraph will argue the insights on gender diversity within a TMT. The nominal effects of a gender diverse TMT will be explored, as well as the subjective experience of the social construct of gender diversity. As diversity can have an ambiguous nature, it may also hinder organisational ambidexterity. To benefit from diversity in a TMT, an intervening mechanism needs to be in place. The final paragraph of this chapter will explain this mechanism of behavioural integration. Each paragraph will elaborate on the relevant scientific literature and will be closed with a sub-conclusion. The obtained theoretical insights will be combined with the results of the empirical study in the discussion and conclusion.

2.1 Upper echelon theory

The upper echelon paradigm is a theoretical framework that predicts that organisations are a reflection of the shared values and collective cognition of their top executives (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). The TMT is “the relatively small group of most influential executives at the apex of an organisation – usually the CEO (or general manager) and those who report directly to him or her” (Finkelstein et al., 2009, p.10). Executives are visionaries, who guide the corporate future in their own areas of functional responsibility. The theory argues that the entire TMT has the responsibility for developing and implementing strategies that strengthen organisational performance (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). The dominant coalition actively formulates, articulates, and executes the strategic and tactical choices of the corporation (Eisenhardt et al., 1997; Laroche, 2010). The right strategic choices may lead to enhanced organisational performance. The fate of a company can often be traced back to the actions of its top executives (Hambrick, 2010).

Complex decisions on the strategy are the outcome of the strategic behaviour of the TMT (Finkelstein et al., 2009). Executives act on what they know, their cognitive base and what they value. The cognitive base is defined as the assumptions about future events, knowledge of alternatives and knowledge of consequences attached to those alternatives. This, together with their values, limits the executive's field of vision, which leads to selective perception of information and influences the interpretation of the situation. This ultimately greatly influences strategic choices (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Hambrick, 2007). TMTs are aggregations of individual executives, each of whom has a particular cognitive base, values, and knowledge (Cannella & Holcomb, 2005). As TMTs manage complex and turbulent business environments, a diverse mix of cognitive bases is considered to be beneficial (Hambrick, 2010). Increasing the cognitive diversity of the TMT is a way to embrace various perspectives in the strategic process (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Hambrick et al., 1996). Teams with a greater range of their field of vision may recognize a wider variety of strategic issues and know how to deal with them (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Many TMT researchers have used the upper echelon theory as a starting point for further research on the relationship between TMT diversity and organisational outcomes (Hambrick, 1994). Diversity is an index of the degree of demographic, functional and background dimensions in the composition of the group (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). A key construct addressed in research is the use of demographic characteristics as valid proxies for deeper cognitive bases, values, and perceptions (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Demographic variables like gender, age, race, tenure, education, or functional background are easier to obtain (Miller et al., 1998).

The results of research on the relationship between diversity and various measures of organisational outcomes are contradictory. Diversity can be seen as a double-edged sword (Triana et al., 2014). Diversity of TMTs influences the team's contribution to organisational performance (Díaz-Fernández et al., 2020; Erhardt et al., 2003; Finkelstein et al., 2009; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Kagzi & Guha, 2018). Diversity leads to a broader spectrum of problem-solving skills and broader access to available knowledge and information which improves capabilities for decision-making. It stimulates developing more alternatives and avoids groupthink, as executives will challenge each other's viewpoints. It enhances creativity and innovation, flexibility and adaptability for changes, problem solving, and bolder competitive actions. (Carson et al., 2004; Finkelstein et al., 2009; Hambrick et al., 1996; Jehn, 1995; Schneider & Bellard, 2010; Talke et al., 2010; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Diversity among top executives is most beneficial in complex environments. It provides a greater breadth of information sources and skill sets (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Hambrick et al., 1996). The drawback of more diversity is an increased potential for disagreement, self-

interested behaviour, poor communication, lack of decisiveness and lack of social integration (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Hambrick et al., 1996; Miller et al., 1998).

Diversity may increase cognitive conflict because of a wider range of different perspectives and alternative interpretations (Eisenhardt et al., 1997; Ensley & Pearce, 2001; Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Challenging each other's assumptions may lead to better decisions (Jarzabkowski & Searle, 2004). It may be essential as it stimulates a thorough and creative discussion, a more complete evaluation of the alternatives, greater understanding of the chosen strategic decision and higher decision commitment (Carson et al., 2004; Eisenhardt et al., 1997; Wiersema & Bantel, 1992). But diversity may also spark dysfunctional social conflict which leads to polarization and hostility, due to attacks on personal values (Carson et al., 2004; Jarzabkowski & Searle, 2004; Jehn, 1995; Pelled et al., 1999). This type of conflict is enhanced when individuals tend to group others and themselves into social categories which leads to segregation of "ingroup" and "outgroup" (Carson et al., 2004; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). This can make TMTs less effective and hinder interactions.

The upper echelon theory has been criticized (Neely et al., 2020). The relation between demographic proxies and organisational outcomes does not consider the real psychological and social processes of TMTs (Hambrick, 2007). The inconsistent findings regarding the effects of TMT diversity have been attributed to a lack of acknowledgement of the intervening mechanisms, the so called 'black box' (Hambrick, 1994). Considerable action occurs inside this 'black box' and failure to get inside leads to construct validity problems (Hambrick, 2007; Lawrence, 1997; Priem et al., 1999; Roh, 2019). Further research on the intervening mechanisms between TMT demographical diversity and organisational performance is required to realize more consistent outcomes (Cannella & Holcomb, 2005; Carpenter et al., 2004). The upper echelon model does not address how a diverse TMT reaches consensus (Cannella & Holcomb, 2005). To improve insights into the intervening processes, it is essential to open the 'black box' to clarify how diversity within a TMT works (Hambrick, 2007; Lawrence, 1997; Priem et al., 1999). The upper echelon model needs to be refined by executing fieldwork (Hambrick, 2007; Pitcher & Smith, 2001).

Summarizing, according to the upper echelon theory organisational performance is driven by the TMT. There is a prominent focus on diversity in TMT research. The effect of TMT diversity may be positive or negative. Diversity is a double-edged sword. To really understand the effects of TMT diversity, further empirical research within the 'black box' is indispensable.

2.2 Organisational ambidexterity

Utilizing competitive advantages for long-term success requires organisations to be able to satisfy current demands by operationalising current competences while simultaneously developing fundamentally new capabilities for tomorrow's business (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004; Levinthal & March, 1993; March, 1991; Teece et al., 1997). Dynamics - like technological developments and increasing competition - force an organisation to be flexible and adaptable (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). Successful companies generate competitive advantages through revolutionary and evolutionary change (Tushman & O'Reilly 1996), or through exploratory and exploitative innovation (Benner & Tushman 2003; March, 1991).

Exploration is defined as "search, variation, risk taking, experimentation, play, flexibility, discovery, [and] innovation" (March, 1991, p.71). Exploratory innovation is designed to meet the needs of new customers and emerging markets and requires new knowledge, or development of existing knowledge, as well as the pursuit of new technological competences (Benner & Tushman, 2003). Exploitation is linked to the use of existing competences and includes activities such as "refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation, [and] execution" (March, 1991, p.71). Exploitative innovations are focussed on exploiting existing competencies (people, resources, and methods) in the most efficient way to meet the needs of existing customers or markets (Benner & Tushman, 2003). Exploration and exploitation require different structures, processes, strategies, leadership, systems, competences, and cultures (Benner & Tushman, 2003; March, 1991; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008).

Various studies have suggested that organisations pursuing exploration and exploitation simultaneously obtain superior financial performance (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004; He & Wong, 2004; Lubatkin et al., 2006; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Uotila et al., 2009). Organisations that are exclusively involved in exploration will ultimately go out of business as they are consequently locked into an infinite succession of search and change without gaining benefits, while organisations that focus merely on exploitation may experience high payoffs in the short-term, however, they are not sustainable as the organisation is not able to adjust to changes in the environment (Levinthal & March, 1993; March, 1991). The ability of an organisation to manage both activities concurrently was named "ambidexterity" (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Organisational ambidexterity is defined as "an organization's ability to be aligned and efficient in its management of today's business demands while simultaneously being adaptive to changes in the environment" (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008, p. 375).

Organisational ambidexterity causes contradictory managerial demands with respect to the allocation of resources, product development and organisational design (Smith & Tushman, 2005; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). The TMT plays a key role in 'building' an ambidextrous organisation (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004; Carmeli & Halevi, 2009; Lubatkin et al., 2006; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Smith & Tushman, 2005; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). It makes decisions regarding organisational forms, cultures, and resource allocations (Smith & Tushman, 2005). The TMT needs to be able to successfully manage the complexity of the contradictions in tasks, goals and responsibilities created by the disparity of exploitation and exploration (Lubatkin et al., 2006; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Smith & Tushman, 2005). The TMT needs to be able to deal with paradoxical challenges, which need to be reconciled (Benner & Tushman, 2003; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Smith & Tushman, 2005; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Balancing the paradoxical contradictions is rooted in senior management team's cognition (Smith & Tushman, 2005).

The more diverse a TMT is, the more diverse the cognition of its individual members are (Hambrick, 1994). A TMT with cognition diversity can facilitate addressing paradoxical challenges to achieve organisational ambidexterity (Smith & Tushman, 2005). Diversity of a TMT provides support to identify emerging customer needs, screen emerging technologies and implement them in new product portfolio innovativeness (Talke et al., 2010; Van Doorn et al., 2013). It helps a TMT to balance its focus between exploration and exploitation (Buyl et al., 2012). A diverse TMT provides the ability to handle large amounts of information, a greater variety of perspectives and more decision alternatives, that lead to the right strategic choices (Li, 2013). In other words, TMT diversity can facilitate the team's contributions to organisational ambidexterity. Nevertheless, TMT diversity may also hinder organisational ambidexterity because of its undesirable effects of ineffective communication, lack of collaboration, and intra-group conflict which prevents reaching a shared vision (Li, 2013; Smith & Tushman, 2005). To mitigate the undesirable effects of TMT diversity, an integration process needs to be in place (Li, 2013; Smith & Tushman, 2005) which stimulates collaborative participation and creates an open environment (Jarzabkowski & Searle, 2004) "in which senior executives can openly and freely exchange contradictory knowledge, resolve conflicts, and create a set of shared perceptions that then can be integrated and acted upon" (Lubatkin et al., 2006, p. 652)

In short, ambidextrous organisations know how to balance their explorative and exploitative activities, which leads to superior financial performance. The TMT plays a key role in pursuing organisational ambidexterity. Balancing the innovation activities creates a paradoxical challenge. Diversity of a TMT is a crucial enabler to reconcile this paradoxical challenge and foster organisational ambidexterity. Due to its dual nature, an intervening process mechanism is required to allow a TMT to benefit from the advantages of diversity.

2.3 Experiencing gender diversity

There has been slow but steady progress of women advancing to the upper echelon of organisations (Schneider & Bellard, 2010). Women remain underrepresented in top positions (Heilman, 2001; Schein, 2001). Governments are increasingly insisting on a fair distribution of men and women in top positions with the introduction of quota (Pande & Ford, 2011; SER, 2019; Sojo, 2016). Sixty-six countries around the world have imposed certain gender quota or legislation to promote gender diversity in boardrooms (Deloitte, 2019). Male or female leaders do not differ in effectiveness, so the competence question is irrelevant (Eagly et al., 1995; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). However, the numbers lag behind, with 16.9 percent of board seats worldwide held by women, implying that quota and legislation to boost female leadership are not remarkably successful yet (Deloitte, 2019).

Scholars have studied the effects of female representation in the upper echelon extensively (Kagzi & Guha, 2018; Post & Byron, 2015). The impact on organisational outcomes was examined from a business case perspective (Kagzi & Guha, 2018). Studies have reported a positive association with organisational performance (Carter et al., 2003; Krishnan & Park, 2005; Lückerath-Rovers, 2011), however, mixed outcomes were suggested as well (Adams, 2016; Hoobler et al., 2018; Jeong and Harrison, 2017). Other contributions of women in TMTs were found as well, like a decrease of conflict within the TMT, thus enhancing its effectiveness (Nielsen & Huse, 2010), the encouragement of innovation (Dezsö and Ross, 2012) or ambidexterity (Almor et al., 2019). Research on the effects of gender diverse TMTs has mainly been defined in terms of the nominal categories of gender (sex) of the individual TMT members (Cannella & Holcomb, 2005).

Gender diversity is not only a matter of sex, but also a subjective and dynamic experience of social categories to which members “feel” they belong. This may become prominent in specific contexts. Social categorization may become more salient because of team members reactions to an individual team member and their expectations (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003). Gender can be seen as a social construct, in which the meaning and responsive actions vary for individuals (Calás et al., 2014; Ely, 1995). Gender roles are consensual beliefs about the different characteristics of women and men (Northouse, 2019). These distinctions are deeply embedded in social structures and organisational processes (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998). Gender diversity may lead to stereotypes and prejudices (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Gender stereotypes describe stereotypical beliefs about the way women and men act and prescribe norms about how men and women should behave (Calás et al., 2014; Heilman, 2001; Northouse, 2019). Gender stereotypes and prejudices about female executives stem from the incongruity of what people perceive as

the traits of a gender role and the requirements for a successful leader role (Calás et al., 2014; Eagly & Karau, 2002). If these perceptions do not match in the mind of the observer, it can lead to a more negative evaluation of the leader (Eagly, 2007; Heilman, 2001). The leadership role is still construed as masculine and encompasses assertive and dominant behaviours (Koenig et al., 2011), while the female gender role is perceived to be more focussed on communal interests and includes kind and sympathetic behaviours (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Northouse, 2019). It can lead to female leaders feeling that they must repeatedly prove their worth as they would be perceived less effective compared to their male counterparts, especially in male-dominated teams (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998; Eagly, 2007).

Women face a considerable challenge in reaching an executive position at the top due to several (perceived) gender phenomena that exclude women from the upper echelon, like the “glass ceiling”, “broken rung”, gender role violation, and double standards of competence (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Northouse, 2019). Gender stereotyping appears to be a crucial obstacle when assessing the competence of potential candidates (Heilman, 2001), as men believe that women are less likely to possess characteristics necessary for a management position, so a lack of fit is perceived for women ‘in the pipeline to the top’ (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Management is still pervaded by the ‘think-manager-think-male’ phenomenon and with masculine characteristics (Schein, 2001).

Even after securing a top position, women may still experience subtle forms of gender discrimination, like implicit gender stereotypes or prejudices against women, as they are a minority in most male-dominated upper echelon settings (Bassford et al., 2013; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Gender microaggressions is even taking place on top level, like exclusion at key conversations or insults of thoughts, feelings, or competences of women (Bassford et al., 2013). Female executives have to explicitly prove their capability, as failure might be expected (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998). Being successful as a female executive is a violation of the prescriptive norms. The accomplishments might still be underappreciated or attributed to others or circumstances. Negative responses can occur when women exhibit behavioural styles reserved for men (Heilman, 2001).

Stereotypical expectations may not only influence the perceptions of the male counterparts, they may affect the women themselves. Middle-aged males may be considered the normative ingroup, while female executives might feel being the outgroup (Roh, 2019). They may be aware of the gender-based stereotypes and respond by adapting to the stereotype or by engaging in stereotype-countering behaviours (Northouse, 2019). They may, for instance, choose more indirect approaches of vocalizing their ideas and adjust how much they speak (Calás et al., 2014). They may choose to not accentuate their femininity, but instead emphasize their knowledge and experience (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998).

In short, women are slowly advancing to the upper echelon level of organisations. There is a business case for gender diversity of the upper echelon, but no consensus has been reached about the outcomes. Women may be equally effective yet have to overcome many barriers of inequality to reach this level. Most of these barriers are related to the social construct of gender roles and some of these barriers still exist at the top level.

2.4 Behavioural integration

A common understanding and a shared vision are important to enable a TMT to make the right strategic choices to enhance organisational performance (Venugopal et al., 2020). A shared vision embodies the extent to which TMT members enthusiastically support the collective goals and are willing to devote efforts to meet them (Li, 2013). A shared vision has a positive influence on making the right strategic decisions collectively due to a more cooperative attitude (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Li, 2013).

A diverse TMT must be able to act collectively despite holding different views throughout the strategy process. Individual executives of a diverse TMT may possess different insights and more diverse information at their disposal but may be reluctant or excluded to interact in the strategy process (Hambrick, 1994). Social integration stimulates social interactions but can also reduce critical discussions due to the desire to maintain harmonious relationships (Simsek et al., 2005).

Behavioural integration is “the degree to which the group engages in mutual and collective interaction” (Hambrick, 1994, p. 188) or in different words, displays a degree of being ‘a real team’, sharing resources, information, and responsibilities (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006; Hambrick, 1994; Hambrick, 1997; Simsek et al., 2005). It is an extension of the upper echelon perspective, as behavioural integration focuses on the entire team acting collectively and sharing values (Hambrick, 1994). Behavioural integration is conceptualized as a meta-construct of three interrelated TMT processes: (1) joint decision making, (2) collaborative behaviour, and (3) information exchange (Hambrick, 1994; Simsek et al., 2005). It entails one social dimension (collaborative behaviour) and two task dimensions (joint decision making and information exchange) (Simsek et al., 2005).

Behaviourally integrated TMTs exhibit enhanced task and social interaction. The TMT members develop a shared knowledge of the assumptions, alternatives, and consequences of each decision (Smith & Tushman, 2005). Behavioural integration enables the TMT to combine knowledge and information resources to create new insights about the organisation’s strategic options (Hambrick, 1997). It creates an open environment where executives will openly and freely voice their opinion during intense interactions. Team members will

effectively challenge opposing views during these interactions, which will spark cognitive conflict and lead to a more realistic evaluation of the situation (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006). Behavioural integration results in a shared vision (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006, Simsek et al., 2005). A behaviourally integrated TMT is perceived to reach strategic decisions of better quality (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006).

2.4.1 Joint decision-making process

The strategic decision-making process is by its nature unclear, complex, risky, and unstructured. It is influenced by the perceptions and interpretations of TMT members (Jarzabkowski & Searle, 2004; Wiersema & Bantel, 1992). Disagreement over strongly held preferences and beliefs of executives may lead to head-butting instead of issue resolution in the decision-making process. This could lead to quietly addressing strategic issues behind the scenes by some executives and excluding others (Miller et al., 1998). Joint decision making enables the TMT to discuss and evaluate all ideas before reaching a final decision (Venugopal et al., 2020). It leads to more open and transparent communication about divergent ideas (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006). It empowers individuals to address issues, enriches the information flow, and enhances the commitment of TMT members once reaching a united decision (Carmeli & Halevi, 2009; Venugopal et al., 2020). Prior research quantified three important elements of joint decision making: informing each other when actions affect another team member's work, having a clear understanding of the joint problems and needs of team members, and discussing expectations of each other (Simsek, et al., 2005).

2.4.2 Collaborative behaviour process

Collaboration is a social process that stimulates open and direct communication and resolves intra-group conflicts. Collaborative behaviour increases the capability to provide the most suitable responses in social situations. It fosters commitment and participation. When a TMT cooperates, it is better able to make use of complementary resources and skills and the various roles it can perform effectively can be expanded (Carmeli & Halevi, 2009). It encourages TMT members to listen to each other's views, value different perspectives and integrate opposing positions with the objective to develop integrated solutions (Smith & Tushman, 2005). The opinions of TMT members will be integrated in decisions, which ensures that no alternatives are missed (Lubatkin et al., 2006; Venugopal et al., 2020). Prior research has assessed collaborative behaviour as the willingness to help in managing the workload voluntarily, the flexibility to switch responsibilities to make each other's life easier and to the willingness to help each other in completing jobs and meeting deadlines (Simsek et al., 2005).

2.4.3 Information exchange process

Difficulties in gathering relevant high-quality information can distort the joint decision-making process (Laroche, 2010). The information that reaches the TMT may be incomplete, unreliable (Laroche, 2010), inaccurate, obsolete (Jarzabkowski & Searle, 2004), biased (Finkelstein et al., 2009) or an overload (Hambrick, 2010). It can be biased to influence decisions of the TMT (Laroche, 2010). Extensive information exchange provides the opportunity to disseminate knowledge within the organisation, as well as insights on the available know-how of the team (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006; Lubatkin et al., 2006). Enhanced internal information exchange enables the TMT to consider divergent individual perspectives for a more complete analysis of alternatives (Carmeli & Halevi, 2009). It enhances the social integration of the members (Hambrick, 1994) and trust between the TMT members (Lubatkin et al., 2006). Prior research measured information exchange as the quantity of ideas, quality of solutions, and the level of creativity and innovation (Simsek et al., 2005).

In conclusion, shared values and social integration of a diverse TMT are crucial for stimulating open and critical debates on alternative approaches and conflicting demands. Behavioural integration is the mechanism that promotes mutual and collective interaction of the TMT through three processes: joint decision-making, collaborative behaviour, and information exchange.

Diversity of a TMT can foster organisational ambidexterity if the TMT is behaviourally integrated to benefit from its diversity. Science has so far provided incomplete insights on the intervening mechanism of behavioural integration, defined as the 'black box', which clarifies how diverse TMTs operate. The first scientific articles were published to provide understanding of how TMT diversity affects emergent team processes (Roh et al., 2019). Now that more women are reaching the executive level, it is time for a new approach to TMT research. No study has examined how the experience of gender diversity on micro level relates to behavioural integration. Opening the 'black box' of behavioural integration will provide insights on how this experience in TMT's impacts the behavioural integration processes.

3 Methodology

The goal of this study is to understand the ways female executives experience the social construct of gender diversity, act accordingly to influence their working environment and how this affects behavioural integration. The aim of the data collection was to identify a pattern between the experiences of gender diversity of female executives and the behavioural integration processes. This chapter provides insights and transparency into the chosen strategy for this study. It describes the preselected study context, the research design, data and respondent collection, interview protocol and data analysis. Additionally, it looks at the role of the researcher. Overall, it discusses the methodology used to answer the research question: *“How does gender diversity, experienced by female executives, affect behavioural integration?”*

3.1 Study context

As this study is carried out against the background of ambidexterity, a conscious choice was made to conduct the study within the logistics industry. This industry consists of logistics service providers. Logistics service providers are companies that handle all or part of the customer's logistics activities for a fee. The logistics industry needs to be flexible to adapt to its dynamic environment. Flexibility simultaneously stimulates operational efficiency and exploration of new options. Ambidexterity is a key weapon for the logistics industry to better adapt and fit in its competitive and uncertain environment (Rojo et al., 2016). The pursuit for ambidexterity creates challenges for the logistics industry. Where this industry originates from the execution of outsourced transport, nowadays more and more companies are outsourcing a wide range of transport and logistics needs to logistics service providers (Raad voor de Leefomgeving en infrastructuur, 2013). The logistics landscape has changed through the rise of e-commerce, increased and intensified competition and greater focus on sustainability. These factors make logistics business models less tenable than before (Kindt & van der Meulen, 2015). Digitalization and technologies such as block chain, business intelligence, robotization and the use of drones for final mile deliveries are penetrating the industry (Banning et al., 2018). The development of new services and new markets is mandatory to stay ahead of competition. The futureproofing of the logistics industry lies within its ability to innovate (Banning et al., 2018; Kindt et al., 2020).

The Netherlands is well-known for its attractive innovation and business climate for the logistics industry. The country retained a dominant position for decades as a Gateway to Europe in the logistics landscape. The Dutch logistics industry belongs to the world top; however, this international top position did not

remain unchallenged (Kindt et al., 2020). In 2018, the Netherlands ranked sixth on the Logistics Performance Index (The World Bank, 2018), while in 2014 it ranked second. Innovation is essential for the Netherlands to return to the absolute top (Kindt et al., 2020). Therefore, the Netherlands was chosen for this study. In the Netherlands, the representation of female executives in the top has been slowly progressing over the last years but is still relatively low with only 12,5% women in board of directors of listed companies (Lückerath-Rovers, 2020; NOS, 2020). The logistics industry is a good reflection of these strong male-dominated boards, with a limited representation of 15% of female managers in 2020 (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2020; Freriks, 2019; Jorritsma, 2021).

3.2 Research design

From a social constructionist epistemology, gender is not considered as a simple matter of fact, but as a social construct, produced in a daily interaction of social actors (Ely, 1995). In other words, it is given meaning by people in their interaction with others (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). This study focuses on experiences of this social construct and related responses to influence the working environment (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018; Warren, 2001) to search for new understandings as a contribution to science (Boeije, 2016; Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). As this data was not available and the research question postulated in-depth data, a qualitative study was the most logical choice to develop an inductive theory (van Tulder, 2018; Warren, 2001). As experiences are personal, the unit of observation is set on an individual level. By systematically collecting new data through interviews and applying inductive reasoning, the first step towards developing theory was made by analysing the underlying social processes that shape interaction and by searching for knowledge about behaviour (McCallin, 2003). The qualitative approach provided opportunities to get an understanding of the views of the interviewees and reflect on their relevant behaviour. New insights were gained about the experiences of gender diversity in a TMT through interaction with female executives. These experiences led to specific responses, which act as a mechanism for behavioural integration. These responsive actions were revealed during the interviews.

3.3 Data collection

Interviews are often seen as one of the best ways to “enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). As the method of semi-structured interviews offers flexibility and a way to steer the interviews towards relevant information, it was deemed an appropriate method to collect the qualitative

data for this study (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Semi-structured interviews provide freedom to seek clarification of previous answers or elaboration of responses.

Data were collected between the 3rd of May and the 4th of June, with a maximum of two interviews per day. This approach of no more than two interviews per day was deliberately chosen to keep focus. In this way, potential non-verbal cues from interviewees could be taken into account, keeping in mind the sensitivity of the discussed topics (Price, 2002). Participants were offered the choice of a face-to-face interview or an online video interview (Zoom or Teams) to encourage interviewees to participate and to talk to otherwise inaccessible corporate elites (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Janghorban et al., 2014, Harvey, 2011). Executives are mostly in full-time employment and have a busy schedule. The online interview option allowed for greater flexibility to participate (Harvey, 2011; Oltmann, 2016) and greater flexibility for the respondent with regard to time and location (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Mann & Stewart, 2011; Odendahl & Shaw, 2001; Reinharz & Chase, 2001). Given the sensitivity of this study, some of the interviewees expressed a preference for interaction from a familiar and safe environment (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Oltmann, 2016). Increased social distance offered a possibility to talk openly about sensitive topics due to a higher perception of anonymity (Oltmann, 2016). In fact, 67% of the respondents preferred the option of an online interview over face-to-face. A short phone call was made after commitment to participate, to build rapport with the interviewees and to gain trust by providing a background introduction of the researcher and initial disclosure (Harvey, 2011; Mann & Stewart, 2011; Reinharz & Chase, 2001). A reminder for the planned interview was sent the day prior to the interview (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). The online interviews proved to be of equal value as the face-to-face interviews for this study, as the openness in both interviews was comparable and similar experiences were shared.

Interviews were conducted in Dutch. The average duration of an interview was one hour. There was no significant difference in the length of the average face-to-face interview and average online interview. At the start of each interview permission for voice recording of the interview was requested for the purpose of transcribing the interview records (Boeije, 2016). Due to the sensitivity of the information, anonymity was assured to gain trust from the respondents, as this has a positive effect on disclosing in-depth insights into their private and social worlds (Warren, 2001). It minimizes social desirability (Bergen & Labonté, 2019). Respondents were urged to respond most truthfully to the questions. The interviewees were given the guarantee that transcripts would not be included in the thesis and that collected data would be solely used for the purpose of this study (Wiles et al., 2008). They were offered the possibility to receive the final thesis.

3.4 Respondent selection

A purposeful sampling strategy was designed to provide information-rich cases for in-depth interviews (Patton, 2002; Robinson, 2014). Although this a priori sampling implicates a bias (Noble & Smith, 2015), it provides strength in qualitative interview studies. Information-rich cases yield unique insights and in-depth understanding about the phenomenon in question (Boeije, 2016; Patton, 2002; Robinson, 2014; Warren, 2001). The interviewees needed to have the required status to provide adequate information about their experience of gender diversity experience (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018; Etikan et al., 2016; Guest et al., 2006). The target population of this study concerned female executives, who are members of TMTs (Robinson, 2014). The definition of the upper echelon theory was followed, wherein the TMT is defined as the top two tiers of organisation's management, e.g., CEO, COO, CFO, and the next highest management tier, reporting to the CEO (Finkelstein et al., 2009). Both line and staff executives were included in the sample, as the entire TMT plays a key role in building' an ambidextrous organisation (Hambrick, 2010). The inclusion criteria (Odendahl & Shaw, 2001; Robinson, 2014) for suiting the purpose of this study were a selection of female interviewees working as an executive in a TMT ("directie") of a Dutch logistics company or a Dutch branch of a logistics company, registered with the Chamber of Commerce under SBI 'klasse 52, Vervoer en opslag' (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2018).

A post was placed on LinkedIn in Dutch (see appendix 1) and English (see appendix 2). The Dutch post led to 8,228 views, 51 reactions and 36 comments within 72 hours. The English post led to 1,826 views, 12 reactions and 7 comments (see appendix 3). A personalized post was placed in twelve network groups on LinkedIn, which are made up of women executive members or members working in the supply chain industry (see appendix 4). The Holland International Distribution Council (NDL/HIDC), a private non-profit organisation representing the Dutch logistics industry, was contacted to promote participation in this study as well. They placed a post on their website (Nederland Distributie Land, 2021) and drew attention to this post via their digital newsletter (see appendix 5). Female executives in the logistics industry were contacted in the quest for respondents. The researcher is a member of several women networks (like Diversity Works), which facilitated establishing contact with the right interviewee candidates. As a result of the above method, a list of 71 target respondents was compiled. They were sent a written invitation by email with an elaboration of the purpose of the interview, the protection of anonymity, and the timeframe (Robinson, 2014). There was a non-response of 36 women and 8 women declined to participate. An unexpectedly high response of 27 respondents was achieved, of which two respondents took part in the pilot study. The a priori sample size was specified at a minimum of 12 interviews (Guest et al., 2006). As a number of 25

interviews was logistically manageable for the researcher, the target sample size was expanded (Robinson, 2014). One respondent unfortunately did not show up during the planned digital interview, which led to 24 conducted interviews for the main study.

3.5 Role of the researcher

Being female and having worked in male-dominated TMTs for the last six years within the logistics industry, the researcher is a member of the population itself. As the researcher is the key person to obtain data from the respondents and to write this thesis (Chenail, 2011), she can be viewed as an integral part of both the process and its product (Boeije, 2016; Galdas, 2017). From a practical point of view, this offered several advantages. The researcher speaks Dutch, which gave the interviewees the opportunity to conduct the interviews in their native language. The researcher has professional credentials within the logistics industry, which facilitated the quest for an adequate number of respondents (Odendahl & Shaw, 2001). It also managed the power imbalance, since there was only a small seniority gap between researcher and respondents (Odendahl & Shaw, 2001; Welch et al., 2002). The researcher is native to the dynamics of the industry, which facilitated a level of mutual understanding and interaction (Bergen & Labonté, 2019; Chenail, 2011). On the other hand, it presented risks like potential bias, due to the affinity with the population and social circle being studied (Reinharz & Chase, 2001; Warren, 2001). Bias may limit curiosity and provides a distortion of the results (Chenail, 2011; Galdas, 2017). The danger existed that the interviews become more like a conversation, where accurate reporting would yield to the norms of polite communication (Nederhof, 1985). To remedy these risks, a pilot study was undertaken (Chenail, 2011).

3.6 Pilot study

Prior to the data collection, two pilot interviews were conducted with the objective to try out the proposed method for the main study to establish that the interview protocol would perform as envisioned (Chenail, 2011; Wray et al., 2017). A pilot study helps to detect potential bias (Chenail, 2011) and to reflect on interpersonal skills and abilities (Wray et al., 2017). Audio recordings of the two pilot interviews were analysed and feedback was requested from the interviewees to identify unclarities and to pinpoint difficult questions (Chenail, 2011). The interview protocol was altered to avoid some confirmation bias identified during the pilot study. In the main study questions were carefully asked in a neutral way and the researcher kept her own experiences to herself and did not share any personal insights. It became clear that some

social desirability was present, like not responding to ‘threatening questions’ of experiences of feeling different (Nederhof, 1985). This was remedied in the main study by more probing (Bergen & Labonté, 2019). By undertaking the pilot study, it was possible to reflect on the interview guide (Majid et al., 2017). This led to a change in the order of the questions and the inclusion of additional probing, thus ensuring that all relevant topics were addressed (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018; Warren, 2001).

A personal reflection on how well the pilot interviews were conducted led to an approach of using mainly open-ended questions to provoke subtle and rich responses (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002) and to avoid elites feeling confined to a restricted set of answers (Harvey, 2011). Relistening to the recordings confirmed that the researcher did not adequately respond to some of the participants’ pauses, silences or laughter. By conducting the two pilot interviews, the competence of the researcher was enlarged, and the impact of the researcher’s bias was minimized as much as possible. This increased the reliability of this study. The results of the pilot interviews supported the conclusion from the main data.

3.7 Interview protocol

The interview guide (see appendix 6) started off with some general questions about the position, responsibilities, and tenure of the interviewee. An overview is provided in appendix 7. The interviewees were asked to provide a deeper insight on the company (see appendix 8). Companies were classified in small (turnover \leq € 12 million), medium-sized (turnover \leq € 40 m million) or large (turnover $>$ 40 million) based on their revenue (Chamber of Commerce, 2021). If the company was a multinational enterprise (Eurostat, n.d.), the country of the headquarters was documented. Subsequently, the current and previous composition of the TMT was discussed (see appendix 9) as well as the TMT meeting structure, like frequency, chairman and agenda (see appendix 10). As this study is conducted against the background of ambidexterity, the perceived level of innovation of the company was asked together with some examples of innovation (see appendix 11). It was verified who is responsible for driving the innovation within the organisation.

During the core of the interview, the three processes of behavioural integration were discussed in detail to ensure input for the research question. Laddering-up as well as laddering-down techniques were used during the interviews (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018; Price, 2002). The three behavioural integration processes were discussed in depth, starting with the least invasive question, viz. a process description at TMT level to set the scene and to collect contextual information. Subsequently, more invasive questions were asked about the role of the participant. When the interviewee showed cues of readiness, the interview proceeded

to deeper matters of feelings, values, and beliefs. The most invasive questions were kept to the end of the interview (Price, 2002). They comprised the possible interrelation between gender and role in the TMT, the experiences of gender differences with male TMT members and the obstacles met in a male-dominated TMT. These questions were asked in the most neutral way possible to minimize socially desirable answers (Nederhof, 1985). When interviewees did not answer the question, they were politely asked again, or another question was asked before reverting to the original question (Harvey, 2011). Even though the interview guide consisted of a structured sequence of topics and questions, the interviews followed the flow of conversation (Warren, 2001), with the interviewer steering the conversation back to specific topics when the discussion became too much side-tracked.

Follow-up correspondence led to post-interview cooperation and facilitated factual verification of the information shared in appendix 7 to 10 (Welch et al., 2002).

3.8 Data analysis

The thematic analysis method was selected to analyse the data, as it is a flexible and useful research tool and provides a rich and detailed account of the data (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). It fits a relatively superficial level of interpretation and can function as a fundamental method to identify, analyse, and interpret patterns of meaning (Boeije, 2016). The thematic analysis approach led to the construction of a coding tree with themes and subthemes. Due to the explorative nature of this study, the coding tree was developed organically after data collection, instead of being fitted into a pre-existing coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the first phase of thematic analysis all interviews were transcribed verbatim, using the original recordings and transcription software (Amber script). Two transcripts were shared with the respective interviewees to corroborate their accuracy (Noble & Smith, 2015). The interview recordings and transcripts were familiarized by reading and re-reading the transcripts. Next, the transcripts were analysed with the software coding tool Atlas.TI 8, using open coding to identify interesting features by looking for statements, keywords and quotes related to experiences, gender differences and behavioural integration. Initially, open coding was used to create a first set of 268 elements. As an example, the following quote received the code 'alpha male behaviour':

“Men are, of course, much more of a cockerel. Much more, have more drive, the urge to be assertive. Our HR lady doesn’t have that at all...If there are discussions about someone proving themselves to be right, it is never the HR lady. She can just as easily accept that she is wrong. And the men have more difficulty with that. They fight a little more.” (R10)

During the analysis of the last four interviews no new elements emerged, which may suggest data saturation (Guest et al., 2006). By continuously reverting to the research question, several elements became irrelevant and were categorized under miscellaneous. The elements that mattered were categorized into experiences of gender diversity, responsive actions, and perceived outcomes of behavioural integration. As a next step, axial coding was executed to consolidate, reformat, or split elements into potential dominant or interesting patterned responses in the data. Based on advanced insights and similarities in the data above quote was redesignated to ‘behavioural dominance’. An ongoing analysis was carried out by reviewing the elements and categories. In this process ‘behavioural dominance’ was merged with the way this dominance within the team is expressed, the communication style, labelled as ‘brusque communication’. Both elements relate to the form of conduct within the TMT. Together with the element ‘expectation of ingroup behaviour’ which relates to the type of behaviour the TMT expects from its members, the subtheme ‘toxic masculinity’ was formed. This subtheme represents the experience of a toxic form of conduct. In this way, each subtheme was defined clearly, by refining its specifics (see appendix 12). Citations were gathered of each subtheme to consider whether the subthemes worked in relation to the elements and for the entire data set.

In the final step, the interrelationships of the subthemes were identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). It became clear that there is a hidden relation between the sociocultural experiences of gender diversity and the responsive actions that female executives undertake, impacting behavioural integration. These actions were defined by the female executives as being different from their male counterparts and related to their experiences. These established connections between responsive actions within and across data and participants’ experiences of gender diversity provided a framework for organizing and reporting the perceived outcomes of behavioural integration (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The established relations led to 3 overarching perceived outcomes of behavioural integration, namely harmonised team behaviour, making common cause and imposed commitment. Appendix 13 contains the final coding tree.

4 Results

This chapter discusses the results of the study. The data from 24 interviews with female executives constitute the basis for this chapter. During the interviews, the three identified processes of behavioural integration were discussed. Each process was studied on how it is operational within the TMT, which role the respondent fills and what the respondent relates to being a woman. The differences that respondents experience with their male counterparts were asked, and finally which gender barriers the respondents experience as a woman in TMTs. A clear distinction of experiences of gender diversity prevailed between male-dominated team behaviour, individual behaviour within the team and behaviour of male executives towards the female executives. Respondents highlighted deliberately chosen responsive actions towards these experiences. Through the analysis, it became clear that these responsive actions affect the perceived outcomes of TMT behavioural integration. This in turn influences ambidexterity.

Three perceived outcomes of behavioural integration are found: harmonised team behaviour, making common cause and imposed commitment. The paragraphs below will discuss the perceived outcomes, in relation to the experiences of gender diversity and responsive actions.

4.1 Harmonised team behaviour

The first experience of gender diversity, discussed in almost all interviews, concerns male-dominated behaviour of the team, labelled as toxic masculinity. The female respondents described stereotypically masculine behaviour, relating to the form of conduct of the TMT. During TMT discussions a certain power play takes place, which is experienced as a manifestation of behavioural dominance and brusque communication. A clash of egos, showdown and assertiveness reflect this behavioural dominance with the goal to prove to be right. This behaviour is expressed through a specific communication style. Respondents described it as a blunt, boorish way, with little consideration for others and limited awareness of the timing of the communication. It is experienced as grandstanding, with a lot of shouting and limited listening. In some tense situations, it is even aggravated by banging a fist on the table, slamming doors, and swearing. The communication is to the point, with an emphasis on getting the message across, no matter whether it is the right moment. The message is not framed and there is little tolerance towards others. In the TMT environment, most female respondents consider this to be the normative ingroup behaviour and some experience pressure to adjust and to comply. Their behaviour is addressed by their superiors as being too

sweet, not pushing, or forceful enough. It feels as if they are not allowed to respond emotionally in a feminine way. As a respondent mentioned:

“So, I believe, if you say you want more women joining, but women should behave exactly the same way as men. So why would you want a woman?” (R20)

The respondents attribute toxic masculinity to the fact that men do not realise that conduct is just as important as content and results, because of a seeming lack of social filter. The female executives react to this experience by engaging in female stereotyped behaviours. By observing this masculine behaviour and paying attention to the non-verbal communication during these clashes, they are paying attention to what is happening below the surface. Intuition and empathy were highlighted as the way to sense others' emotions. By being considerate and asking how people are feeling and if they need help, they are trying to develop social connectiveness within the team. Some female executives cautiously choose an approach and time to respond to brusque communication by staying calm in heated discussions or distancing themselves from the discussion. There is an awareness of the need to package the message and to choose the indirect approach to create a support base. Others sometimes choose to respond with stereotype-countering behaviour by giving a harsh reaction to the confrontation, which the respondents relate to consciously behaving less woman like. Intentionally creating a pause by using humour or indicating that the issue may be better postponed is a more common response. Humour can also be used to say something with a quip, to lighten up things a bit without having to hurt anyone's feelings, which the women say works better for their male colleagues. Some deliberately show vulnerability to loosen the atmosphere or intermediate between opponents to decrease conflicts. Undesirable behaviour is flagged, especially when the female executives feel a kind of unfairness in the interpersonal attacks. In these situations, they try to create awareness of what appropriate behaviour in the team should look like or at least hold up a mirror to their colleagues or the CEO in a deliberately chosen one-to-one moment. By addressing conflicts, the female executives express unresolved conflicts consciously and make sure that they do not continue to simmer. All these responsive actions can be related to putting attention to the process on how to cooperate as a team instead of just focus on the content of the message. There is a belief amongst the respondents that these responsive actions are related to their gender.

“To be honest, it's very stupid. But I think it's just something typically female, that she does these things because she's supposed to be some sort of mother of nature. Sort of like a lioness at times. I don't know if that's the right description, but I really think it's something natural.” (R24)

TABLE 1
Harmonized team behaviour

EXPERIENCE OF TOXIC MASCULINITY	RESPONSIVE ACTIONS	HARMONIZED TEAM BEHAVIOUR
	Being considerate <i>"I try to focus on social contact as much as possible and make sure the atmosphere stays friendly." (R01)</i>	
Behavioural dominance <i>"Men are, of course, much more of a cockerel. Much more, yes, have more drive, urge to be assertive. Our HR lady doesn't have that at all. If there are discussions about someone wanting to be right, it is never the HR lady. She can just as easily accept that she is wrong. And the men have more difficulty with that. They fight more." (R14)</i>	Flagging unacceptable behaviour <i>"And then a vicious conversation arises, and I think in this team setting, I'm the one who usually intervenes and says, hey guys, this kind of behaviour is not how we deal with each other. But that's also because I don't like this way of working. I don't know if that's because I'm a woman, I guess so." (R22)</i>	Change of behaviour <i>"I also think that a good example is a good one. If I show that I help people and offer a listening ear, the others will do the same. I think that is very important." (R10)</i>
Brusque communication <i>"They are all males, also all Bokito's and how they communicate so to speak. They bang their fist on the table and this is how we are going to do it. And so that's how it is. And that's really a different way." (R08)</i>	Mediating conflicts <i>"And actually, I'm put in place as a sort of intermediary between the two to ensure that they start talking to each other again, that one falls in line and that the other one springs into action. And well, like that. I think it is very feminine to do it that way." (R02)</i>	Different dynamics <i>"You will see that if you bring women into a group of men, the dynamics will change." (R20)</i>
Expectation of ingroup behaviour <i>"I was told at one point that I would have the ability to understand, but that I should indeed become a bit harder, because I was still too sweet... I had a face that was too sweet, and I didn't push too hard, that's what I was told at the time." (R04)</i>	Responding judiciously <i>"I never find the corporate jungle so constructive, because ultimately it is often a clash of egos and then we walk out again and yes, then I sometimes wonder. And that will be fine-tuned somewhere else or whatever. But I think women can break through that with their way of communicating." (R14)</i>	Team spirit <i>"Gender diversity naturally provides a good balance. Different form of humour, respect, and more discussion where emotion/feeling is applied more quickly. Atmosphere is important, that helps with a healthy balance." (R16)</i>
	Sensing <i>"I think it's a bit of a feeling, I don't mean that men are not like that by definition, but I think that we as women are more sensitive to that, a bit of atmosphere. How is it going, how does a conversation like this go, and those signals that we can pick up on better." (R18)</i>	

The female respondents believe that their responsive actions affect the behavioural integration of the team. The presence of women in the team changes the power dynamics of communication and the atmosphere. It leads to a different type of conversation, where messages are formulated more precisely, and the power play is dropped. The discussion becomes more light-hearted and relaxed, in which team members start listening to each other. There is a better mutual understanding. The competition drive is reduced, and a healthy discussion is taking place. The team members show more consideration for each other. There is an understanding of just being part of the machine and that the machine can only work as a whole. Setting a good example leads to making team members think about their behaviour, adapting it or copying the example. Team members start treating each other with respect, appreciating and trusting each other, which contributes to team building.

In contrast to this outcome is the environment of family-owned businesses. In this environment, respondents do not or hardly experience toxic masculinity. There is a natural tendency towards listening to each other. Running a business with family members creates a different atmosphere within the TMT as there is a natural connection, based on family ties. This is the foundation for open direct communication and mutual respect. A direct confrontation is taking place, without sensing or responding judiciously. As an example, below quotes:

"I'm not the type of woman who is very sensitive and picks up all the signals, I don't have that." (R05)

"My brother and I, that is of course a slightly different situation than when you are in a regular company with men and women. Yes, my brother and I are very much in tune with each other in such a way that we know of each other who is good in what...I actually bring that up immediately. And that is sometimes very unpleasant of family. I think you bring it up sooner than when you're just colleagues, and sometimes that's annoying, because someone could have got out of bed on the wrong foot. And you wouldn't comment on that immediately in the case of a colleague, but in the case of your brother you would." (R07)

Another contrast to above is behavioural dominance by women. Some respondents stated that they experience equal levels of dominance:

"I think that is also because, if you look at the ladies, we have quite a few ladies with quite a sharp tongue and we have some typical men...so the men are maybe a little softer than average and the ladies are maybe a little harder than average." (R09)

A certain openness in the discussions is experienced, as well as the space to freely share opinions. In these teams, however, there is a presence of strong power dynamics, with pure focus on content. For example, the following quote reflects lack of mediation of conflicts to harmonise the team behaviour:

"Sometimes I think: yes, never mind, I have enough to do. They will tell me when things are getting out of hand again. That is not a good attitude, I know, but it is something that is created by circumstances." (R15)

In short, the experience of male-dominated behaviour of the TMT leads to several types of responsive actions from female executives, which are related to emphasizing the form of conduct within the team. These actions lead to the perceived outcomes of different dynamics, behavioural change, and mutual respect in the team, labelled as a harmonized team behaviour.

4.2 Making common cause

The second experience of gender diversity in the data is related to self-centred behaviour of individual male TMT members. Female executives experience that their male colleagues have a stronger focus on their own successes and stick more to their own convictions, which creates a conflict of interest in the TMT. Own interest is placed above the common interest in the power game of the TMT. If a decision is unclear, leaving a grey area, women feel their counter partners are using this as an opportunity to do things their way. There is no hesitation to push through individual agenda's, bypassing colleagues and taking matters straight to the highest level. Reaching one's own goal is given priority, as are the additional own successes. There is less interest in what others have to say, which is emphasized by poor listening to problems of others and by demarcating one's territory. Men want to be seen as leaders; they not only want the recognition, but also uphold their reputation. If they are to be blamed for anything, they will place the causes outside themselves to maintain the perception of their achievements and to buoy up their prestige.

"Men are more inclined to go for themselves and their own success and women more from the community. I think that's the biggest difference."(R02)

The respondents expressed that their intentions in the TMT are different. By being transparent in communication and intentions, women try to open up the discussion and get the different perspectives on the table. By taking stock of everybody's interests and pros and cons in a discussion, they focus on a workable solution for everyone with a common denominator, which will benefit the company. They try to trigger the discussion further by providing different insights and thinking out-of-the-box. Female executives

ask critical questions to challenge others and to ensure that alternatives are considered, possible risks are taken into account and decisions are not made lightly. As female executives stated that they experience less concern about their reputation, they feel not withheld to put the cat among the pigeons. As they desire clarity for all, they will keep on asking questions until a joint decision is made with little room for different interpretations. They believe that they only impose a judgment after consultation of the team.

"I think that seeking feedback from someone else is more feminine than masculine. I think so, I see the men more, this is how it is, and this is how we are going to do it. And I think, well from my side it's more feminine, just looking for input from other sides." (R17)

To get everybody on board in the process of joint decisions with the focus on common interests, female executives consciously choose to leave their ego at home and share the credits. This means that at times they deliberately retreat into the background to create support and may even make it look like the solution they proposed was suggested by a male colleague. By keeping a low profile and providing central stage to others, they make it acceptable for their male counterparts that decisions are taken jointly, and responsibilities are shared.

The data shows that the females feel that the above-mentioned responsive actions influence behavioural integration. They unite the team to achieve a shared goal. Making a common cause is sparked by debating each other's viewpoints in an open way and looking at them from different angles. There is a focus on the bigger picture and nothing is lost out of sight. The conversation can become a dialogue, where everybody gets a turn and different opinions can be discussed and listened to. Asking questions and providing out-of-the-box perspectives may limit groupthink and stimulate creative processes. Open discussions might contribute to individual TMT members agreeing and deciding jointly from common ground. Better and more sustainable choices are made, and priorities are set. Demarcation of responsibilities are broken through, and the business is driven together. The feeling of togetherness can stimulate sharing responsibilities. Being successful together thus gains the upper hand.

TABLE 2
Making common cause

EXPERIENCE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST	RESPONSIVE ACTIONS	MAKING COMMON CAUSE
	<p>Asking critical questions</p> <p><i>"What I see myself is that, as a woman, I am less bothered about throwing things on the table than I see with many men, but I don't know if that's the case, because I can't look into their heads. But it doesn't bother me to throw things on the table. Yes, I think men are more bothered by that, that it all has to be very cool and sound tough."</i> (R14)</p>	<p>Business interests first</p> <p><i>"To me it is precisely that balance that makes it possible to be successful together and not lose sight of anything."</i> (R09)</p>
<p>Self-interests</p> <p><i>"And I believe the rest of my male colleagues [think], let's get it over with, it's not my department, not interesting, just let it go, it'll just take my department more work so why should I do it."</i> (R18)</p>	<p>Being transparent</p> <p><i>"People know what they can expect from me, and I am very open, and everyone knows that I have no agenda, no hidden agenda. Of course, I have my own [agenda] to get something done, but I don't have a hidden agenda. What you see is what you get."</i> (R12)</p>	<p>Common responsibilities</p> <p><i>"I sometimes say I am not mother superior here who constantly has to put men to work, because it does produce something. But of course, in the end, the idea is that it happens without me and that they feel genuinely responsible for it. And you see that more and more."</i> (R16)</p>
<p>Status significance</p> <p><i>"I see some men do it too, but I think women do it naturally more easily than men and that may have something to do with a bit of status or ego; a woman doesn't make a big deal out of it, she makes it easy to discuss and a man will sometimes choose for yes, wait a minute, but I have a reputation to uphold."</i> (R13)</p>	<p>Focussing on the greater good</p> <p><i>"From the idea to do well for the company and not to raise your profile or put yourself on the map."</i> (R16)</p>	<p>Discussing different perspectives</p> <p><i>"Men and women are just different, and they should stay that way, because I think it's precisely because of those differences that really wonderful things can happen. Because at a certain point you start to complement each other, because the man might bring something to the table to convince the woman of something she didn't think of and vice versa, and that's how great creative processes and ideas come about."</i> (R24)</p>
	<p>Providing different perspectives</p> <p><i>"I really believe that the female brain, just works differently. We think about different things than a man thinks about."</i> (R01)</p>	<p>Taking joint decisions</p> <p><i>"I think that it [diversity] really brings management teams [...] that you look at things from many different perspectives and that you are much more into cooperation and therefore that you become the sum of the parts and not that certain parts make decisions, but that decisions are made from the common ground."</i> (R02)</p>
	<p>Sharing the honours</p> <p><i>"People are not so used to a woman in this role, so you take it up a little differently. Yes, how do I interpret that, more from the togetherness and putting people forward instead of profiling myself."</i> (R02)</p>	

A contrast to above findings is the situation where the female executives have a responsibility of ownership or co-ownership (see appendix 7). These executives do not experience the presence of conflict of interest within the TMT. They are aware of the need to take the ultimate decisions once there is disagreement but still very conscious of how they must fulfil their role. They strive for a common cause by involving others in the discussion, leaving room for an open discussion of different perspectives, making sure that there is a support ground for decisions and treating the TMT members as equals. The following quotes support this view:

"We always try to work it out together. In the end, I'm the one who takes the decision if we don't agree. But not by pushing it through. Because it's a small company, it involves people and they really have to be able to get on with it...You just have to work it out together, get it very clear together." (R05)

"Well, at the end of the day, I'm the boss, the statutory Director, but I can't do something on my own. It has to be a team, so as long as we are not equal, they will certainly not accept that I do it my way." (R03)

"I should actually be more in the background. I have to learn to let things happen. But that is difficult of course, because then you are in a real split: it's my money, it's my company. But it's not always handy to have an answer or a solution ready beforehand and not giving the rest room to think." (R23)

Summarizing, female executives respond to the experience of conflict of interest in the TMT with specific actions. These responsive actions stimulate the team to feel responsible to take a joint decision with the best interest for the company, after a thorough and open discussion of the different interests and focussing the team on sharing the success of the outcome.

4.3 Imposed commitment

The final experience of gender diversity consists of social categorization behaviour from the side of the male colleagues towards the female executives. This feels as subtle forms of gender discrimination. It is experienced through insults about communication and competences and exclusion from the ingroup. The respondents feel that they are being treated differently, purely because they are women. In discussions the respondents feel that they are often interrupted. If female executives take centre stage and raise their voice to firmly express their opinions, their communication style is being assessed differently from that of men and less accepted, attributing more positive characteristics to the communication of ingroup members than outgroup members. Vicious responses occur by labelling a strong stand as 'bitchy,' 'hysterical' or 'quick-

tempered'. It is perceived as pushing, nagging, annoying or emotional, while an equally behavioural style shown by men is understood as forceful. This leads to women feeling that they are an unworthy interlocutor.

"What I experience is that TMT-members often say: Take it easy. Or that they think I'm a bit of a hothead, while I think, I don't know if it's like that, but you do that too, but with me it's interpreted differently. I do have that feeling sometimes. If I get a bit angry, then all sorts of things are immediately associated with that, while they are just as likely to get angry in their turn. Or what are you shouting about, they say. Then I think, well, I'm not shouting, I'm raising my voice, that's something different." (R11)

Patronising, belittling, and denigrating behaviour are some of the examples which were emphasized during the interviews. On the other hand, women also feel that they get preferential treatment and get things done more quickly because of being women. The female executives believe that this behaviour is ingrained, and that most men are not even aware of their different behaviour towards women.

"We had a European management meeting with over 150 people, with only a handful of women and that day was led by someone high up in our organisation. He said: well ladies, please stand up, it's really superfine that you are all here again for the aesthetic we are really very happy that you are in the organisation, please turn around. And we were like, huh [sound of shock] ...It was really meant to be complimentary, but at a time like that, people don't realise that we're not sitting there because we happen to be dressed up nicely that day...So they don't realise that you're pushing someone completely aside with that...I don't care if I look nice, even if my hair stands on end. What matters is that I have a say in this TMT. That is what I am here for." (R17)

This different treatment distracts from the competences of the female executives. In the assessment of competences, women feel that there are evaluative biases, leading to double standards. Women feel that they have to explicitly prove their capability. If they are successful, they are not easily given credit. Instead, emphasis is placed on the absence of specific skills. This lack of acknowledgement also manifests itself through exclusion. There is a certain restraint from the ingroup towards participation of more qualified women on Board level. It feels like only the top of the class women have the right to join. Hiring a woman is perceived as a risk because she might become pregnant. Having a seat in the TMT does not remove the feeling of exclusion. Female executives consider themselves as not being 'one of the guys' on the basis of their experiences.

TABLE 3
Imposed commitment

EXPERIENCE OF GENDER MICROAGGRESSIONS	RESPONSIVE ACTIONS	IMPOSED COMMITMENT
<p>Censure of communication</p> <p><i>"When a man gets angry, he's a tough guy and when a woman gets angry, she's hysterical, so to speak." (R10)</i></p>	<p>Claiming position</p> <p><i>"I am very clear. And I do substantiate my points very strongly, so I make sure that there is no room for them to see me as, well, how should I put this, as a nice girl, that they pander to me, just to get me off their backs. I want to be taken at least as seriously as any other TMT member." (R06)</i></p>	<p>Antagonism</p> <p><i>"Then they fall silent, or nothing is done with it, and they just go on as if they hadn't heard. Or they make the sound 'meow', okay, here we go again and then we continue." (R17)</i></p>
<p>Different treatment</p> <p><i>"The piece of skirt comes to the warehouse, that's how people talk about it. Look, and that's where you notice that people don't take you seriously because you're a woman." (R08)</i></p>	<p>Limiting unequal treatment</p> <p><i>"My business unit starts with an A, and I am the only woman. So, at a certain point, at all the meetings it was always: we start with the A or yes, you are the only woman, so you start. I once got very angry about that second one, and I said: I just don't want to hear it anymore, I don't feel like it, I understand that it is always annoying that someone has to be the first, but don't always put me forward as cannon fodder because I am a woman, I'm not up for it. And they don't do that anymore." (R22)</i></p>	<p>Earning respect</p> <p><i>"It's funny, because I never really realised that he [the owner] realised it that way and then he said, you are one of the few women I have worked with who consistently commands real respect and you deserve it, and you get it." (R06)</i></p>
<p>Double standards</p> <p><i>"You had an air freight, ocean freight, anyway it was all men, and I was the woman and I think everybody had the title 'Director' except me, I had the biggest team, but I was 'manager'. I didn't even realise it at first until someone gave me that Org chart. I say that's weird. I have to take care of that, because it's not okay, it's just not okay." (R08)</i></p>	<p>Trusting own competences</p> <p><i>"Then you just learn to know your own boundaries. It's just a search that you do and at some point, I decided that maybe 10 years ago, I'm done. It's no longer my problem that you don't take me seriously. It's your problem. And since then, I've really started to live like that... And I've made a very conscious choice to do that. And I trust I can do it." (R19)</i></p>	<p>Inclusion</p> <p><i>"The pleasant thing is that if you do set your boundaries or make people aware of the fact that they are doing that, yes, I have had positive experiences with it. I've never had them push me aside afterwards because it does strengthen the bond. I've had a lot of situations where I really felt comfortable working as a team, and I really didn't think that they were concerned about the fact that I'm a woman. And a lot of it is ingrained subconsciously, and yes, you just have to fight it, that's all." (R14)</i></p>
<p>Exclusion</p> <p><i>"To put it very bluntly, a lot is arranged while they're taking a leak, and we're not there." (R12)</i></p>		

They feel that many decisions are fine-tuned elsewhere and that things are happening around them which are out of their grasp, even though they are responsible. All these experiences can be interpreted as gender microaggressions. Female executives respond to these gender microaggressions by holding on to the conviction that they are entitled to their rank. During the interviews respondents expressed a conscious choice for self-confidence. By trusting their own competences and objectifying negative responses from their environment, (pure) survival is of a lesser concern. Instead of responding to the feeling that they have to prove their value, they place this feeling outside of themselves and deliberately choose to act confidently. This self-confidence feeds the feeling that they have a right to be in their position and that they can claim this entitlement. By examining TMT members' expectations and stressing whether they are reasonable, female executives create a pattern of expectation towards their position and set boundaries to the amount of work that is placed in their hands. By preparing TMT meetings thoroughly and making sure their contribution is well-founded, they command attention. By demanding time of their male colleagues, they ensure they stay connected. If they feel they are being by-passed or left out of topics relating to their area of responsibility, they sound the alarm, making it difficult to circumvent them. In this process of claiming recognition of their competences, female executives openly confront discriminatory behaviour, like sexist remarks from the team, without making a big fuss about it, thus ensuring that the attention remains on competences.

"I don't let people walk all over me and I think that, as a woman, you don't have to have a big mouth, you don't have to behave like half a man...I even think that you just have to keep your femininity, but you do have to raise the alarm and have the courage to speak up to people when you have the idea that, hey, something has bypassed me. And of course, I've experienced that in the past, but then I'm not afraid to seek the confrontation with someone and talk about it." (R16)

The discussed responsive actions of female managers lead to the unravelling of unconscious behaviour. This increases the team's respect for the female executives. It leads to bonding, thereby reducing the team's unease about working with a woman. The downside is that addressing unequal treatment triggers irritation, animosity, or venomous feedback. So, there is a dual effect on behavioural integration of the team. The commitment is increasing, but it is a forced one.

In contrast to these results is the situation where the CEO plays an active role in reducing gender microaggressions. When he / she demands that the female executive has to be recognised as an integral part of the team and that the team meets, thinks, and acts like a team, the team commitment changes. In these situations, female executives feel they are being listened to and are treated equally.

"I think that X [CEO] in person finds it very important, diversity, male-female ratio, he is really very strict on that. And if someone even has the inclination to make a remark like that again, that person is really punished for it. By expressing that's not acceptable. That never happened before." (R18)

"It was the case that people thought it was a bit odd that I joined the Management Team. Actually, they all hated it and I'm not talking about the CEO, because he was actually the one who put me in that position. But the four colleagues were like: well, what is she doing here? She's just a newbie. She's literally not one of the guys. And then our CEO said, yes, whatever, but one team, one goal and we really need each other. So, you five are going to make things work, one way or the other, so good luck." (R16)

In recap, the experience of gender microaggressions is rebutted with powerful actions of claiming authorization and restricting gender discrimination. Exactly this puts the commitment on the edge.

5 Discussion and conclusion

This chapter discusses the results and links them with the theoretical scope to draw a conclusion. It will highlight the practical implications. The chapter will end with an insight into the study's limitations and suggestions for future research.

5.1 Discussion and conclusion

This study aimed to answer the research question:

How does gender diversity, experienced by female executives, affect behavioural integration?

The relation between the experience of gender diversity and behavioural integration has not been explored before. This study provides new insights on how female executives operate within the intervening mechanism of behavioural integration and how the experience of gender diversity may impact this.

The results reveal that female executives feel that they are different within the context of a male-dominated setting, which still prevails most TMTs (Bassford et al., 2013; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Being a minority may even reinforce the social construct of distinguishing between the distinctive characteristics of men and women based on stereotypical expectations (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998). In this setting, experiences of gender diversity are fact of life for female executives, no matter of age (appendix 7), size of the company (appendix 8), TMT composition (appendix 9) or the frequency of the TMT interaction (appendix 10). These experiences confirm the theory of gender as a social construct in which meaning and responsive actions of individuals differ (Calás et al., 2014; Ely, 1995). The results support the claim that experiences are subjective and dynamic, so that specific contexts can affect their presence or absence (Northouse, 2019), such as family-owned companies or having responsibility of ownership.

In this study, most female elites have explicitly condemned forms of team behaviour or individual self-centred behaviour as typical masculine. This gives reason to be cautious about the results. It may be that these experiences are partly based on consensual perceptions of gender roles of men (Northouse, 2019), leading to social categorization of this behaviour as masculine (Calás et al., 2014; Ely, 1995). The contrasting result of the behavioural dominance of female leaders demonstrates that these behaviours can also be expressed by women.

The findings uncovered a hidden relation between the sociocultural experiences of gender diversity and the responsive actions that female executives undertake, impacting behavioural integration. It confirms that

the social construct of gender differences has an impact on the responsive actions of women (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998; Calás et al., 2014; Ely, 1995; Northouse, 2019). Empirical insight has been provided into how feeling different and being different affects responsive actions at a micro level. Stereotypical behaviour influences women themselves, as they are aware of it and deliberately choose how to respond. The results fill a theoretical gap about these conscious responsive actions of female executives to biases related to diversity (Hambrick, 2007). In studying the association between gender diversity and the emergent team processes (Roh et al., 2019), responsive actions cannot be ignored. Female executives undertake responsive actions to overcome gender microaggressions. They feel the responsibility to make efforts to integrate a gender diverse TMT, by responding to toxic masculinity and self-centred behaviour. Stereotypes are powerful influencers of behaviour, however, do not always evoke a confirmation of behaviour (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Female elites may adapt their behaviour and respond in a more masculine manner (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Northouse, 2019). This response of stereotype-countering behaviour is illustrated with giving a harsh reaction to the confrontation. They may exploit their communal interests and respond attentive and thoughtful (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Northouse, 2019). The range of responsive actions underlines that researchers should reconsider the use of nominal methods in studying how gender diversity affects team processes (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003).

The experience of gender diversity affects behavioural integration through responsive actions. Previous literature categorized behavioural integration into three interrelated processes of joint decision-making, collaborative behaviour, and information exchange (Hambrick, 1994; Simsek et al., 2005). This study found more variants of behavioural integration and, moreover, the fact that the classification into three processes regardless of the context and composition of TMT is oversimplified. Behavioural integration can be influenced by specific contexts and individual responsive actions. In this study, the perceived outcomes of behavioural integration are affected by responsive actions of female executives, which are caused by gender diversity experiences. This implicates that the existing theory on behavioural integration does not fully cover the scope of what is happening within a TMT. The extant behavioural integration processes (Hambrick, 1994; Simsek et al., 2005) are not complete. Behavioural integration should be theorised based on the context.

The first experience of gender diversity has to do with the form of conduct of (almost) all men of the TMT, which manifests itself in assertiveness and dominance (Koenig et al., 2011). These norms of the ingroup (Roh, 2019) are reflected in their way of communicating and the expectation that the female executives will behave likewise. Toxic masculinity, however, is only experienced in a corporate business structure. Women respond by using their sensitivity and communicating in a judicious way (Calás et al., 2014) to resolve intra-

group conflicts (Carmeli & Halevi, 2009), by cautiously addressing undesired behaviour and by socially connecting with the team. They believe that they should not interact in an equivalent way and try to emphasize the importance of cooperation, rather than just focusing on the content without appropriate behavioural rules. When they utilize these tools, they experience a reduction of the power play dynamics and a harmonisation of team behaviour. This type of behavioural integration influences more open and refined communication (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006), and leads to executives listening to each other's points of view (Smith & Tushman, 2005). A decrease in conflicts within the TMT can enhance its effectiveness (Nielsen & Huse, 2010).

The second experience of gender diversity has to do with individual egocentrism, driven by the desire for prestige. In contrast to the literature (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Hambrick et al., 1996; Miller et al., 1998), female leaders relate egocentrism primarily to male behaviour. They do not recognise this in their own behaviour, which is evidenced by the example of female executives having the status of owners and still being very conscious of treating TMT members as equals. Men, on the other hand, do not shun to push individual agendas behind the scenes to reach their own goal (Miller et al., 1998) according to the female executives. This creates conflict of interest in the TMT, which can be mitigated by the responsive intentions of the female executives. They deploy their femininity, critical and out-of-the-box mindset, and transparency to get a diversity of perspectives out in the open to reach the best decision for the company (Jarzabkowski & Searle, 2004). If this decision becomes a success, they are willing to share the honours. By engaging in this behaviour, the TMT can overcome its disagreements and reduce head-butting (Miller et al., 1998) as it focuses on common ground. Making a common cause encourages TMT members to openly discuss alternatives. It avoids groupthink, and values and integrates different perspectives with the objective of the bigger picture (Lubatkin et al., 2006; Smith & Tushman, 2005; Venugopal et al., 2020). Sharing the credits of success achievements resulting from the right decisions for the company can stimulate switching responsibilities (Simsek et al., 2005).

The final experience of gender diversity describes gender microaggressions (Bassford et al., 2013). It supports the literature that stereotypes, and prejudices still exist at the top level (Bassford et al., 2013; Eagly & Karau, 2002). 'Think-manager-think-male' is still a fact of life (Schein, 2001). Female elites feel excluded (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998), insulted by subtle forms of gender discrimination (Bassford et al., 2013; Eagly & Karau, 2002) and judged with double standards (Heilman, 2001). These gender microaggressions are addressed with forceful reactions of claiming the entitlement of their position, strong self-belief and self-confidence of this entitlement and confronting discriminatory behaviour. These reactions lead to more inclusion and respect, driving team commitment. Antagonism, however, may spark a dysfunctional social

conflict that may even reinforce polarization between the “ingroup” and the “outgroup” (Carson et al., 2004; Jarzabkowski & Searle, 2004; Jehn, 1995; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; Pelled et al., 1999). It can stir up internal tensions, and lead to less desirable reactions in social situations. Responsive actions to gender microaggressions have a dual effect to behavioural integration. The more enforced the commitment of the TMT is, the less natural it may be, leading to less collaborative behaviour. This particular outcome has an ambiguous nature and can be considered as a double-edged sword, rather than the diversity itself (Almor et al., 2019; Triana et al., 2014). With regard to this matter, results show a particular role for the CEO by limiting gender microaggressions within the team and promoting gender inclusive behaviour. This endorses the theoretical claim of the tremendous managerial influence that a top group leader has on TMT behavioural integration (Hambrick, 1994; Finkelstein et al., 2009). It supports the notion that diversity is not just a predetermined condition that cannot be changed (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003). The CEO can trigger a more natural commitment. This calls for further research.

This study was anchored in the upper echelon perspective, which states that organisations reflect the shared values and collective cognition of their top executives (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). TMTs are aggregations of individual executives, each of whom has her or his own values (Cannella & Holcomb, 2005). Individual values and individual actions can, however, influence the actions of the entire TMT. Thus, the study endorses the expressed criticism (Nelly et al., 2020), about the lack of sophistication of the use of demographic characteristics as valid proxies for values. Psychological and social processes of executives, such as experiences and responsive actions can only be found by opening the ‘black box’ (Hambrick, 2007). This explorative study provides new insights into two major streams of literature, gender diversity of TMTs and the theory of behavioural integration. It is unique in its kind, as it provides an understanding of experiences and responsive actions of a limited accessible group of female executives (Pettigrew, 1992). By opening the ‘black box’ of behavioural integration (Hambrick, 2007; Lawrence, 1997; Priem et al., 1999; Roh, 2019), this thesis emphasizes the importance of the key role of responsive actions. Responding to the experience of gender diversity within a TMT influences behavioural integration in the form of harmonised team behaviour, making common cause and imposed commitment.

Linking these outcomes to organisational ambidexterity, the results of this study highlight the key role of TMTs in driving innovation (Carmeli & Halevi, 2009; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Lubatkin et al., 2006; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Smith & Tushman, 2005; Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996; Venugopal et al., 2020), with respondents from 14 out of 21 companies claiming this (appendix 11) and most of them perceiving the level of company innovation as high. Literature has demonstrated the importance of gender-diverse TMTs in encouraging not only exploitative but also explorative behaviour. Even low levels of gender diversity can

have a significant impact on how TMTs behave, the decisions they make and the outcome of ambidexterity (Almor et al., 2019). Diversity of cognition offers a greater variety of perspectives for the paradoxical challenges in achieving organisational ambidexterity (Li, 2013; Smith & Tushman, 2005). This is supported with anecdotal evidence:

"With diversity, you can identify things better. It is of no added value whatsoever if you only have a bunch of people who all think the same. That really doesn't get you any further as a company. So, if you especially want to be innovative, then yes, the added value is very great. Having diversity in the Management Team, that's how you make the difference." (R06)

Diversity may also hinder ambidexterity due to its negative effects, which prevent reaching a shared vision (Li, 2013; Smith & Tushman, 2005). In the past, researchers have asked for more attention to the integration of TMT behaviour to pave the way for ambidexterity (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013; Smith & Tushman, 2005). Being a real team through mutual and collective interaction (Hambrick, 2007) is crucial for realizing organisational ambidexterity (Li, 2013; Smith & Tushman, 2005). Behavioural integration can increase the effectiveness of the team and mitigate the negative effects of diversity, like ineffective communication, lack of collaboration, and intra-group conflict (Carmeli & Halevi, 2009; Li, 2013; Lubatkin et al., 2006; Smith & Tushman, 2005).

This newly found variant of behavioural integration may increase the effectiveness of the TMT's behavioural repertoire (Carmeli and Halevi, 2009) and contribute to an open environment (Jarzabkowski & Searle, 2004). Executives show appropriate behaviour and act like 'a real team' by involving and respecting every TMT member. The feeling of being 'a real team' may be strengthened by openly discussing different perspectives, taking joint decisions, putting common interests first and sharing responsibilities. Harmonised team behaviour, making common cause and being committed to each other may help gender diverse TMTs better in understanding the tensions of the ambidexterity paradox and deal with them effectively. Recent research (Venugopal et al., 2020) criticized the direct relation between the defined subprocesses of behavioural integration and organisational ambidexterity. The newly discovered form of behavioural integration may be more suitable as an intervening mechanism between gender diverse TMTs and organisational ambidexterity.

Given that ambidextrous organisations can obtain superior financial performance (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; He & Wong, 2004; Lubatkin et al., 2006; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Uotila et al., 2009), it seems of great interest to further study the influence of harmonised team behaviour, making common cause and imposed commitment to organisational ambidexterity.

5.2 Practical implications

This study is by no means intended to claim a feminist perspective of the need for equality at the top. When asked what advices they would give companies regarding diversity policy, several respondents indicated that they strongly believe in talent-based recruitment, aimed at recruiting the most suitable candidate for a TMT position. They do not fully support an imposed quota.

“Of course, there are a lot of companies who think that there should certainly be women at the top. But I wonder whether they are the best people in the right place.” (R21)

The results make stakeholders aware of the experiences of gender diversity in male-dominated TMTs. They reveal the value of female participation in TMTs. Responsive actions of female executives impact the behaviour of the TMT towards more collaboration and encourage joint decisions with the best interests for the company. Behavioural integration can be positively influenced by female elites. Nevertheless, the experience of gender microaggression leads to an ambiguous result. This can be remedied by the CEO if he actively limits behavioural discrimination in the team and emphasises team equality.

In many Dutch companies, the responsibility for 'diversity and inclusion' of the workplace is often placed on the agenda of Human Resources (Winkel, 2021). By placing this responsibility at a higher level, more commitment of the TMT may be achieved. It is important that executives who feel different are allowed to be themselves. The perception of the inclusiveness climate is therefore vital. CEOs do well to actively discuss the experiences of diversity and inclusiveness with minority groups (Ser et al., 2021) and confront the TMT with these experiences (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003) to create a more pleasant organisation in which diversity is welcomed. As one of the respondents stated:

“I was asked by the global CEO to have a conversation with him to sit down and talk to him for an hour, what is it like to work as a woman for ... [previous employer] and so he had gathered a group of about six ladies from all over the world who gave him feedback. He really did see that the more diverse, the more influence in your management team, the more people you can reach and the more customers you can reach. And yes, you just get a lot of different perspectives.” (R17)

These actionable insights into organisations may contribute to the Sustainable Development Goal of gender equality (George et al., 2016).

5.3 Limitations

Despite a well-conceived methodology, this study comes with several limitations. First, the purpose of this study was to gain insight into the ways in which gender diversity experiences, beliefs and actions of female executives affect behavioural integration. A qualitative study was the most logical choice to induce towards a general theory (van Tulder, 2018; Warren, 2001). At the same time, this research approach is inherent to the main limitation. Experiences and responsive actions shared by respondents are not easily verifiable. Gender diversity is a subjective and dynamic experience of a social construct (Ely, 1995), given meaning in interactions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018) and determining its response (Calás et al., 2014; Ely, 1995). Due to this subjectivity and the dynamic nature of one's own experiences, views and perspectives, there is a limitation in the generalisability of this study. To increase it, a wide sample variation was provided by interviewing 24 female executives from 21 different companies, with different areas of responsibility at line or staff level. Moreover, the repetition of data during the last interviews indicated data saturation (Guest et al., 2006). A thorough procedural description was shared of the way the study was conducted, as well as rich examples of data, which increases the reliability.

This study focussed on the upper echelon setting, where female executives are a distinct minority in a male-dominated environment (Bassford et al., 2013; Eagly & Karau, 2002). This could reinforce gender stereotyping about men and women, thus limit generalisability towards other team compositions. The deliberate choice to only interview female executives is a limitation. Female elites are 'the new kid on the block'. They experience that they are different, and exactly this experience was central to this study. Since their male counterparts have an undeniable influence on this experience, collecting data only from women's experiences is a limitation, but it also provides an opportunity for further research.

Generalisability is furthermore limited by the chosen study context, consisting of Dutch companies in the logistics sector. This focus controlled for sector- and country-specific cultural effects, and the logistics sector provided a good reflection of the general representation of women on boards of listed companies (Lückerath-Rovers, 2020; NOS, 2020). National cultural characteristics, however, exert strong normative influence on individual experiences and actions. Cultural values specify which behaviour is expected, accepted, and desired. Power distance is the extent to which members of a culture expect and accept an unequal distribution of power (Roh, 2019). The Netherlands scores low on this dimension (Hofstede Insights, 2021). Additionally, differences in cultural collectivism might impact the results. A society may have a greater or lesser degree of interdependence among its members. The Dutch society is an individualistic society in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves (Hofstede Insights, 2021). The

Netherlands was chosen for this study context. The norm of the Dutch culture is characterized by a high degree of independence and decentralised power. Hierarchy is present only for convenience. Control is not appreciated. Communication is direct and participative. This could might be reflected by the experience of conflict of interest. It could have influenced responsive actions, like standing up for yourself.

Industry environment may also have impacted the results. Research has suggested that industry dynamism may facilitate or hinder the social dimension of behavioural integration (Finkelstein et al., 2009). The logistics industry needs to be flexible to adapt to its dynamic environment of digitalization and technologies (Banning et al., 2018). Innovation is key (Banning et al., 2018; Kindt et al., 2020). This stimulates engagement of a TMT to find novel solutions (Roh, 2019). This enhanced engagement could reduce the focus on self-interests. Empirical studies in a wider variety of industries and cultures could increase transferability.

A final limitation is the presence of potential bias in this study. This may come from the side of the researcher and from the side of the respondents. As the female researcher is an integral part of the study context, this may have led to steering the interviews and a distorted interpretation during the data analysis process. To mitigate these risks, self-reflection was constantly undertaken during the empirical research phase to increase credibility. Care was taken to objectively analyse the responses by codifying the transcribed interviews and looking for experiences, responses, and perceived outcomes. Nevertheless, it is possible that data is misinterpreted or miscategorized (Reinharz & Chase, 2001). Thus, interpreting women's words and stories required a delicate and reflexive attitude. Actively looking for contrasting experiences that did not fit the recurring patterns and consciously mentioning these in the results section, increased the reliability of this study. Respondents might have influenced this study by providing socially desirable answers by, deliberately choosing not to share distressing experiences to not jeopardize their own position, to provide partial or vague answers or to deny issues to window-dress the company (Bergen & Labonté, 2019). This was partly remedied by guaranteeing anonymity (Warren, 2001), probing, and sticking to the questions (Bergen & Labonté, 2019).

5.4 Future research

This study serves as an exploration of how experiences of gender diversity affect behavioural integration. It would be interesting to increase the generalisability of the developed theory with follow-up research.

The first suggestion to strengthen the newly developed theory is to validate the interview findings and provide 'reality checks' (Ohndendal & Shaw, 2001). This can be done by interviewing male executives to find out if they are aware of and recognise the experiences of gender diversity (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003). It will

be intriguing to see if male executives acknowledge the responsive actions of their female counterparts and if they agree with the perceived outcomes of behavioural integration. It could be enlightening to conduct this study with male respondents in a female-dominated TMT setting, to draw experiences of the social construct of gender diversity more broadly, namely related to minority positions in TMTs.

Behavioural integration should be theorised based on its context. The composition of the TMT is changing due to the steady increase in the number of women and the attention given to this. It may well be that with an increase in the number of women in a TMT, the experiences of gender diversity are reduced, leading to fewer responsive actions, which may reduce the influence on behavioural integration. A case study with several TMTs of which the proportion of female executives significantly differs can provide this insight. Another way to study the potential influence of the growing influx of female elites on TMT behavioural integration is through a longitudinal study within a company actively pursuing the top-level quota.

Experiences can be influenced by the CEO. The role of the CEO in mitigating gender microaggression and its effect on behavioural integration offers a good opportunity for further research. This could be well designed by conducting a case study comparing the behavioural integration of a gender diverse TMT with and without a progressive CEO towards gender inclusive behaviour.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to conduct empirical studies in a wider variety of industry environments or cultural contexts. Research has suggested that industry dynamism may facilitate or hinder behavioural integration (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Roh, 2019). A relatively stable environment activates social categorization of 'ingroup' and 'outgroup' in a TMT (Roh, 2019), which could stimulate more gender microaggressions. TMT members may be more reluctant to cooperate in this environment. Cultural characteristics can exert a strong normative influence on individual experiences and actions. In cultures with a high-power distance, status and information are distributed unequally (Roh, 2019). This could limit the experience of conflict of interest or impact for example the responsive action of asking critical questions to high-status members. It can lead to acceptance of exclusion. Conducting the same study in a culture with high power distance can provide these insights. Additionally, differences in cultural collectivism might impact the results. Collectivism reinforces the sense of feeling as an integral part of social relationships. In a collectivistic culture, high priority is placed on collective goals and actions and individuals consider themselves as in-group members. This may influence the experience of gender microaggressions and toxic masculinity, as individuals consider others as in-group members (Roh, 2019). Exclusion might be absent, and it could be the case that only ingroup behaviour is recognized. It could even influence the stereotyping of different behaviour. Using this cultural context can offer a deeper understanding of all three experiences, they might just not be there.

The results show that experiences of female executives are subjective and dynamic. They are absent in specific contexts. It would be interesting to delve into that further. What are the causes that toxic masculinity is experienced in a public company and is absent in a family-owned company? And why do female executives do not experience toxic masculinity when they are owner of the company. It could be that they show masculine behaviour themselves and they just do not experience its toxicity. Or that they claim their position so strongly that this weakens the behavioural dominance of male executives. This can only be ascertained by talking to male executives who are part of TMTs where a woman is the owner of the company. A deep dive into this would enlarge theoretical insights on the contextual factors.

In conclusion, this qualitative study was the first to open the 'black box' to explore how the experience of gender diversity affects the emerging TMT's processes of behavioural integration. Different related experiences, responsive actions and perceived outcomes were identified. These results give rise to further interdisciplinary research into the interaction of executives within the 'black box' and how experiences of social categorisation of gender influence responsive actions. There is still much to be gained in terms of how individual experiences and behaviours are beneficial or detrimental to behavioural integration of TMTs in this new era of greater gender equality at the top.

Finally, the discussion has tried to establish a link between the new variant of behavioural integration and organisational ambidexterity. Harmonised team behaviour, making common cause and imposed commitment may facilitate a diverse TMT in addressing the paradoxical challenges to achieve ambidexterity. Given that ambidextrous organisations can expect superior financial performance, quantitatively testing the relation between this type of behavioural integration and organisational ambidexterity is of vital importance. Behavioural integration is a tool to achieve a shared vision on exploration and exploitation. This study expressed the dual nature of imposed commitment, so the moderating effect of the CEO's role would have to be considered in this relation.

This study offers new insights into the theory of gender diversity of TMTs and the theory of behavioural integration. It provides opportunities to develop a new theoretical framework on the relation between gender diverse TMTs and behavioural integration. This requires follow-up studies.

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Appendix overview

Appendix 1	LinkedIn post for respondents in Dutch
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Appendix 10	Meeting structure TMT
Appendix 11	Perceptive level of company innovation
Appendix 12	Coding tree

Appendix 1 LinkedIn post for respondents in Dutch

VROUWELIJKE EXECUTIVES IN DE LOGISTIEK GEZOCHT!

Werk jij als vrouw in een senior positie bij een logistiek bedrijf (distributie, opslag en aanverwant) en ben je lid van het managementteam? Of ken je iemand die hieraan voldoet? Dan kom ik heel graag in contact met jou!

Ter afsluiting van mijn tweejarige Parttime Master Bedrijfskunde aan de Erasmus Universiteit ben ik (V45) bezig met een scriptie over de invloed van genderdiversiteit binnen een managementteam. Dit team zet de strategie uit voor zowel de huidige operatie als innovatie, en neemt beslissingen over de verdeling van resources. In een interview van maximaal een uur wil ik een aantal vragen stellen over hoe vrouwelijke executives de processen van gezamenlijk beslissingen nemen, samenwerken en het uitwisselen van informatie beïnvloeden binnen het managementteam, omdat deze kunnen leiden tot een gebalanceerd resultaat van exploratie en exploitatie.

Respondenten zijn key in dit onderzoek, vertrouwelijkheid geen probleem en ik deel graag het resultaat van mijn onderzoek achteraf (scriptie/samenvatting).

Ben jij of ken jij iemand die wil deelnemen? Laat het me weten, tag diegene of stuur me een bericht (evdbosch@yahoo.com of 06-20415032), zodat wij in contact kunnen komen. Delen van dit bericht wordt enorm gewaardeerd!

Appendix 2 LinkedIn post for respondents in English

FEMALE EXECUTIVES IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN INDUSTRY WANTED!

Are you female and do you work in the field of logistics (warehousing, distribution and affiliated), and are you a member of the management team? Or do you know anyone who fits this role? I would love to connect with you!

In conclusion of my two-year part-time Master in Business Administration at Erasmus University, I (F45) am working on a thesis about the influence of gender diversity within a management team. The management team sets the strategy for both innovation of the current operation as well as innovation and takes decisions about the allocation of resources. In an interview of maximum one hour, I would like to discuss how female executives influence the processes of joint decision making, collaboration and information exchange within the management team, as these can mediate a balanced outcome of exploration and exploitation.

Respondents are key in this research, anonymity is not an issue. Do you want to participate, or do you know someone who is willing to participate? Please let me know, tag them, or send me a message (evdbosch@yahoo.com or 06-20415032), so we can connect. The interview can be done live or digitally. Sharing this message is highly appreciated!

Appendix 3 LinkedIn post results

VROUWELIJKE EXECUTIVES IN DE LOGISTIEK GEZOCHT! Werk jij als vrouw in een senior positi...



51 reactions · 36 comments

8,228 views



59 people from CEVA
Logistics viewed your post

DSV - Global Transport and Logistics	43
DHL eCommerce Solutions	36
Ricoh Nederland	31
DHL	29
DHL Supply Chain	26
Kuehne+Nagel	24
Bolsius Group	21
REEF	21



581 people who have the title
Logistics Specialist viewed
your post

Salesperson	480
Business Owner	256
Project Manager	184
Operations Specialist	164
Business Strategist	157
Executive Director	133
Consultant	125
Customer Service Specialist	114



687 people viewed your post
from Rotterdam Area,
Netherlands

Amsterdam Area, Netherlands	546
Eindhoven Area, Netherlands	519
Nijmegen Area, Netherlands	465
Utrecht Area, Netherlands	464
Tilburg Area, Netherlands	385
The Hague Area, Netherlands	303
Breda Area, Netherlands	280
Groningen Area, Netherlands	206

FEMALE EXECUTIVES IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN INDUSTRY WANTED! Are you female and do you ...



12 reactions · 7 comments

1,826 views

3 reshares



88 people from Shell viewed
your post

DHL eCommerce Solutions	17
Samsung SDS Cello Logistics	13
DHL	12
DHL Supply Chain	7



140 people who have the title
Salesperson viewed your post

Logistics Specialist	76
Business Strategist	53
Executive Director	45
Business Owner	41



181 people viewed your post
from Rotterdam Area,
Netherlands

Amsterdam Area, Netherlands	149
Utrecht Area, Netherlands	79
The Hague Area, Netherlands	78
Nijmegen Area, Netherlands	64

Appendix 4 LinkedIn groups

HELP REQUESTED: female executives in supply chain industry wanted!

Dear ladies, I am looking for women working in a senior position in the Dutch field of logistics (warehousing, distribution and affiliated), who are a member of the management team.

In conclusion of my two-year part-time Master in Business Administration at Erasmus University, I (F45) am working on a thesis about the influence of gender diversity within a management team. The management team sets the strategy for both innovation of the current operation as well as innovation and takes decisions about the allocation of resources. In an interview of maximum one hour, I would like to discuss how female executives influence the processes of joint decision making, collaboration and information exchange within the management team, as these can mediate a balanced outcome of exploration and exploitation.

Respondents are key in this research. Do you want to participate, or do you know someone who is willing to participate? Please let me know, tag them, or send me a message (evdbosch@yahoo.com or 06-20415032), so we can connect. Every help is highly appreciated!

1	ECWO (Engels)
2	ECWO Women in Leadership Open Programme alumni
3	Connecting More Women (NL)
4	Supply Chain Women (NL)
5	VLM community vrouwen netwerk (NL)
6	010 Zakenvrouwen
7	Transport & Logistics
8	European Supply Chain
9	SCM Professionals
10	Netwerkgroep Planning, Logistiek & Inkoop
11	Third party logistics
12	Vereniging Logistiek Management

Appendix 5 Digital newsletter NDL/HIDC



Vrouwelijke executives in de logistiek gezocht!



Werk jij als vrouw in een senior positie bij een logistiek bedrijf (distributie, opslag en aanverwant) en ben je lid van het managementteam? Of ken je iemand die hieraan voldoet? Dan komt onze oud-collega Eveline van den Bosch heel graag met jou in contact! Zie hieronder haar verzoek:

VROUWELIJKE EXECUTIVES IN DE LOGISTIEK GEZOCHT!

Werk jij als vrouw in een senior positie bij een logistiek bedrijf (distributie, opslag en aanverwant) en ben je lid van het managementteam? Of ken je iemand die hieraan voldoet? Dan kom ik heel graag in contact met jou!

Het managementteam zet de strategie uit voor zowel de huidige operatie als innovatie van nieuwe markten en bedrijfsmodellen, en neemt beslissingen over de verdeling van de resources. Er zijn heel veel onderzoeken geweest naar diversiteit binnen top-managementteams, echter niet op het strategisch gebied van innovatie. En juist in de logistiek, waarbij het om efficiëntie en toekomstgerichte innovaties gaat, is dit een dagelijks agendapunt.

Appendix 6 Interview guide

Introductie

- Context onderzoek:
 - Hoe genderdiversiteit het werk binnen een management team kan beïnvloeden
 - Nadruk op management teams en het vrouw zijn
- Context interview:
 - Timeframe
 - Meerwaarde van bijdrage voor respondent
 - Toestemming opname interview
 - Anonimiteit in verband met sensitiviteit
 - Structuur: Algemene vragen management team en bespreken van drie processen

Algemene vragen	
Gerichte vragen	Probing
1. Korte introductie van persoon	Rol, ervaring, leeftijd, aantal reports, verantwoordelijkheid, hiërarchie, voorganger in TMT
2. Introductie van bedrijf	Diensten, grootte (FTE), oprichting, omzet
3. Samenstelling TMT	Grootte, man-vrouw, leeftijden, historie
4. Overleg	Agenda, frequentie, voorzitterschap
5. Innovatie en optimalisatie	Perceptie, verantwoordelijkheid in organisatie, voorbeelden
Samenwerking binnen TMT	
Gerichte vragen	Probing
1. Beschrijving van samenwerking binnen TMT	Deadlines halen, verdeling workload, elkaar ondersteunen
2. Persoonlijke rol	Inbreng
3. Invloed op proces	Reacties, verandering
4. Relatie aan vrouw zijn	Verbinding, verschillen met mannelijke collega's
5. Belemmeringen	Aanvallen op persoonlijke waarden, 'ingroup' - 'outgroup', rol incongruentie
Beslissingstraject in TMT	
Gerichte vragen	Probing

1. Beschrijving van beslissingstraject binnen TMT	Behoeftes van anderen, impact van beslissing op werk van anderen, verwachtingen van elkaar
2. Persoonlijke rol	Inbreng
3. Invloed op proces	Reacties, verandering
4. Relatie aan vrouw zijn	Verwachtingen, verschillen met mannelijke collega's
5. Obstakels	Gebrekkige communicatie, top-down cultuur
Informatie deling binnen TMT	
Gerichte vragen	Probing
1. Beschrijving informatie deling	Hoeveelheid en type data (operationeel, strategisch, targets), kwaliteit van oplossingen, openheid, mate van creativiteit en innovatie
2. Persoonlijke rol	Inbreng
3. Invloed op proces	Reacties, verandering
4. Relatie aan vrouw zijn	Creativiteit, verschillen met mannelijke collega's
5. Belemmeringen	Buitensluiten, 'ingroup' - 'outgroup'

Afronding interview

1. Is er iets wat ik niet gevraagd heb in dit interview?
2. Wat denk jij dat gender diversiteit binnen een management team oplevert?
3. Wat is jouw tip aan organisaties op het gebied van gender diversiteit binnen management teams?
4. Bedanken voor tijd en moeite

Appendix 7 Respondent overview

Interviewee	General title	Responsibility	Reporting to	Start job	Predecessor	Reports	Age
R01	C-level	General	Shareholders and Managing Director	2014	new created role	20 FTE	41
R02	Director	Business Unit	Senior VP	2019	combi job of 2 predecessors (m)	800 FTE	53
R03	Statutory Director	Co-owner	Supervisory board with shareholders	2017	business acquisition	40 FTE	49
R04	Manager	Staff	Managing Director	2014	new created role	3 FTE	36
R05	General Manager	Co-owner	Managing Director	2015	family succession	6 FTE	45
R06	General Manager	Staff	Managing Director	2020	new created role	5 FTE	28
R07	Managing Director	Co-owner	Co-owners and shareholders	2021	family succession	6 FTE	34
R08	Director	Business Unit	Managing Director	2018	man	200 FTE	48
R09	Director	Staff	Managing Director	2018	new created role	12 FTE	45
R10	Managing Director	Co-owner	Co-owners and shareholders	2011	business acquisition	160 FTE	52
R11	C-level	Co-owner	Managing Director	1996	new created role	11 FTE	53
R12	VP	Business Unit	CEO	2020	man	1000 FTE	42

Interviewee	General title	Responsibility	Reporting to	Start job	Predecessor	Reports	Age
R13	Director	Staff	Managing Director	2019	woman	16 FTE	45
R14	Sector Head	Business Unit	Vice President	2014	new created role	3 FTE	49
R15	Director	Staff	Managing Director	2015	man	none	41
R16	General Manager	Staff	CEO	2017	new created role	7 FTE	37
R17	C-level	General	CEO	2016	new created role	80 FTE	45
R18	Manager	Business Unit	General Manager	2018	man	11 FTE	31
R19	Managing Director	General	Owner	2019	man	17 FTE	45
R20	VP	Staff	Managing Director and VP HR	2016	man	64 FTE	55
R21	Managing Director	Co-owner	Co-owners and shareholders	2019	family succession	8 FTE	40
R22	Director	Business Unit	CRO and Global head HQ (matrix)	2018	man, left a year earlier	17 FTE	50
R23	Managing Director	Owner	Shareholder	2020	business acquisition	40 FTE	53
R24	General Manager	Staff	Managing Director	2012	new created role	3 FTE	46

Appendix 8 Company overview

Interviewee	Company type (based on turnover in NL)	Year foundation in NL	Employees in NL	Services	Own wheels	Global reach
R01	Medium-sized	2001	60 FTE	Terminals and inland transport of containers via barge and train	no	German multinational
R02	Large	2007	1000 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	no	
R03	Small	2004	40 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	no	
R04	Large	2007	800 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	yes	French multinational
R05	Medium-sized	1988	25 FTE	Freight forwarding	no	
R06	Medium-sized	2008	80 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	no	
R07	Medium-sized	1927	150 FTE	Transport Benelux	yes	
R08	Large	1990	630 FTE	Contract logistics and freight forwarding	no	
R09	Large	1990	630 FTE	Contract logistics and freight forwarding	no	French multinational
R10	Medium-sized	1948	160 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	yes	German multinational
R11	Large	1919	600-700 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	yes	
R12	Large	1985	5000 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	no	

Interviewee	Company type (based on turnover in NL)	Year foundation in NL	Employees in NL	Services	Own wheels	Global reach
R13	Large	2007	1000 FTE	Contract logistics	no	German multinational
R14	Large	2000	300 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	no	German multinational
R15	Medium-sized	2007	800 FTE	Contract logistics	yes	
R16	Large	1966	1800 FTE	Container terminal operator	no	
R17	Large	1982	4000 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	no	German multinational
R18	Large	1960	300 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	no	
R19	Large	1979	250 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	no	
R20	Large	2017	4100 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	no	USA multinational
R21	Medium-sized	1937	275 FTE	Contract logistics and international transport	yes	
R22	Large	2006	400 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	no	Japanese multinational
R23	Small	1996	40 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding and distribution	no	
R24	Large	1967	600 FTE	Contract logistics, freight forwarding, distribution and own terminals	yes	

Appendix 9 Composition TMT

Interviewee	Gender composition TMT	% Women in TMT	Gender composition previous TMT	Age variation TMT	Remarks
R01	5 men and 1 woman	17%	1st TMT	41 - 54	Managing Director not actively involved in business and not present at TMT-meetings New TMT since 2018 except Senior VP 2 out of 5 TMT-members are co-founders of the company
R02	4 men and 2 women	33%	5 men and 1 woman	43 - 60	
R03	2 men and 1 woman	33%	1st TMT	49 - 61	
R04	10 men and 3 women	23%	9 men	36 - 60	
R05	3 men and 1 woman	25%	2 men and 2 women	38 - 74	
R06	5 men and 1 woman	17%	5 men	28 - 55	
R07	2 men and 1 woman	33%	1st TMT	29 - 54	Extension plans for TMT with 2 persons, daily contact with each other
R08	4 men and 2 women	33%	5 men and 1 woman	45 - 53	
R09	4 men and 2 women	33%	4 men and 2 women	45 - 53	
R10	3 men and 2 women	40%	1st TMT	mid 30 - late 50	
R11	4 men and 1 woman	20%	1st TMT	50 - 58	
R12	10 men and 2 women	17%	11 men and 1 woman	42 - 60	

Interviewee	Gender composition TMT	% Women in TMT	Gender composition previous TMT	Age variation TMT	Remarks
R13	4 men and 2 women	33%	4 men and 2 women	43 - 60	New TMT since 2018 except Senior VP Recently restructured TMT with a new composition, respondent got promoted to a global role (May 2021)
R14	5 men and 1 woman	29%	3 men	mid 30 - late 50	
R15	10 men and 3 women	23%	11 men and 1 woman	38 - 60	
R16	6 men and 3 women	33%	5 men and 1 woman	37 - mid 50	New CEO since 2015 Most TMT members started last 5 years
R17	8 men and 2 women	20%	8 men	44 - 55	
R18	7 men and 1 woman	13%	6 men	31 - 50	
R19	3 men and 2 women	40%	2 men and 2 women	28 - 48	
R20	5 men and 1 woman	17%	9 men and 2 women	mid 40 - 60	
R21	2 men and 1 woman	33%	5 men	35 - 66	
R22	6 men and 1 woman	14%	5 men and 2 women	45 - 60	TMT with expats from country HQ New TMT, compiled by new Director-Major shareholder
R23	2 men and 2 women	50%	1st TMT	38 - 53	Extended TMT meeting with 6 site managers, international TMT meeting with 14 site managers
R24	4 men and 1 woman	20%	4 men	40 - 55	

Appendix 10 Meeting structure TMT

Interviewee	Frequency TMT meetings	Chairperson	Fixed agenda	Remarks
R01	1x every two weeks	Alternating between 2 persons of C-level	yes	Managing Director not actively involved in business and not present at TMT-meetings
R02	1x per month standard and 1-2x per month strategy meeting with a smaller group	Senior VP	yes	
R03	1x per week operations meeting (extended TMT with Operations), 1x per two weeks strategy meeting (TMT)	No official chairperson, respondent takes role	yes	
R04	6x per year	Managing Director	yes	
R05	1x per month operations meeting and 1x per month strategy meeting with executive team (3	General Manager	yes	Daily contact with each other
R06	1x per month	Managing Director	yes	
R07	1x per month strategy meeting and 1x per week scrum meeting	Alternating	yes	
R08	1x per month strategy meeting and 1x per week scrum meeting	Managing Director	yes	
R09	1x per month	Managing Director	yes	
R10	1x per month	Director-Major shareholder	no	
R11	1x every 6 weeks	Manager	no	
R12	1x every 2 weeks and 1x per quarter a strategy day	Alternating	yes	

Interviewee	Frequency TMT meetings	Chairperson	Fixed agenda	Remarks
R13	1x per month standard and 1-2x per month strategy meeting	Senior VP	yes	
R14	2x per week	Head of shared services	yes	
R15	6x per year	Managing Director	yes	
R16	1x per 2 weeks	CEO	yes	
R17	1x per month and separated product sessions every month	CEO	yes	
R18	1x per month standard and weekly an update call	General Manager	yes	
R19	1x per 2-3 weeks	Alternating	yes	
R20	1x per month	Managing Director	yes, with input of TMT	
R21	1x per month strategy meeting and 1x per week operations meeting	External advisor	yes	Every month strategy meeting with 3 external advisors
R22	1x every 2 weeks	Corporate Affairs Director	yes	
R23	1x per month standard and weekly an update meeting	No chairperson	yes	
R24	1x per week standard, 1x per month extended TMT meeting, 4x per year international TMT meeting	Managing Director	yes	Extended TMT meeting with 6 site managers, international TMT meeting with 14 site managers

Appendix 11 Perceived level of company innovation

Interviewee	Innovation level	Examples innovation	Innovation driven by
R01	high	Developed a power business intelligence with a software provider to share automated data with customers, big mile, lean & green projects	TMT
R02	high	Buildings top end in industry, mechanization and automatization, auto store, augmented reality, i-pac	Innovation leader (role of respondent in TMT)
R03	low	no innovation on IT or technical level, but customized solutions per customer	Customers, sales, operations, IT
R04	fair	Warehousing solar panels, solar on top of trailers, alternative planning	TMT, sites
R05	fair	stepped in a new market with an innovation subsidy, new business model launch and just signed a contract with Oracle for OTM in the cloud	TMT and IT
R06	high	IT solutions, new customer markets	TMT
R07	high	Build an installation on customer location, bioreactor at new site, LNG-trucks	Customers, staff
R08	fair	Innovation as a strategic pillar, paperless working, innovative track & trace, parcel solution to compete with parcel carriers	Solutions department
R09	fair	building a new campus (2023), abroad several innovations like autostore, miniload, goods-to-man, but not in The Netherlands	Solutions department
R10	fair	New location next to container terminal for improvement of efficiency with solar panels on rooftop, new transport modalities	Staff
R11	high	solar panels on rooftops, hydrogen fuel, building a hydrogen station on site to become more sustainable, satisfaction of staff by several innovations	TMT
R12	high	Vision picking, fully automated trolleys for pickers in the warehouse, risk management tools, smart sensors, fully mechanized and automated warehouses	Dedicated team for mechanization and automation

Innovation			
Interviewee	level	Examples innovation	Innovation driven by
R13	high	Innovation part of the strategic program, automatization, robotization and mechanization in operations	Change and transformation office
R14	fair	customized solutions for each customer, visibility of milestone and scan moments live for customers, active monitoring, e-pod	HQ solutions design, local BPM department, customers
R15	fair	Warehousing solar panels, solar on top of trailers, alternative planning	TMT, sites
R16	fair	Mainly optimisation of current processes, new product on market with a discharge predictor for more transparency towards customers, API-connections	TMT
R17	high	Volocopter, CO2 neutral, working with Fraunhofer institute on innovations	Headquarters, TMT, QHSE department
R18	fair	Operational systems renewal	TMT
R19	high	New robot for discharging containers, pilots with drone inventor, high attention for development of the staff (trainings)	TMT
R20	high	Robotization, automation, drones	Headquarters and Operational Excellence
R21	fair	Shuttle systems, mechanized DC with operators, pre-announcements What's app for pick ups	TMT and customers
R22	fair	Process optimisation and continuous improvement processes (root cause analyses, Kaizen, yokoten), e-freight, online training staff	Global HQ, RHQ TMT, Process Innovation
R23	low	-	TMT
R24	high	Development of own trailers for specialized cargo	TMT

Appendix 12 Specification of subthemes

EXPERIENCES OF GENDER DIVERSITY

TOXIC MASCULINITY

FORM OF CONDUCT WITHIN THE TEAM

Behavioural dominance

Power play in the team, clash of egos, being less tolerant and having the urge to be dominant

Brusque communication

Show behavioural dominance by communicating bluntly, being to the point and bringing issues to the table abruptly, without proper awareness of timing

Expectation of ingroup behaviour

Supposition of equal communication style within the team

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

SELFISH PURSUIT OF ONE'S OWN GOALS

Self-interests

Perceived as being in one's own interests

Status significance

Reputation and prestige

GENDER MICROAGGRESSIONS

SUBTLE FORMS OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Censure of communication

Expression of disapproval and criticizing the communication with adverse judgement

Different treatment

Distinguished behaviour based on gender difference

Double standards

Different assessment of competences, having to prove oneself more

Exclusion

Being shut out, not being involved and lack of support by the team

RESPONSIVE ACTIONS

RESPONSES TO TOXIC MASCULINITY

Being considerate	Thoughtful for others, empathize to socially connect with others
Flagging unacceptable behaviour	Addressing undesirable behaviour and discussing the desired way of working together as a team
Mediating conflicts	Intervening between colleagues for the purpose of reconciliation
Responding judiciously	Consciously choosing the way to respond and the appropriate moment
Sensing	Having an instinctive feeling for the prevailing sentiment in the team

RESPONSES TO CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Asking critical questions	Questioning ideas and answers critically to reduce risks and get clarity
Being transparent	Having no hidden agenda and clearly sharing one's intentions
Focussing on the greater good	Attention to the benefit of more people than oneself, seeking the middle ground and getting people on board
Providing different perspectives	Thinking out of the box and from a different angle
Sharing the honours	Staying out of the limelight and sharing the credits

RESPONSES TO GENDER MICROAGGRESSIONS

Claiming position	Demanding recognition for one's rank and setting boundaries to the amount of work that is placed in one's hands
Limiting unequal treatment	Denouncing inequality based on gender and addressing people to account for it
Trusting own competences	Feeling self-confident in making own choices and not feeling the urge to prove one's worth

BEHAVIOURAL INTEGRATION EFFECTS

HARMONISED TEAM BEHAVIOUR

Change of behaviour	Adjustment of behaviour into showing consideration for each other and listening to each other
Different dynamics	Relief of atmosphere with less power struggle and more balance
Team spirit	Appreciation towards each other

MAKING COMMON CAUSE

Business interests first	What is best for the company
Common responsibilities	Securing progress and getting the job done together
Discussing different perspectives	Looking at things from different viewpoints and openly debating them
Taking joint decisions	Deciding from common ground

IMPOSED COMMITMENT

Antagonism	Active opposition of a conflict
Earning respect	Getting appreciated by the team
Inclusion	Being included within the team

Appendix 13 Coding tree

