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*School of Education and  
Communication*

# Breaking the 'glass ceiling'

A Critical Discourse Analysis of how powerful  
businesswomen are portrayed in The Economist  
online

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**AUTHOR:** *Julie Risbourg*

**TUTOR:** *Renira Gambarato*

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JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY  
School of Education and Communication  
Box 1026, SE-551 11 Jönköping, Sweden  
+46 (0)36 101000

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## ABSTRACT

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Writer: Julie Risbourg

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Women still represent a minority in the executive world. Much research has been aimed at finding possible explanations concerning the underrepresentation of women in the male dominated executive sphere. The findings commonly suggest that a patriarchal society and the maintenance of gender stereotypes lead to inequalities and become obstacles for women to break the so-called 'glass ceiling'. This thesis, however, aims to explore how businesswomen are represented once they have broken the glass ceiling and entered the executive world. Within the Forbes' list of the 100 most powerful women of 2017, the two first businesswomen on the list were chosen, and their portrayals were analysed through articles published by The Economist online. The theoretical framework of this thesis includes Goffman's framing theory and takes a cultural feminist perspective on exploring how the media outlet frames businesswomen Sheryl Sandberg and Mary Barra. The thesis also examines how these frames relate to the concepts of stereotyping, commonly used in the coverage of women in the media. More specifically, the study investigates whether negative stereotypes concerning their gender are present in the texts or if positive stereotypes such as idealisation are used to portray them. Those concepts are coupled with the theoretical aspect of the method, which is Critical Discourse Analysis. This method is chosen in order to explore the underlying meanings and messages The Economist chose to refer to these two businesswomen. This is done through the use of linguistic and visual tools, such as lexical choices, word connotations, nomination/functionalisation and gaze. The findings show that they were portrayed positively within a professional environment, and the publication celebrated their success and hard work. Moreover, the results also show that gender related traits were mentioned, showing a subjective representation, which is countered by their idealisation, via their presence in not only the executive world, but also having such high-working titles in male dominated industries.

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Keywords: Businesswomen, CDA, Framing, Gender Stereotypes, Glass Ceiling, Journalism.

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# 1. Introduction

According to a study published by the New York Times in April 2018, women represent 50.8 percent of the American population, whilst men named John represent 3.3 percent of the same population (Miller, Quealy and Sanger-Katz 2018). However, despite a 47.5 percent difference between the two figures, the study also showed that there are as many Johns as there are women among Fortune 500 Chief Executive Officers (CEO) (Miller, Quealy and Sanger-Katz 2018). Indeed, as professor and journalist Adam Grant put it, it seems that “we’re a long way from breaking glass ceilings” (@AdamMGrant, April 26, 2018).

In the past two decades, studies such as the ones conducted by Williams (2013), Adams and Harte (1998), Sayer (2005), Rosin and Korabik (1991), Solomon (2006), Skaggs, Stainback and Duncan (2012) and Ingersoll et al. (2017), have found that the number of women in generally male-orientated industries is increasing. This is coupled with the fact that women entrepreneurs are booming in developed countries such as the United States (US), where the number of small business owned by women entrepreneurs doubled in the past decade (Naidu and Chand 2017). Such statistics show significant progress in the development of gender equality in the Western white-collar world, one that is typically thought of as a ‘man’s world’. However, as previously mentioned by Grant (2018), the notion of ‘glass ceiling’ remains. In their book *The Glass Ceiling in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Barreto, Ryan and Schmitt (2009, 5) claim that the term has been used vastly by researchers, journalists and the general public for the last twenty years, drawing on the metaphor of a glass ceiling to depict the experience of women in the workplace. The glass ceiling represents one (or several invisible barriers) that women encounter during their careers (Oxford Dictionary 2018c, Barreto, Ryan and Schmitt 2009, 5), stopping them from reaching the top-level hierarchy within a company, as it is commonly used to refer to the phenomenon whereby men dominate the “upper echelons of management” (Barreto, Ryan and Schmitt 2009, 5).

Much academic focus (Shugg and Liamputtong 2002, Randazzo 2015, Lämsä and Tiensuu 2002) has been on how women are oppressed by a male-orientated society, both professionally and within media coverage. However, this thesis attempts to take a new perspective on such issues by focusing on how women who have succeeded in climbing the corporate ladder (where a gender pay gap is maintained) are represented in the media. Claims concerning women’s underrepresentation at high levels in business, as well as gender gaps, are confirmed by a recent study published by the European Commission (2017):

In work, men generally occupy higher positions than women. In 2016 only 36% of managers in the UK were women. The share of women in this position is below 50% in all EU member states. On average, women earn 16% less than men in all member states.

This thesis focuses on the online version of the British business magazine, *The Economist*, in order to examine if the publication puts an emphasis on gender rather than the job position when reporting on ‘powerful’ women, something which rarely happens in articles covering male CEOs or politicians for instance. It could be argued that it is impossible to define ‘power’ in this context (Cosslett 2012), as many factors can be taken into consideration such as wealth, influence, charisma or even beauty. However, this study’s sample will be based on the prestigious Forbes list of the ‘world’s 100 most powerful women’ from 2017 (*Forbes* 2017), which includes female scientists, politicians, philanthropists, business executives and musicians. Accordingly, the notion of power expressed in this paper will correspond to that which is set out by Forbes. Thus, it is important to acknowledge the factors taken into consideration by Forbes when classifying a woman as ‘powerful’, leading her to be presented in their yearly list. Howard (2017), Forbes journalist, claims that four metrics are taken into consideration when deciding whether a woman belongs or not on the list of the most powerful of the year, which include their net worth, media presence, influence and impact in their fields. Although the example mentioned at the beginning of this introduction was based on the US, it offers further context to the issue, as, according to Barreto, Ryan and Schmitt (2009, 4), the situation involving women in the executive world seems to be the same as in the European Union (EU) and in the United Kingdom (UK).

The choice of the country of the publication was made by using Samovar, Porter and McDaniel’s (2010, 206) ‘masculinity values’ index, where Britain’s high ranking means that, presumably, its society displays predominantly masculine traits over feminine ones. The authors argue that masculinity is “the extent to which the dominant values in a society are male-oriented” (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel 2010, 206). It is important to note that this will not be used in the analysis but rather to justify the choice of picking a British online magazine rather than one from another country. The index includes 50 countries and three regions, which are ranked from 1 to 53, where Japan’s ranking is first and Sweden is 53<sup>rd</sup>. Following the index, the lower the ranking number is, the more the country can be classified as one that favors masculine traits, and the higher the number, the more it favors feminine traits. Great Britain’s ranking is 9/10 (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel 2010, 206). The presumed predominance of patriarchy and strong masculinity in the British society are confirmed by Watson (2000) in his study regarding male health, culture and identity based

in the UK: “we need to differentiate between the production, reproduction and erosion of patriarchy as located within social structures and institutions, and masculinities as a personal and embodied response to and reflection of these social and cultural values” (Watson 2000, 2). The main interest of the thesis is in exploring whether this ‘masculine’ influence in the UK can be perceived through the sample of articles that will be analysed from *The Economist*, which itself was chosen due to its popularity in Britain. Indeed, *The Economist* is said to be the “best-selling current affairs magazine in the UK” (*The Economist Media Centre* 2017). The magazine’s popularity was also an important factor in its selection for this study, as it is said to be one of the most influential and thus the most effective in the dissemination of dominant ideas and values. It could also be argued that their way of thinking directly reflects the collective mentality of those in the modern business world.

## 1.1 Disposition

In the next section, the aim and the two research questions of the thesis are presented. Thereafter, previous research concerning this topic is reviewed, including specific areas of research outlining ‘stereotypes of women in society’, ‘the representation of women in media’ and ‘the inequalities women face in the working environment’. In the section after, the theoretical frames and concepts that are used in the study are described, including Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), gender studies and most precisely cultural feminism, Goffman’s (1986) framing theory and stereotyping and idealisation. Afterwards, the study’s CDA methodology is stated, followed by the four CDA tools chosen to conduct the analysis, which are lexical choices, word connotations and nomination or functionalisation for the text, and gaze for the visual elements. Then, the material is presented, as well as the limitations of the study. Lastly, the analysis, result of the study, and conclusion are displayed. The results point to the idea that high-profile businesswomen are portrayed positively within a professional environment. Moreover, the results show that gender-related traits were mentioned, showing a subjective representation, which is countered by their idealisation, via their presence in not only the executive world, but also having such high-working titles in male dominated industries.

## 2. Aim and research questions

### 2.1 Aim

The purpose of this study is to contribute to current research regarding gender inequality in media discourse by focusing on a specific area which has not received much scholarly attention. Much academic focus (Stier and Herzberg-Druker 2017, Montiel 2015) has instead been on the consequences of the gender inequalities faced by women in the working environment, such as being refused promotions or higher positions in the hierarchy because

they are judged unfit by male recruiters. However, not much research (Lämsä and Tiensuu 2002) has been done concerning the representation of women once they had broken the ‘glass ceiling’ and achieved a top position, which could be considered as a research gap that the current paper aims to contribute to fulfil. The aim of this study is to analyse how gender inequalities or stereotypes are communicated in the coverage of powerful businesswomen in The Economist. The hypothesis of the paper is that The Economist’s coverage will draw attention to the fact that the subjects of their articles are women, but also the lack of female presence amongst the most powerful in society. Indeed, scholars such as Williams (2013, 610-611) argue that women are a minority amongst the executive world in comparison to men, describing women in top positions as a “numerical rarity”. Williams (2013) found that “Very few women occupied top positions, and those who did experienced increased visibility, role encapsulation, and boundary heightening, which marginalized them and excluded them from positions of power and responsibility”.

## 2.2 Research questions

The main research questions in this thesis are:

R.Q 1: How are the women selected from Forbes’ “World’s 100 Most Powerful Women list” framed in the sampled articles from The Economist online?

R.Q 2: How do these frames relate to the stereotyping and/or idealisation of businesswomen?

## 3. Previous research

The following section will present 28 peer-reviewed articles which are all related to the field of research of this thesis and either have a close link to this empirical case or serve as contextual background. Some articles will be analysed more in depth than others, depending on their relevance as the aim here is to provide a broader scope of what was done in the previous research regarding this thesis’ topic. Every study of this literature review was found via the ProQuest search engine, using key words to select them such as ‘gender stereotypes’, ‘women stereotypes’, ‘women in the media’, ‘women representation’, ‘working women’, ‘businesswomen’ and ‘glass ceiling’, ‘gender inequalities’. The content of the studies were all briefly explored before deciding to include them or not in the review. The time frame of the studies (between 1989 to 2017) was not at all a decisive factor, they were rather chosen depending on how their content could help paint a large picture to help the reader visualise the scope of the previous research related to the empirical case. Hence, the gathering of data allowed one to see the three following categories emerge from the literature review, which then guided the choice to retrieve certain peer-review articles which would not be judged relevant, or in other words which would not belong those the three upcoming categories.

However, it is important to underline the fact that through this keyword search, no article was excluded, even if they would 'counter' the other studies' findings. In other words, despite the fact that every study concerning gender stereotypes showed that it was perceived as a negative aspect, it is what was found through the key word search, and if studies showing positive aspects of gender stereotyping were encountered, they would not have been excluded. The aim is to depict what has been done in research before the writing of this thesis, without involving bias in including only the ones that would serve the 'point' of this thesis.

### 3.1 Stereotypes of women in society

Many scholars argue that we live within a patriarchal culture (Naidu and Chand 2017, 649, Montiel 2015, 182, Byerly and Ross 2004, 2), which is the primary cause of gender inequality in society. In order to understand how this issue could impact upon the lives of women, it is important to acknowledge the types of inequality scholars have discovered during their research. Although they will not be depicted here, as this section tackles women's portrayal in society through negative comments, it is important to highlight that stereotypes can nonetheless be positive (Syi and Cheryan 2013, 87), as the thesis may encounter such stereotypes in the analysis. Examples of such positive stereotypes connected to women were suggested by Eagly and Mladinic (1989, 547) in their article on gender stereotypes and attitudes toward women and men. They claim that positive feminine stereotypes could be the following traits: "helpful, aware of others' feelings, warm to others, gentle, devoted to others, kind, understanding and emotional". This last trait, 'emotional', will be discussed further in the following section, as it can both be classified as a positive trait but also as a negative one, portraying a rather 'weak' aspect of women's personalities.

Firstly, it could be argued that between men and women, one of the most common and basic stereotypes that exists depict women as the 'weaker' of the two genders, in almost every aspect of life. This is reinforced by Castano (2005, 28) as she points out that society relies upon established dichotomies such as culture/nature, mind/body, reason/emotion, objectivity/subjectivity, public/private and he argues that the "second element of the pair is always considered the worst and related to women" (Castano 2005, 28). It is also widely suggested that despite their 'weak' portrayal, women's primary role is to take care of the family (Sayer 2005). As a matter of fact, Shugg and Liamputtong (2002) found in their study on the portrayal of women's health in media that "the predominant issues in the women's health articles were children/motherhood and pregnancy" (Shugg and Liamputtong 2002, 717). Moreover, the types of words and themes associated with women in their study were

“kind, nurturing, unable to protect herself, inability to cope” (Shugg and Liamputtong 2002, 717), all showing their perceived inferiority to men.

One could argue that the ‘roles’ assigned to women are thus the most difficult, taking a large amount of responsibility, which presents the question - why the men who are said to be ‘tougher’ would not be attributed these ‘tasks’? One possible explanation is the idea that women are more emotional and thus give greater attention to their own feelings and the feelings of those around them. The ‘emotional’ dimension within stereotypes of women touches various aspects of women’s lives and behaviour, a notable example of which is the words women are said to be sensitive or receptive to. Indeed, in their paper based on media and gender studies, Gaucher, Friesen and Kay (2011, 110) remind us of the idea that there is an established literature documenting widely held gender stereotypes and that it is clear that there are differences in the use of language between both genders. They go on to explain that women are perceived as more communal and interpersonal in comparison to men who are attributed to leadership and agency types of trait (Gaucher, Friesen and Kay 2011, 110, Williams 2013). This stereotype, combined with their results, led them to conclude that women were sometimes ‘victims’ of it, as they found that job advertisement were more often than not written in a way that appeals to men rather than women, without women being able to notice it.

Concerning how the stereotypes of women can lead to inequalities within the labour market for instance, scholars such as Stier and Herzberg-Druker have argued that women prefer “specific types of occupations” (Stier and Herzberg-Druker 2017, 1189) which often require them to “care for others” (Stier and Herzberg-Druker 2017, 1189), indirectly leading them towards smaller salaries than men, as men happen to commonly apply for higher-paid jobs than women. Aside from the financial aspect of inequality women are victims of, Montiel (2015) gives another insight into how these stereotypes reach women. In her work on gender equality, women’s human rights and patriarchy, she puts forwards the idea that the stereotypes associating women with the domestic sphere and men with the public (Montiel 2015, 182-183) can, by correlation, have a negative effect on women’s employability in public sphere jobs such as “politics, economy, media, education” (Montiel 2015, 183) for example.

In summary, these studies (Shugg and Liamputtong 2002, Stier and Herzberg-Druker 2017, Montiel 2015) allow us to see what some of the existing stereotypes surrounding women are, and how it can affect them in the working world. However, the studies do not discuss women who actually make it to the executive world, instead only suggesting the stereotypes that women may be victims of in society which could ultimately act as barriers to their career

progress. It is within this research 'gap' that the current study is situated, examining how women who have seemingly not been held back by gender stereotypes and who hold high-power executive roles, are represented in mainstream business media. Furthermore, these articles, which all show some of the various stereotypes associated to women, underline how according to these stereotypes, women should not be a part of the executive sphere. The results of those studies also have a direct impact on the choice of this thesis' theoretical framework. In other words, the predominance of gender stereotypes is a key factor to include both in the theory part of the study, but also in the conduct of the analysis, as it will be interesting to see if they can still be identified in a 'business executive' context. However, it is important to note that, considering the fact that the actors here are businesswomen, positive stereotyping such as idealisation is also included, although not present in the studies previously mentioned.

### 3.2 The representation of women in media

With the previous section of this literature review having established the types of stereotypes that exist within society and how they can impact on the lives of women, the focus of this section will be on whether these stereotypes are present within media discourse. This is of particular importance to this study, as it examines both texts and images to see how the representation of women is constructed within news media discourse. Although some of the studies explored in this section concern advertising, this will not form a part of this analysis. Notwithstanding, such studies are used in order to give greater context regarding how women are portrayed in media.

Many studies (Jansson and Sahlin 2015, EIGE 2013) suggest that women are increasingly present in media (EIGE 2013, 2), which could be seen as a positive turning-point for gender inequality. However, a report published by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE 2013) claims that, despite the fact that women have "considerably outnumbered men in university-level and practice-based journalism programmes" (EIGE 2013, 2), they are still highly "underrepresented at the decision-making level" (EIGE 2013, 2). This might be one of the reasons why all of the studies looked at (Jansson and Sahlin 2015, EIGE 2013, Wood 1994, Friesem 2016, Shugg and Liamputtong 2002, Lämsä and Tiensuu 2002), claimed that gender inequality is still present in the media, either by the underrepresentation of women or by their misrepresentation. Wood (1994, 1) for example, when describing women in the media field, describes them "underrepresented, unimportant or invisible". In her article on the influence media have on views of gender, Wood (1994) argues that the media bias is the causal link to stereotypes in society, as she argues like other scholars (Shugg and Liamputtong 2002) that the media shapes the way in which we perceive society and gender,

as she describes media influence as the most “pervasive” and “most powerful” (Wood 1994, 1).

Likewise, when discussing media representations of gender, Friesem (2016) adds the notion of ideology, putting forward the idea that the media shapes the development of one’s gender identity. One could argue that the findings of the various research previously mentioned in this section, all led to the same conclusion: that the media play “an important role exacerbating these stereotypical images” (Shugg and Liamputtong 2002, 715), but also that it “reproduces sexist stereotypes that discriminate against women” (Montiel 2015, 183) and that the images of the sexes given in the media “perpetuate unrealistic, stereotypical, and limiting perceptions” (Wood 1994, 1). Montiel however underlines the fact that the media have the power and ability to empower women, socially, politically and economically (Montiel 2015, 183). Indeed, a suggestion for further research could be to focus on the impact of an increased number of women in the media and whether this leads to their empowerment in media discourse.

In a study which examines a similar empirical case as the one of this thesis, concerning the “representations of the woman leader in Finnish business media articles”, Lämsä and Tiensuu (2002) conducted a discourse analysis in order to explore, amongst other aspects, the types of representation constructed by media content. The main finding of the study was that there were three types of discourse. Firstly, a patriarchal discourse, showing that there is a significant difference between the representation of men and women leaders, as they found that women were portrayed as “different and subordinate to the male manager” (Lämsä and Tiensuu 2002, 368). Secondly, the victim discourse, slightly different to the previous one, as the researchers state that “instead of trying to convince the reader of the appropriateness of hierarchical power relations and subordination between the genders, the victim discourse openly and publicly demands a change in power relations” (Lämsä and Tiensuu 2002, 369). Indeed in this case, the female leader is pictured as “a victim in relation to the advancement of her career, and top managerial positions are seen as a bastion of the male gender” (Lämsä and Tiensuu 2002, 370). Lastly, the third category contrasts highly with the others, as well as each study previously mentioned in this literature review, as a professional discourse was identified. This discourse consists of a woman being promoted and no one calling into question her skills or gender (Lämsä and Tiensuu 2002, 371). Despite this last category, Lämsä and Tiensuu conclude that the descriptions of female statuses were disproportionate in the articles and they nonetheless appear to favour men and masculinity, maintaining the gender gap (Lämsä and Tiensuu 2002, 372). Whilst this study focused on Finnish media, the findings reinforce the potential for further research to see how such media constructions

materialise in other cultural contexts such as in Britain and if it applies to different areas of work such as the ones present on the Forbes' list.

In comparison to the studies tackling stereotypes and their consequences on women (Gaucher, Friesen and Kay 2011, Sayer 2005, Williams 2013, Montiel 2015), where the majority of methods used were quantitative data analyses, those looking at the representation of women in the media (Jansson and Sahlin 2015, Wood 1994, Friesem 2016, Shugg and Liamputtong 2002, Lämsä and Tiensuu 2002) used mostly qualitative methods. A study conducted by Lämsä and Tiensuu using discourse analysis illustrates this difference well, as do most of the other studies (Jansson and Sahlin 2015, Wood 1994, Friesem 2016, Shugg and Liamputtong 2002) that use qualitative methods in order to establish the portrayals available in the media in their own cases. On the other hand, this study (Lämsä and Tiensuu 2002) is also the only one of this literature review that found a 'professional discourse' in their results, excluding stereotypes and gender inequality.

Moreover, the studies tackling the representation of women (Jansson and Sahlin 2015, Montiel 2015, Randazzo 2015, Kang 1997) could be divided into two groups. The first group would be the studies which chose to focus on advertising in order to analyse the representation of women in the media (Jansson and Sahlin 2015, Randazzo 2015, Kang 1997) and the second group would be studies that researched the representation of women within a working context (Adams and Harte 1998). One must specify that the first group contains a much higher number of studies than the second group. Although one could potentially justify this inequality in number of studies within the working field by claiming that "women are less likely to develop high commitment and career aspirations" (Stier and Herzberg-Druker 2017, 1189) and thus impacting on the research as they would provide a very small amount of material to study. This hypothesis reinforces the need to further this research in the case where this argument does not apply and find out how ambitious women with "career aspirations" (Stier and Herzberg-Druker 2017, 1189) are represented in the media.

In the first group, one can see a clear pattern through the findings, as it is established that the representation of women in media and here in advertising (either text or images) is, in general, within a sexualised context (Jansson and Sahlin 2015, Montiel 2015, Randazzo 2015, Kang 1997), thus maintaining the assumption that stereotypes present in society are reproduced in the media. In order to reach this conclusion, various types of studies were examined, covering from the representation of women from Mexican fashion magazines (Jansson and Sahlin 2015) to the queer's women perspectives on the media (Randazzo 2015)

in order to have the broadest possible sample to establish a correlation in those studies and findings.

In the study concerning the portrayal of women's images in magazines advertisements, Kang (1997) used semiotics in order to analyse the meaning of the images and pictures selected by media outlets to publish. He analysed randomly chosen samples from three major female-targeted American newspapers for two years. He indeed found that women were presented in a home environment, rarely as a businessperson or alone, but rather in company of a man or other women, and often pictured with cleaning, beauty or clothing products (Kang 1997, 982). Although those fully correspond to the stereotypes previously discussed in this paper, Kang (1997) shows that there is one difference between the stereotypes within society and within the advertising materials he found. In contrast to 'the housewife inferior to the man' stereotype, here, advertising seems to play on stereotypes of both genders, hence erasing gender inequalities, but further strengthening the clichés of both genders. He found in his study that men were commonly presented in adverts for cars, travels, alcoholic beverage etc. (Kang 1997, 982). For instance, one can argue that being portrayed with beauty products is rather flattering in comparison to being portrayed with alcoholic beverages, as the connotation might be stronger in the second case.

Concerning the second group, Adams and Harte (1998) aimed to analyse the representation of women within their employment in British banks and retail companies rather than in the media. One could see the relevance of this study as it targets a type of activity that the stereotypes found in other studies stipulate that women are not a part of. It provides another insight on the representation of women within a 'working' context and looks into proving or disproving this stereotype. The aim of the researchers was to analyse corporate social reporting via a content analysis in British bank and retail companies over fifty-nine years. Their findings correlate with the study conducted on the representation of the 'women Finnish leader', as they establish that the main concept in the results was a strong patriarchal influence, leading to the underrepresentation of women both in banks and retail, as they claim that corporate annual reports have "largely ignored women" (Adams and Harte 1998, 807). They also explain that some companies have made policy declarations in order to fight this disparity, but the researchers explained that very little was actually found to corroborate these words. However, Adams and Harte (1998) highlight the fact that these results cannot be generalised within all business fields, thus differentiating from stereotypes. They also give rise to the fact that there is a history of equal opportunities in the country and that the corporate reporting on women's employment is voluntary. This suggests that the situation can evolve, and that more research should be conducted over time in order to see if an

evolution has occurred. In effect, they explained that they could see a small rise in the representation of women in those fields in the last few years of the carrying out of the content analysis. This is indeed a place where my own research could fit, as it would take place in the same British context, but not limited to banking and retail, but rather to higher and more general positions within any field of companies.

Overall, one can see how, concerning the representation of women in advertising, gender stereotypes remain undeniably present. Within a media context, women represent a minority in this industry, which could be a potential factor justifying why stereotypes are still present in media too, as the executives are a majority of males. Those findings show that women are also represented via gender stereotyping in the media and not only in society, which directly links to the theory of framing used to conduct the analysis of this thesis. Indeed, those studies set up a strong contextual background to the empirical case of this study, by highlighting the presence of stereotypes in the media, although no article mentioned focuses on the representation of women with high-working statuses, it is important to take it into consideration to see if the same can be applied in the case of businesswomen's representation in the media.

### 3.3 The inequalities women face in the working environment

Although the category previously mentioned seems similar to this one, the fundamental difference is that the previous studies (Montiel 2015, Friesem 2016, Shugg and Liamputtong 2002) were primarily focused on the representation of women in itself, and two of those studies (Adams and Harte 1998, Lämsä and Tiensuu 2002) chose to specifically see how it was done in a working environment. However in this last category, the studies are very much focused on career aspects of women, especially executive ones, as it is important for the future research to evaluate what has been done before in this field of research.

Indeed, whilst the previous studies explored focus on different aspects of gender inequality and how they can act as barriers against women, holding them back from professional progress, it could be assumed that once a woman has made it into the executive world, stereotypes and traditional female ideals go away. It could also be suggested that a woman's career ascent to the top is her fighting these stereotypes and society's inequalities as, for example, her salary would correspond to the job she occupies rather than her gender. As previously mentioned in Lämsä and Tiensuu (2002)'s study, one could see how by asking gender-related questions to female executives, journalists tend to reinforce gender disparity in society. However, one could also argue that, in contrast, journalists try to empower women by giving them voices (Meeks, 2012). However, it was also found that executive men,

politicians or scientists were not asked the same type of questions regarding this matter. In many ways, the study carried out by Lämsä and Tiensuu (2002) inspired this paper as it presented a need for further research in this area, exploring how executive women are represented in news discourse, given journalists' approach to interviewing. Furthermore, this study will seek to investigate how this thinking is manifested in news discourse within what is considered a "macho" cultural context, specifically in the UK (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel 2010, 206).

Gender inequalities as a barrier to female success are one of the main topics that researchers tend to explore when writing about this field. Naidu and Chand (2017) put forward the idea that in the working environment, women tend to face more difficulties than men due to inequality in labour. One of the main aims of their study was to see if gender inequality was 'only' present or if it would act as an actual barrier in women's careers. They realised that this inequality impacted their career in the way that, in order to escape the challenges caused by those gender inequalities, a significant number of women were turning towards entrepreneurship and smaller structures than corporations to flourish in the workplace. Naidu and Chand (2017) also established that women in developed countries faced fewer difficulties than those in developing countries. Acting as a possible cause to effect, they found that developed countries such as "the USA, Canada and UK have more than one third of small businesses owned by women entrepreneurs" (Naidu and Chand 2017, 649). Indeed, these figures indicate that despite feeling 'unwelcome' in the corporate world, and in many cases being portrayed by society as 'victims', women are using entrepreneurship as a way of indirectly fighting gender inequality in the workplace by making their own rules in their own companies. However, women seem to face as many barriers in the workplace as in society. Indeed, despite successfully completing the first challenge of creating their own business, Zhao et al. (2013, 75) found that women find little to no help in this career path. In the UK for example, women entrepreneurs face high costs of business infrastructure, problems related to childcare and lack of access to business networks (Zhao et al. 2013, 75).

However, women are not always able to find their independence of gender inequality with it remaining, in some instances within the corporate world, inescapable, placing women in inferior positions via the 'glass ceiling' concept (Williams 2013, Rosin and Korabik 1991, Solomon 2006, Glass and Cook 2016), judged unanimously present by Rosin and Korabik (1991, 41) in the workplace. This expression was first mentioned in the name of an academic article published by the Wall Street Journal in 1986, called 'Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Can Women Reach the Top of America's Largest Corporations?'. As mentioned in the title, the name came from the idea of a transparent barrier, 'a glass ceiling', which was blocking

women from climbing the corporate ladder and attaining equality between women and men later on in their careers (*The Economist* 2009). Although one could argue that this concept at its origin implied that there was only one barrier to overcome, it could also be considered that it instead corresponds to a series of obstacles, which keep women from progressing in the corporate world. Some of these obstacles could be for example motherhood, which requires women to take time away from their careers or, the lack of female role models in top executive positions to look up to (*The Economist* 2009, Williams 2013). Although the glass ceiling remains today (and not only at the time of Rosin and Korabik's study in 1991) the Forbes list of the 'world's 100 most powerful women' (*Forbes* 2017) proves that it is not unbreakable. However, evidence suggests that even at the highest levels of corporate management, men are paid more than women for the same job; it is often suggested that women are paid 25 percent less than men (*The Economist* 2009).

When analysing the experience of the corporate world by executive women, Rosin and Korabik (1991) conducted a large quantitative study coupled with semi-structured interviews. One can see that the gender gap possibly causing those inequalities is undoubtedly present in the findings of the study, as they put in evidence that executive women were "watched and monitored more closely and trusted less than equivalent men" (Rosin and Korabik 1991, 41). This can illustrate the stereotype implying that women are inferior to men, and not as talented. In addition, another major finding was the fact that women were denied promotions (Rosin and Korabik 1991, Zhao et al. 2013). Although one could argue that no generalisation can be made, the fact that men were not denied it in the same situation shows that gender certainly comes into play here. It could be argued that the figures produced by Rosin and Korabik's study are somewhat outdated given that they were attained in 1991, however, Zhao et al.'s (2013) more recent study revealed the same result, showing that in some companies, women were still denied promotions.

Furthermore, in their book 'Job queues, gender queues: Explaining women's inroads into male occupations, Reskin and Roos (1990) argued that gender discrimination happened in its purest form against women in a working environment, as they claimed "employers prefer men over women" (quoted in Stier and Herzberg-Druker 2017, 1190). However, the relevance of this idea could be disputed given that it was put forward in 1990, and that society has since changed and female statuses within the workplace have evolved. If taking this hypothesis into consideration, one could see this situation as a 'vicious circle' that men are a part of, sharing the same thinking and restricting women from joining the executive world. Thus, this could reinforce the findings of Muoniovaara and Turunen's (2015) study on women's career development and female managers in banks in Sweden. The findings revealed that women dominated the field in terms of employees, but men were the majority at the management

level. Taking these findings into account and the idea that women are ‘missing’ in some top-level fields such as the executive office of the president of the United States for instance, one can wonder if there has been any evolution or if it is “still a ‘male business’” (Claveria 2014). Putting aside the fact that women have traditionally been underrepresented in political institutions (Claveria 2014), it seems to still be the case today in America as Claveria’s study reveals that despite women’s participation in the labour market as well as their educational achievement (Galbraith, 2010) in the past thirty years, their presence in political cabinets remains extremely low. Although this differs from the empirical case of this study, one could observe an undeniable common point between businesswomen and female, that both spheres tend to be full of obstacles, where women remain a minority. Furthermore, this could illustrate one of the stereotypes that men do not trust women or that they belong in the household and should leave the men to take care of politics. As Forbes’ list contains several female politicians from all around the world, it will be interesting to see how they are represented within their high-responsibility career.

Staying on the same idea of stereotypes, one could argue that executives tend to be more wrapped up in themselves than employees lower in the company’s hierarchy. Taking as a premise that this was applicable for every male executive, Ingersoll et al. (2017) conducted a study to explore if it was also the case for female executives as well as to see if it would be a factor in leading women CEOs to take unnecessary risks within their company, to counter the existing stereotype claiming that women are more “ethical, transparent and risk-averse than men” (Ingersoll et al. 2017, 2). A data analysis allowed the researchers to establish that being a narcissist is not a trait that comes with the job, as it seems to ‘only’ apply to men CEOs. This study demonstrates the difference between the potential negative personality traits that many executives have and the traits associated with gender. Although this was again very much based on stereotypes, this study suggests that a top-level job does not seem to correspond to women’s personalities. Lastly, in a study conducted by Skaggs, Stainback and Duncan (2012) concerning the female corporate executives and the board of directors on women’s managerial representation, it was found that there was “no reduction in the gender wage gap” (Skaggs, Stainback and Duncan 2012, 937). This result emphasises the strong overall presence of gender discriminations women are still victims of, despite the various career twists women use to escape it.

This third section of the literature review showed various examples of the inequalities women face in the working environment, notably gender discrimination and a gender gap. A vast majority of those studies took on a radical feminist perspective to explain how a patriarchal society was a major influence related to these issues. However, for the purpose of this

empirical case, one can see the invalidity of using such a radical approach, as businesswomen are not perceived as 'victims' in this case as they fought through those inequalities. Indeed, differing from the studies mentioned above, it is more relevant to take a cultural feminist stance to conduct the analysis, which is not radical and corresponds more to the case.

## **4. Theoretical frame and concepts**

### **4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis**

Whilst Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is primarily a methodological approach to the "systematic and reproducible investigation of semiotic data (written, spoken or visual)" (Wodak 2013, xxi), it is important to note the theoretical roots of such an approach and their overall implications on how this study is performed. Specifically, as suggested in its name, CDA involves the adoption of a 'critical' research perspective. Critical theory is commonly associated with the work of the Frankfurt School, a group of theorists working within the Marxist tradition (Rexhepi and Torres 2011, 685) during the 1920s and 1930s. These theorists concerned themselves primarily with "the manner by which aspects of power and knowledge are produced, disseminated, and ultimately linked" (Rexhepi and Torres 2011, 684). These theoretical concerns are key to understanding when and how to use CDA as a methodological approach and thus defining the overall focus of such work.

The aim of Critical Discourse Analysis is to unmask ideologically permeated and often obscured structures of power, political control, and dominance, as well as strategies of discriminatory inclusion and exclusion in language use. (Wodak 2009, 8)

What is crucial to the theoretical approach of this study is the strive to study how power and discrimination are expressed and disseminated within The Economist's online news discourse. Whilst other theoretical perspectives such as Goffman's (1986) framing theory will play a perhaps more 'obvious', visible role in the analysis, the influence of critical theory in the study's methodology is important for the overall direction of the thesis and must not be overlooked. Indeed, the methodological aspect of CDA will help analyse what are the underlying meanings of the media text published on The Economist online, and how the reader is facing a potential 'constructed reality' where he might be influenced purposely or not by the content of the online magazine. As stated by Machin and Mayr (2012, 1), conducting a CDA can allow us to

reveal more precisely how speakers and authors use language and grammatical features to create meaning, to persuade people to think about events in a

particular way, sometimes even to seek to manipulate them while at the same time concealing their communicative intentions.

However, despite the fact that the CDA tools will help to interpret, it is important to consider the theoretical implications of CDA and thus how it operates as an overall research approach. Despite CDA's focus on the interpretation of media texts for example in order to identify the underlying discourses, it does not take a typically constructivist approach. Instead, CDA belongs to the critical paradigm and more specifically finds its roots in critical realism (Fairclough 2013, 177).

## 4.2 Gender studies

This theoretical framework is undoubtedly founded upon a feminist premise, as it is at the heart of the empirical case explored, but also present in each previous study mentioned in the literature review. The vast majority of scholars (Naidu and Chand 2017, Montiel 2015, Byerly and Ross 2004) who wrote articles discussed in this literature review all put forward the idea that we live within a patriarchal society. These studies emphasise the idea that the professional barriers women face are a direct consequence of this male-dominant society (Gaucher, Friesen and Kay 2011), but also that men contribute to the maintenance of these stereotypes and inequalities (Rosin and Korabik 1991). One could argue that such ideas reflect and draw upon those from within the radical feminist tradition, by implying that men are the primary cause of this inequality between genders in a working environment. Although it is important to acknowledge and take note of how such scholars have tackled the issue of gender inequality, this paper will adopt a 'less radical' approach, taking a cultural feminist perspective.

Such an approach allows the current study to explore society's gender stereotypes without considering that the issue of gender stereotyping and inequality is entirely caused and sustained by men. Indeed, radical feminists imply that sexual inequality is a result of patriarchy (Chandler and Munday 2011, 143). However, a rather essentialist, cultural feminism was chosen, which celebrates "traditional feminine values, such as emotionality, intuition, cooperation, caring, and nonviolence, and emphasizing the differences between men and women" (Chandler and Munday 2011, 144). These traits are all frequently mentioned in many studies from the literature review (Stier and Herzberg-Druker 2017, Claveria 2014, Montiel 2015), the cultural feminist perspective views these characteristics as specific to women but not as negative traits which can stop them from achieving their goals, unlike the radical feminist perspective.

Moreover, the Forbes' list is an example which challenges the radical feminist school of thought by showing that women can 'make it to the top' without being stopped by any 'male barriers'. This is even applicable in countries where women's rights are limited, such as Saudi Arabia (Lubna S. Olayan, CEO of Olayan Financing Company for example) or those from African countries (Isabel Dos Santos, businesswoman from Angola for example), where the patriarchal culture is strong. This is where this thesis differs from the previous studies explored, as it is not intended to use radical feminism to justify or explain the stereotypes and inequalities women are facing, but instead to use a cultural feminist perspective to see if and how The Economist mentions those characteristics attributed to women within a business setting.

Some of the other prominent theories within the literature review were gender stratification and 'intersectionality' (Williams 2013, Jansson and Sahlin 2015, Friesem 2016). According to Williams (2013), these are approaches "to studying gender that takes race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality into account" (Williams 2013, 614) and which draw attention to the "social inequalities and unjust social relations" (Lykke 2010, 50) these different factors produce. However, the definition of gender stratification provided by Geist and Myers (2016) suggests that "men typically inhabit higher statuses than women" (Geist and Myers 2016), an idea conflicting the very existence of the Forbes list of the one hundred most powerful women in 2017. Thus, despite the fact that researchers (Williams 2013, Jansson and Sahlin 2015, Friesem 2016) have adopted this theoretical tool in their own work, the current study will not focus on explaining why social injustice exists, but rather how such injustices are manifested within media texts in the form of gender stereotypes once women have reached a "high status" (Geist and Myers 2016).

#### 4.3 Framing theory

When looking at the way in which high-profile women are represented in the media, it is important to understand the aspects of news reportage that can potentially change the meaning conveyed to the audience.

Various scholars (Shugg and Liamputtong 2002, EIGE 2013, Wood 1994, Friesem 2016, Lämsä and Tiensuu 2002) put forward the potential the media has to empower women and erase the gender stereotypes they might be victims of. However, most of them came to the conclusion that the opposite was happening, that male media editors were rather reinforcing the gender gap (Montiel 2015). Some researchers such as Solomon (2006) have also suggested possible explanations for this, putting forward the idea that despite the increasing number of women in the global media industry, they were not employed within top-level

management positions, and thus had no impact on the type of content published (Solomon 2006) and thus an inability to have any control over how women are potentially 'framed'. In essence, the framing theory suggests that the media focus their attention on chosen aspects of an event and then put it within a field of meaning. Indeed, one could interpret that the way media organisations portray women or treat gender issues might have a significant impact on their readers without them noticing. Framing does not only involve what is present within the actual content of the article, it also takes into account aspects which are not published, which can lead to the potential underrepresentation or misrepresentation of 'powerful' businesswomen in the media.

This is where Goffman's framing theory (1986) is important, in order to explore how the media can potentially manipulate the reader's views, and possibly maintain certain stereotypes in one's mind without openly doing so. Indeed, Goffman describes these frames as "schemata of interpretation" (Goffman, 1986, 21), which aid news media producers and audiences in locating, perceiving, identifying and labelling different subjects or events (Goffman 1986, 21). Perhaps a simpler definition of Goffman's framing theory is offered by Davie (2017) as:

In essence, framing theory suggests that how something is presented to the audience (called "the frame") influences the choices people make about how to process that information. Frames are abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning. The most common use of frames is in terms of the frame the news or media place on the information they convey.

Although Goffman's concept will play a fundamental role in this analysis of how news media discourse frames high-profile women, this theory has potential drawbacks, that is, that the theory undermines the audiences' ability to interpret what they read. Indeed, one could argue that the theory ignores the subjective processes involved in news media consumption such as the reader's own feelings or values. Although this study will only be identifying the presence of such frames and is thus not concerned directly with audience effects, it is an interesting piece of critique to consider.

Another possible critique of Goffman's framing theory is that it tends to be reductionist in nature (Benford 1997, 420). Indeed, in the specific theoretical context of feminism, it has been argued that humans are not born with the automatic ability to interpret sexist frames in a certain way, rather our interpretation is made up of more complex factors which shape our understanding. This idea is reinforced by Benford (1997) in his article criticising Goffman's

theory, putting forward the idea that a feminist frame is not simply a cognitive schema but instead a “way of defining, reframing, interpreting reality that is collectively fashioned and passed on” (Benford 1997, 420).

#### 4.4 Stereotyping and idealisation

Considering that the hypothesis of this study is that stereotypes will be present in the text and images analysed, it is also important to explore the concept of idealisation, as the representation of powerful businesswomen in articles from The Economist online do not have to be necessarily negative. Indeed, they can also be positive, which can still be classified as a stereotype (Chandler and Munday 2011, 407), representing women in an idealised way.

Firstly, Chandler and Munday (2011, 407) define the act of stereotyping as “a form of inaccurate, value-laden representation and categorisation reflecting fixed, preconceived beliefs and expectations based on exaggerated and oversimplified generalisations about the supposedly inherent traits of an entire social group”, and claim that a common example of this “social group” is women (Chandler and Munday 2011, 172). This thus brings up the gender stereotypes issue, vastly mentioned in the literature review (Sayer 2005, Montiel 2015, Shugg and Liamputtong 2002). In their chapter about sexism in the *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, Swim and Hyers (2009, 410) posit that this specific type of stereotypes finds its roots in the education given to children and could be a potential justification to its wide presence in society since years and years. They claim that “in teaching gendered behaviors to our girls and boys, we raise them to develop gender schemas, or stereotyped categories, by which they can judge all information about their own and other’s gender-related behaviors that they encounter” (Swim and Hyers 2009, 410).

The global phenomenon of gender stereotyping is said to be powered by the mass media, as the representations of both genders given by the media “polarise differences between the sexes, notably in their physical appearance, traits, behaviours, and occupations” (Chandler and Munday 2011, 172). The idea of standardised representations, particularly concerning women and their executive jobs, can reinforce the hypothesis of this study by discovering such stereotypes. Moreover, this definition given by Chandler and Munday (2011, 172) implies a difference between which type of jobs men and women can indeed occupy. This reinforces the studies mentioned in the literature review (Lämsä and Tiensuu 2002, Shugg and Liamputtong 2002, Gaucher, Friesen and Kay 2011) which found that women were a minority in high level positions, or even in certain types of industries. Furthermore, on the continuous idea of gender stereotypes, it is also said that sexism, being defined by Chandler and Munday (2011, 386) as the attitude reflecting prejudice against people on the basis of

their biological sex and/or gender roles can typically be that of “males against females on the basis of their supposed inherent inferiority”. Those terms related to gender stereotypes evoke for instance the gap questioning females’ skills in certain jobs, and their potential membership of the executive world. Linking this back to the ‘masculinity values’ index of Samovar, Porter and McDaniel (2010, 2006), it will be interesting to see if the content of the articles of *The Economist* online contain some sexist traits or not, when framing powerful businesswomen.

Secondly, despite the popularity of gender stereotypes in society and sexism within the executive world, idealisation can nevertheless come into play concerning the representation of powerful businesswomen. The fact that they are underrepresented (Claveria 2014, Wood 1994, EIGE 2013) in this sphere of high-level jobs can lead to the portrayal of businesswomen as breaking those conventions, fighting for their rights within their careers and winning the respect of their male colleagues. Those women breaking the glass ceiling would create their own ‘social group’ which could still potentially be stereotyped because of the abnormality of their presence in this ‘man’s world’ (Skaggs, Stainback and Duncan 2012, Claveria 2014). One could argue that the underrepresentation of women in the executive world is a negative aspect of society, but could also become a rather positive thing, if their male counterparts start to take an “epistemological stance on ‘what is real’” (Chandler and Munday 2011, 196) and acknowledge the presence of women fighting to break through the glass ceiling. Moreover, one could imagine that instead of considering a female CEO as their equal, a male CEO could see her as achieving something unusual, or even extraordinary. An example of such possible representation could be to portray businesswomen as superheroes, as they would become “a perfect example or model” (Chandler and Munday 2011, 196) for society which does not exactly represent a truthful or accurate take on reality. It would rather depend on “consciousness, or even that is purely subjective and constructed in our use of signs (notably language)” (Chandler and Munday 2011, 196).

## **5. Method**

### **5.1 Critical Discourse Analysis**

Although most of the previous studies (Rosin and Korabik 1991, Adams and Harte 1998, Naidu and Chand 2017) examined earlier in this thesis opted for a quantitative approach to their research, it was decided that a qualitative methodological framework would offer the most effective way in which to answer the research questions set out for the current study. This can be explained by the fact that those previous authors took a positivist approach to research, seeking an ‘objective’ truth in the simple identification of numeric correlations, whereas the current study seeks to explain how the ‘truth’ is constructed by text producers.

To this end, this thesis adopts a critical discourse analysis (CDA) methodology whereby language is considered as “intertwined with how we act and how language is part of the way that people seek to promote particular views of the world and ‘naturalize’ them, that is, make them appear natural and commonsensical” (Machin and Mayr 2012, 2). Whilst in contrast to the positivist approach to research, qualitative research typically assumes that the ‘truth’ is subjective and focuses on the idea of a ‘constructed reality’, CDA can be viewed as somewhat of a mid-point between these two approaches, by providing a critical and systematic framework with which to credibly interpret what we see i.e. text and images.

The purpose of this study is to explore how gender stereotypes are present in the text and images of articles from The Economist online. Conducting CDA is then the most suited method to discovering the underlying meaning within text and images, and to see if being a woman with such a high working title is covered as a gender-related topic by this publication. Machin and Mayr (2012, 2) explain in their CDA handbook that critical linguists looked at how language could be used as a tool to disseminate power and dominant values. One could see the interest in linking this with the ‘masculinity values’ index (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel 2010, 206) previously mentioned in the introduction, in order to examine if the coverage of The Economist corresponds to the ‘patriarchal values’ of the country given by the index or if it is not the case, which could be justified by the fact that the current editor in chief of the magazine is a woman. Lastly, aimed at exploring how ‘powerful’ businesswomen are potentially framed in The Economist online, the CDA tools chosen when conducting this analysis help to establish it in an ‘interpretive objectivity’, investigating how language and images can, for instance, categorise people (Machin and Mayr 2012, 2). It is here that the gender theories explored in the theory chapter of this thesis will work closely with the analytical toolkit afforded by a CDA methodology as they will allow the analysis to focus on whether gender is a foregrounded issue and how women are portrayed. The cultural feminist perspective adopted and the framing theory contribute to identifying the underlying meaning of The Economist’s online news discourse regarding powerful businesswomen.

## 5.2 Tools

This study will conduct a ‘multimodal’ critical discourse analysis (Machin and Mayr 2012, 7) in order to not only examine texts, but also images present in the articles. This choice was influenced by the work of the ‘pioneers of Critical Linguistics’, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001). They work on creating concepts and tools that allow researchers to examine the underlying meaning of images, in addition to ‘traditional’ discourse analysis for text only. As the aim of the current study is to focus on the representation of powerful businesswomen in articles from The Economist online, it is relevant to explore the visual aspects involved and

not limiting the analysis to written content only. For Machin and Mayr (2012, 8), without considering the visual elements, “we would miss the way that the image too contributes to this process of meaning-making here”. Thus, the choice of images chosen to illustrate the articles is another important aspect to explore. Furthermore, the tools dedicated to conducting a multimodal CDA are needed to be able to achieve a thorough and “systematic” (Machin and Mayr 2012, 8) analysis of images, and to investigate how they work together with the text (Machin and Mayr 2012, 8). Four tools are chosen in order to conduct this analysis. This small number is firstly due to the limited length of this thesis, but also due to the slightly higher number of sampled articles than commonly recommended for a paper of this size. By analysing more articles with lesser CDA tools, the analysis intends to fill its greater aim, which is to answer in the best possible way the two research questions. This is also why amongst those tools, three are for the text analysis and only one is dedicated to the visual elements. This choice was made in accordance to the content of the articles sampled, although every article was illustrated with an image, only a minority were pictures of the two businesswomen spoken of in the articles. Moreover, the purposely limited number of CDA tools also lead to a deeper analysis of the text and images, and comprehensively expose the underlying ideas from the publication regarding the representation of businesswomen.

### 5.2.1 Lexical choices, word connotation and nomination or functionalisation

This study will examine how The Economist online selects and uses specific aspects of language in order to represent the businesswomen in question. As discussed earlier in this paper, language is considered to be “intertwined with how we act and how language is part of the way that people seek to promote particular views of the world and ‘naturalize’ them, that is, make them appear natural and commonsensical” (Machin and Mayr 2012, 2) and thus, the exploration of the linguistic choices made are essential for uncovering what ‘views of the world’ are promoted. The thesis focuses on what Machin and Mayr (2012, 42) refer to as the author’s “lexical choices”, which can include adjectives, nouns, verbs and adverbs. Lexical choices can be defined quite simply as “the choice of words and the use of euphemisms” and are considered as an important way by which ideas and power are communicated in news discourse. It is thus through closer examination of these choices that we are able to identify the ideas embedded within them (He and Zhou 2015, 2358). Closely linked to the first, the second focus of the analysis will be on what Machin and Mayr (2012, 32) refer to as “word connotations” or, more simply, what the words used by the author of a text signify and how this contributes to the construction of meaning. Machin and Mayr (2012, 32) suggest that “since language is an available set of options, certain choices have been made by the author for their own motivated reasons” (Machin and Mayr 2012, 32). Lastly, the nomination or functionalisation of Mary Barra and Sheryl Sandberg is an aspect that will be taken into

consideration whilst looking at their representation in the articles. Alongside the words commonly chosen and their connotations when portraying them, one could see the relevance of exploring how they are named/called. The fact that one could be referred to by her job title rather than her name has specific meanings and is a choice that would be intended by The Economist online to make the reader think that a job title could in this case be more important than naming the person herself (this corresponds to functionalisation). Machin and Mayr (2012, 81) explain that by doing so, the author either aims to portray an actor by what they do to make it sound more official, whereas nomination can sound more personal and does not reduce people to simply a role, implying that this role defines this person. Functionalisation can, in this sense, have negative connotations. In summary, these three analytical tools will allow the study to explore the underlying ideas and representations of powerful businesswomen communicated via the linguistic choices made by The Economist online.

### 5.2.2 Gaze

One could consider it as common practice for an online news media outlet to illustrate text with an image of the primary subject of the article. Again, although it might seem common practice in the readers' eyes and a neutral aspect in the article, conducting a multimodal CDA including tools dedicated to visual social semiotics, help to see the hidden meaning of the picture chosen, as well as indicating why the authors may have specifically chosen it. Machin and Mayr (2012, 70) explain that visual semiotics tools, such as gaze and poses chosen for the analysis of this thesis, will help to examine the representations present within the images used in the chosen material, along with the potential meaning behind them. As Barthes (1973, 109) states that, "a photograph will be a kind of speech for us in the same way as a newspaper article; even objects will become speech, if they mean something". In the case of the 'gaze tool', it offers various ways of interpreting how the reader would understand it and reveal the intentions behind the image choices made by The Economist.

Machin and Mayr (2012, 70) explain that "we show that gaze in a photograph, where a person looks, and how they look, can be one important way of encouraging particular kinds of interpretations and of relationships between viewer and participant". Examples such as whether the person in the picture looks at the viewer or outside the frame, or also if they look downwards or upwards all have strong connotations that play an important role on how the viewer will interpret it.

### 5.3 Material

The material chosen for this study follows The Economist's online discourse of, according to Forbes, the two most powerful businesswomen of 2017: Sheryl Sandberg and Mary Barra. These two women sit at 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> on Forbes' list of the '100 Most Powerful women of 2017'

but are the first two on the list who are recognised based on their business background, an area which has been repeatedly cited as unwelcoming for women and where stereotypes thrive (Skaggs, Stainback and Duncan 2012, Williams 2013).

The first two places on the list are filled by political leaders Angela Merkel (Germany) and Theresa May (United Kingdom). They were not selected for the current study as their representation was likely to be heavily affected by The Economist's political stance. The third place on the list was filled by Melinda Gates, who was recognised for her philanthropy, thanks to her and Bill Gates' foundation, and thus not necessarily as a 'businesswoman'. Thus, as the study is concerned with the stereotypes surrounding businesswomen, the first two to appear on the list are Sheryl Sandberg (4<sup>th</sup>), Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Facebook and Mary Barra (5<sup>th</sup>), CEO of General Motors. This thesis analyses the articles published regarding the two businesswomen within the last four years starting and including the day the sample was taken. The study thus examines 30 articles published between the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2014 and the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2018. The identical number of the sample, 15, for each woman is a coincidence and corresponds to the number of articles published by The Economist online during the given timeframe. The four-year period to sample articles was chosen in order to have enough material to analyse for this thesis. Conducting it for only a year would not have been enough material to analyse. The articles were selected based on a keyword search for their respective names on The Economist's website with the application of a search filter which sorted the results into chronological order. Within the search results, user comments discussing the women were also shown, but only articles by The Economist were selected. This search provided a wide variety of articles discussing the women themselves but also, on some occasions only quoting them briefly. This allows the study to examine how The Economist discussed and represented the two women in a number of different news contexts, giving a more general idea of how relevant media outlet portrays businesswomen.

One overall description which can be made from the data set of articles is that for both Sheryl Sandberg and Mary Barra, the majority of the images are not of them although the text of the articles would speak about them. Concerning Sheryl Sandberg, amongst the articles sampled, she is the main focus in the majority of the articles. They are mostly shared between her portrayed within a professional context (her role within Facebook), and her as a famous author of two books. These are the main two topics examined in the sample, and the articles are spread quite regularly over time. However, it is different for Mary Barra, who is more often only mentioned than being the main focus of the articles published. The content of the articles discussing Mary Barra were all about her professional choices and the actions taken in relation to General Motors. One can see how the articles were more concentrated around

certain dates, such as for example when she took on her new position in the company, when the company went through a scandal, or when she would make a big announcement.

Concerning the choice of the platform, it was influenced by the figures published by The Economist Media Centre on the monthly circulation of the magazine for the Spring 2017 period. It showed that the average circulation worldwide was 1, 444, 936 (*The Economist Media Centre 2017*), in comparison to the online circulation which was 11, 372, 596 (*The Economist Media Centre 2017*). The major difference between the two figures led this analysis to look at The Economist articles online, as it publishes exclusive content, but also that it reaches more people.

#### 5.4 Limitations of the study

It is important to note that there are several limitations in this thesis, concerning the analysis itself but also concerning the method chosen. Firstly, the size of the study meant that only 30 articles could be analysed, which somewhat limits one's ability to make wider generalisations about how high-profile businesswomen are perceived in the media from the results. This limitation is also relevant when considering the fact that this thesis only examines The Economist online's representation of only two businesswomen from the Forbes list. Thus, one can consider that the stereotypes or examples of idealisation encountered are limited to Sheryl Sandberg and Mary Barra only. This limits the variety of possible frames this study could uncover compared to if the study was bigger. Thus, this leaves room for future research, as by widening the time frame, the study could involve more businesswomen and explore a wider range of representation The Economist online uses, as there could be variation on the portrayal of a businesswomen depending on the industry she works in, for instance.

Furthermore, one could argue that the number of four CDA tools chosen for the analysis restricts the potential scope of the analysis. Although it was chosen this way to conduct a deeper analysis and indeed pick the tools that would answer the research questions best, it however does not mean that other tools would not have suited the analysis but rather the opposite. Again, the limited length of the study led to this decision, however, for further research, including more tools for text and visual elements could unleash more aspects that the reader would not notice but that would have strong meanings in the way businesswomen are depicted.

Secondly, as it is commonly stated in qualitative research, one could question the reliability of the study because of its interpretive nature. Some criticism of such methods was

mentioned by Denzin and Lincoln (2011, 2), as they claim that they are often issued by positivistic critics (Chandler and Munday 2011, 347). Those critics allege that qualitative research focusing on understanding meaning are “soft”, “unscientific” and “have no value beyond the formulation of hypotheses” (Chandler and Munday 2011, 347). Hence, they argue that the researchers using such methods write “fiction, not science, and have no way of verifying their true statements” (Denzin and Lincoln 2011, 2). Despite thoroughly using the CDA handbook of Machin and Mayr and sticking to the CDA tools suggested in order to conduct a critical analysis, one could argue that it remains the researcher’s own interpretation and that the results of the study could be challenged by another.

## **6. Analysis**

In order to provide overall transparency to how this analysis was conducted, it is important to outline how the selected material was coded. Firstly, all of the selected articles were printed and a preliminary reading of the articles was done. This first reading allowed me to pre-select the prominent CDA tools needed for the analysis. More thorough readings of the texts were then carried out within which the dominant frames in the texts were identified through detailed examination of the linguistic and visual techniques used by *The Economist* online. These dominant frames provided the categories by which this analysis and results section is divided. Only the most representative examples of how the CDA tools are applied in the articles were chosen to be presented, due to the limited length of the analysis.

### **6.1 Results**

The presentation of the results of this study are divided into two sections based on the main subjects of interest, Sheryl Sandberg and Mary Barra. As the sample is limited to 15 articles per businesswoman, mixing the results of both when patterns were identified would have potentially limited the analysis, as it would suggest that the premise of the study is that both are being presented in a similar way. Also, it could influence the conduct of the analysis and create bias when reporting on the results, by indirectly looking for similarities between the two women. This ‘bias’ is not a positive aspect in this case, as the aim is to conduct a thorough systematic analysis of both businesswomen, in order to precisely establish their portrayals individually, to then discuss possible patterns in the discussion section. Thereafter, the results all together are displayed and the research questions are answered.

#### **6.1.1 Sheryl Sandberg**

As mentioned in the introduction, power is a difficult word to define, particularly when speaking about someone as being ‘powerful’. It is rather subjective to determine which factors lead to somebody being portrayed as a ‘powerful’ person. Although power can be

described as the “ability to achieve a desired outcome” (Chandler and Munday 2011, 332), it does not specify what factors are or should be taken into consideration when classifying a person as achieving such a status. In the case of Forbes, one could say that Sheryl Sandberg’s prestigious career and large net worth were the main reasons behind placing her as the first businesswoman of the list, and as the overall fourth amongst the powerful women of 2017. Sheryl Sandberg’s current job title is Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the technology company Facebook, since she was appointed in 2008, then aged 39. Prior to this, she worked as Google’s vice president for six years, and also wrote books on grief and the keys to female access to leadership roles. Following the success of her book ‘Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead’ (Sandberg 2013), she founded an organisation to support women’s empowerment. The combination of all of these experiences might be the reason for her being selected as one of America’s most influential female executives (*Forbes* 2018).

#### 6.1.1.1 As a professional

Sheryl Sandberg’s portrayal in the articles sampled from *The Economist* can be divided between two main frames, and this section explores the first one, which is her representation within a professional context. In order to consider how the publication chose to portray her, it is vital to examine how she is referred to throughout the articles. This will indicate how *The Economist* aims to shape her in specific ways within their readers’ minds, as the words they chose have an impact on the image the reader has of Sheryl Sandberg. This is an example of how news media can be seen as “biased” (Shojaei, Youssefi and Hosseini’s 2013, 858). This is an idea which is reaffirmed by Shojaei, Youssefi and Hosseini’s (2013, 858) who claim that:

The media’s central role in determining what information the public has justifies the recent increased attention to how the media shapes public knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Media sources may influence the public not only by choosing the slant of a particular report, but also merely by choosing what to report.

This quote places emphasis on the importance of the role media outlets such as *The Economist* have, for instance in shaping how high-profile businesswomen are portrayed. This implies that their representation within the articles has a strong impact on how the readers perceive this still ‘uncommon’ phenomenon in society, i.e. a woman who has broken through the glass ceiling. Firstly, one main finding is that Sheryl Sandberg is referred to by her job title, which one could argue is a neutral way of presenting a businesswoman from the Forbes’ list amongst the most powerful of the year. They acknowledge her success by her job title and what she does on a daily basis: “chief operating officer of Facebook” (*The Economist* 2017e)

and “Facebook’s chief operating officer” (*The Economist* 2015b, 2014b). However, by functionalising her, it could be suggested that this is a method used by *The Economist* to depersonalise Sheryl Sandberg within their coverage. This could be viewed both as having positive and negative impacts on female stereotypes. On one hand, it could be argued that by depersonalising her, the author suggests that she is less human because she is a woman that has reached the top of the corporate world. However, on the other hand, one could view Sheryl Sandberg’s depersonalisation as positive, as it seemingly ignores the fact that she is a woman, instead referring to her job title, which one could argue is a more neutral way of portraying her, and focusing on her achievements rather than making reference to her gender.

Secondly, and still concerning her neutral portrayal based on her job title rather than highlighting the ‘abnormality’ of her situation as a female executive, the publication uses expressions which connote and help to reveal how they underline the importance of her job, although she is not the CEO. The phrases “a company like Ms Sandberg’s” (*The Economist* 2017e) and “Facebook’s Sheryl Sandberg” (*The Economist* 2017f) connote the idea of belonging, as if Facebook was her own company instead of being the company she works for. The symbolic “’s” in both expressions demonstrates how the publication intentionally attempts to communicate this ‘belonging’ notion to the reader. This also contrasts with a more ‘logical’ way of referring to her, as being below the chairman/CEO within the company’s hierarchy, as this is the reality. This surprising way of framing her could be argued to have both negative and positive impacts on her portrayal. One could argue that the potential negative implications of such framing are that it suggests the idea that her career and company define her as a person.

This also provides an example of what Machin and Mayr (2012, 81) coin “functionalisation” where it could be interpreted that her job is her overall life priority and the metaphor of her ‘becoming one’ with the company is here to symbolise her commitment to it. On the other hand, using those words connoting a strong sense of ‘belonging’ to the company could give her authority, reinforcing the importance and responsibility of her job title to the readers, creating a direct and strong link between the company’s actions and her.

Thirdly, still following the idea of functionalisation, she is also mentioned by her title in the company’s hierarchy, examples of this are the following: “the number-two executive at Facebook” (*The Economist* 2015d), “number two at Facebook” (*The Economist* 2017g), “the senior Facebook executive” (*The Economist* 2017d), “a senior executive at Facebook” (*The Economist* 2016b) and also described as being amongst the “top executives” (*The Economist*

2014b). Following cultural feminist theory, using such words to frame her as a woman from the executive world could have the aim of portraying her as an example to society, demonstrating and reminding readers several times how breaking the glass ceiling is not impossible, even in the male-dominant technology industry (Lijee, Bhattacharyya and Vijayraghavan 2014).

This could be reinforced by the fourth way in which Sheryl Sandberg is discussed within a broader professional context, which was through the suggestion that she ‘belongs’ not just to Facebook, but to this generally male-oriented industry. Such examples include *The Economist* mentioning her as one of the “tech bosses” (*The Economist* 2016d), or one of “tech’s behemoths” (*The Economist* 2014b). From a gender stereotypical perspective, it could also be seen as her breaking those conventions and earning the place that she accepted as a COO in a technology company. This celebrates her and her successful career, as, amongst those four types of professional representation in the texts, the lexical choices all focus on her professional status. This positive vision celebrating her career was also found as a similar aspect amongst the indirect types of ‘naming’ that were attributed to her. A final example of this was through portraying her as “experienced boss” (*The Economist* 2017g) when speaking of her in an article concerning her potentially replacing Uber’s CEO.

Her portrayal of being an “experienced boss” (*The Economist* 2017g) could refer to the years she spent at another giant technology corporation, Google. The fame of Google could be the reason that led Facebook’s board to propose her the job of COO in 2008. Although it is probable that she worked hard to get where she currently is, one could argue that she still has to follow orders in every company she has worked for, including Facebook. This idea could be sustained by the somewhat ‘military-style’ lexical choices, in effect connoting the following of orders, and in her case put into place, the demands and decisions made by her hierarchy. This links back to cultural feminist theory, implying that although this is not fate and that women can access such working titles, they have to work their way up in order to not face situations where their superiors remain predominantly male. This can be revealed by the way she is referred to, with an immediate link to being the CEO’s ‘servant’, through the use of words such as “lieutenant” (*The Economist* 2018c, 2016d). Following definitions provided by the Oxford Dictionary, a lieutenant can be defined as a “deputy or substitute acting for a superior” or, in the British army, as a rank of officer “above second lieutenant and below captain” (Oxford Dictionary 2018d). Those definitions highlight how using this specific phrase is in fact an analogy used by the publication to symbolise her role as COO. Also, by referring to her as “the second in command” (*The Economist* 2014c), it re-emphasises the fact that although a high-level executive, she is not at the top of her company’s hierarchy.

This contrasts with the representations discussed earlier which positively acknowledged her career path, to instead give a rather negative image and influence the readers, by insinuating that despite her role, she remains submissive and is required to follow orders. The lexical choice and the connotations that accompany such terms in this context focus on strictness. This can be a way of representation of the executive world as a whole to the readers, but also potentially as a way of depicting Sheryl Sandberg as a victim. This notion of submission can be perceived with the verb 'serving' when presenting who she is and her role in the company, the author expresses that she "serves as" (*The Economist* 2017g) the number two: "Some have suggested that Sheryl Sandberg, who serves as number two at Facebook, would be a good choice, but may not be willing to jump" (*The Economist* 2017g). It is important to point out that although it would have been an interesting and determining factor in the analysis, the gender of the authors of the articles are not known, as they are anonymous.

Despite Sheryl Sandberg's neutral or rather positively portrayed representation through how she is referred to, as well as the exploration of her being potentially portrayed as an executive who still has to follow orders or seek approval from her hierarchy, one can now wonder how she is represented within her role as a COO. When one questions how somebody can be judged as 'powerful', the same can be considered regarding what makes a businesswoman a successful one. She is depicted as part of those executives that make bold decisions in order to follow the trends and opportunities that, if well calculated, will further contribute to the growth of the business. The Economist mentions how Europe, and notably the biggest European business incubator in Paris, will aim to 'compete' with the Silicon Valley (*The Economist* 2017f). Within the text they present the benefits it would bring to American businesses, before emphasising the fact that Sheryl Sandberg was one of the first executives to say that Facebook would be a part of this sphere of innovation (*The Economist* 2014b).

Moreover, her strong mind set as a leader is also stated in the text. By saying that "(...) tech's behemoths need to be watched very carefully" (*The Economist* 2014b), claiming that rivalries between firms are a common thing in this competitive world, the publication demonstrates how hard the job and business can be. The words chosen connote masculinity and a harsh environment, but also that Sheryl Sandberg is in fact swimming amongst such 'sharks', and not getting eaten but rather finding her own way. From a gender perspective, one could see how such expressions close the gap between male and female corporates, as it insinuates that at this level, gender does not come into play, only their business credentials do. This shows the strength and the seriousness of Sheryl Sandberg as a leader, which is reinforced later in the article, when discussing her concerning a possible business deal, which seems to be rather in favour of a competing technology company than in favour of Facebook. The

Economist conclude by a short phrase of three words - "Facebook said no" (*The Economist* 2014b). The tone of the sentence as well as the fact that they replaced her name mentioned above by 'Facebook' shows her authority as a leader, but also how she is the one who chooses what is best for her company. The publication wrote the article knowing that the audience would not be experts on technology business deals, and yet they made sure that they could see how the deal was not beneficial to Facebook, emphasising on the fact that Sheryl Sandberg made the 'right' decision. By doing so, the reader might not realise that they in fact approved her decision, like they understood her choice, and acknowledged her as a good leader. This is another example of how *The Economist* framed the businesswoman in this case. Lastly, alongside being a passionate and mentally strong businesswoman having no issue being a manager in this male-oriented environment, it seems that those qualities have a cost. This cost being her marital life, as mentioned in the text, when talking about her husband, the publication chose to say that he lived in his "wife's shadow" (*The Economist* 2015d): "Mr Goldberg was often asked how he felt about living in his wife's shadow" (*The Economist* 2015d). In a literal sense, those words connote that he lived behind her, implying that she led the way, and he followed. One could argue that this implies that he conducted his life to suit his wife, hence putting his wills and needs after hers. Although cultural feminists would celebrate such facts, one can argue that by mentioning this, *The Economist* depicts a harsher portrayal of the woman. This could lead the reader to imagine her as a 'heartless' woman obsessed with her work, who seems to give more importance to her job than her husband. Another possible interpretation could be that her husband happily chose to do it to help his wife's career, but by not saying more on the subject, the publication chose to take the risk of darkening her portrayal as a businesswoman. Furthermore, it could also support theories that imply that women cannot combine a high-level career with their personal life (Bertagnoli 2017), and thus also reinforcing such gender stereotypes in society, in the end implying that they do not belong to the executive world but rather at home. This 'harsh' side of her personality is underlined when it is suggested that she places her career before anything else in her life. When speaking of her book 'Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead' (Sandberg 2013) on women's empowerment, they explain that Sheryl Sandberg wants women to "lean in more aggressively" and "sit at the table, ask for the corner office, and forget about the babies that aren't even born" (*The Economist* 2015c). The authoritarian tone of the sentence corresponds to the apparently 'rigid' and strong-minded side of her personality, implying that women's success comes with a large cost. It is however important to underline the fact that she is a part of it, as she is a mother herself. Through the selection of these words, especially the mentioning of children being somewhere near the bottom of her list of priorities, the publication can influence the reader into thinking that she is in fact more of a businesswoman than a woman herself, potentially dehumanising her. Although it

cannot be denied that those were her words, by taking them out of context, it fulfils the purpose of the publication and serves the way in which they wanted to portray her.

#### 6.1.1.2 As a woman

As previously mentioned, Sheryl Sandberg is not only portrayed in a professional context, but also in a personal one, as a wife for example. This is an important finding to take into consideration as it corresponds to the second main frame she is the subject of, focusing on the 'human side' of her personality rather than the professional. Throughout the articles sampled in this analysis, the reader is able to get quite a complete portrayal of Sheryl Sandberg, depending on what information the media outlet chooses to offer. The passionate, hard-working representation of her as a professional contrasts significantly with the next section of the results, which shows a more sensitive aspect of her personality that cannot be perceived in a working context, as it could discredit her as a female COO in a man's world, and thus reinforcing gender stereotypes.

The second main frame identified of Sheryl Sandberg is linked with love and care, which contrasts with the previous ways of portraying her, as a fearless businesswoman putting her feelings aside to focus on her career. Whilst it could be argued that she has no choice but to keep a somewhat 'tough' working persona, she also seems to value her personal life, as it is said in one of the articles, she claims that "the most important career choice of a woman is whom she marries" (*The Economist* 2015d). The connotation of the words 'career', 'choice', 'woman' and 'marries' as well as their order in the sentence could imply that she handles her personal life as if it was business. This gives a sense of her trying to rationalise love and fate, which counteracts the 'common stereotype' of women being romantic and believing in such things. Thus, by doing so, it could be seen as the publication picturing her as different from the norm and the common relation between women and love (marriage in this case). This difference could be interpreted as being directly linked to her time-consuming job, leading to it having an important influence on how she sees things in her personal life, re-emphasising on the 'rigid' side of the businesswoman. However, another possible interpretation would be that *The Economist* chose to symbolise the importance she gives to a life commitment through marriage, picturing her in fact as a woman who takes her personal life as seriously as her career, implying that they are equal in her life. As Shojaei, Youssefi and Hosseini (2013, 859) explain, it is necessary to investigate the relationship between media and language, as they claim that the words chosen by, in this case *The Economist*, are "institutionalised means of framing reality". From a more abstract point of view, the publication shows that the apparent balance between Sheryl Sandberg's two worlds highlights the importance and 'need' for a husband, however successful a businesswoman is.



Figure 1. Sheryl Sandberg and her husband (*The Economist* 2015d). Source: <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2015/05/09/the-first-man-of-silicon-valley>

This 'balance', showing that Sheryl Sandberg (Figure 1) places as much importance on her love life as her work, can also be displayed in the picture above. The Economist chose a picture where she is by her husband's side to reinforce the idea in the reader's mind that she is a wife before being a businesswoman, it seems to be how they want the readers to think of her as it is stated by Giannino and Campbell (2012, 60) "the pictures in our heads are mainly constructs from the pictures we get from mass media". Hence, her marital status seems to be more or as important to the editorial team of *The Economist* as her success and what she does for a living. Also, the fact that she walks slightly ahead of her husband could be argued to link back to the 'managing' traits from her 'professional personality' that she reinvents in her relationship. Also, her confidence as being a COO in a male-oriented industry (*The Economist* 2017f) can be identified by the way she walks confidently. Concerning her gaze, the fact that she does not look at the viewer means that there is no demand made and that no response is expected from her (Machin and Mayr 2012, 71). This is what Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) call an 'offer image', as the viewer is "offered the image as information available for scrutiny and consideration" (Machin and Mayr 2012, 71). The portrayal of Sheryl Sandberg's 'human side' counters the previous construction explored of the 'workaholic woman' but can be perceived as positive and negative, as it reinforces gender stereotypes. One can wonder if in an article about a male COO, the importance of a wife would be mentioned. However, her gaze still connotes the confidence she was portrayed having within her 'professional' frame, showing it as one of her characteristics. This is shown by the way she looks slightly up rather than down. As noted by Machin and Mayr (2012, 72), up and down have strong connotations in society, and can also be applied to images, up being positive and

down being negative. Thus, her looking slightly up can connote confidence, and one can compare it with the fact that politicians are often portrayed in a similar manner, both possibly looking towards “lofty ideas and to high status” (2012, 72). Moreover, Machin and Mayr (2012, 73) give the example that politicians are also commonly pictured looking off frame, like Sheryl Sandberg. This can be compared to women in ‘female magazines’ such as *Cosmopolitan*, who are often shown looking downwards, depicting more negative connotations. It is interesting to note that in this case, the picture chosen by *The Economist* opposes this example, breaking the norms of such gender representations in the media by portraying the businesswoman in the way that would make her appear confident and positive.

Furthermore, alongside this new ‘human’ portrayal, which suggests that she is only fully independent in her working life, the articles depict a sort of reliance she had on her husband, which again demonstrates the difference between the two main types of frames used, personal and professional. When speaking of her husband’s death and her book discussing it, *The Economist* say that “Ms Sandberg tracks how her behaviour and perceptions of life changed when she lost her husband” (*The Economist* 2017d), implying again that although she is portrayed as being strong, she was not in control of such a situation and suffered from it, again demonstrating her ‘human side’. Although Sheryl Sandberg wrote a book ‘*Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy*’ (Sandberg 2017) about grief following this tragic event, one can still question whether it was necessary for the publication to describe her reaction towards the matter. They chose to anyway, which one could argue indirectly displays their intention of portraying her in a specific way.



Figure 2. Sheryl Sandberg after her husband’s death (*The Economist* 2017d).

Source: <https://www.economist.com/books-and-arts/2017/04/29/sheryl-sandberg-on-grief>

A new way of portraying her after being a strong fearless businesswoman and wife is by representing her as a widow. One could argue that although she exposed her situation to the media through her book, and *The Economist* did not have to ‘dig into’ her personal life to find

it, it remains important to explore how they covered it, as this is another way of framing her throughout the articles. Firstly, the reoccurrence of the lexical choice of grief shows how important the author found it to include this theme in her portrayal, examples of which are the following: “grief”, “felled by despair”, “tragedy”, “mourness”, “pain” “suffered”, “loss”, “losing a spouse” (*The Economist* 2017d). Those words connoting such a tragic event reinforce the idea that The Economist ‘humanise the businesswoman’. This can also be seen through the use of images chosen to portray her. In the case of the Figure 2, her black outfit alongside the headline “Sheryl Sandberg on grief” (*The Economist* 2017d) connotes this aspect of her personality in the viewer’s mind. Added to this is her gaze, looking straight at the viewer, acknowledging them, which makes it a ‘demand image’ (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001) as if she expected some kind of reaction from them (Machin and Mayr 2012, 71). One could say that her eyes show signs of emotion, which, alongside the text, could influence the viewer to experience her emotion. Although she looks at the viewer, she is not facing them, it looks like she is about to go somewhere and do something before realising the viewers are there and turning her head to seek for support or help. Despite being represented as grieving, this choice of photo shows that she is human after all. Lastly, it is important to note that, within this ‘personal’ frame, she is referred to by her name, commonly ‘Ms Sandberg’ (*The Economist* 2018c, 2017e, 2017g, 2016c, 2016d, 2015c, 2015d, 2014b, 2014c), which shows a contrast to how she is referred to in a professional context. One could argue that by doing so, they create a sense of closeness between her and the audience, as they focus on her ‘personal’ side to make the reader feel empathy towards her.

In parallel of being portrayed as a wife and widow, Sheryl Sandberg is also portrayed as using her fame and influence to be an active member of the feminist movement. As a matter of fact, this is a name The Economist attributed to her, an example of which is “a feminist icon for the tech world” (*The Economist* 2015d). Despite the fact that it involves her gender coming into her portrayal as a businesswoman, one can see an allegedly impartiality of such an act by the publication as she is portrayed as fighting for this cause (having written a book about it) and is not just simply called ‘feminist’. By doing so, she is depicted as an active spoke person for the feminist sphere. In an article speaking about what technology corporate executives do alongside their careers, Mark Zuckerberg from Facebook was said to be “on a drive to bring internet access to the world’s poor” (*The Economist* 2016d), whilst Sundar Pichai from Google was working on “pressing his views on data security, privacy and competition” (*The Economist* 2016d) with the European Union Officials. Sheryl Sandberg was the third executive to be mentioned, and her mission was to travel the world to “talk about equality for women” (*The Economist* 2016d). This shows her ambition to use her power to try and fix the gender gap in society. The vastly used ‘gender inequality’ lexical choice “sexual harassment”

(*The Economist* 2017g), “barriers to positions of power” (*The Economist* 2016f), “discrimination”, “harassment”, “feminist battles”, “womanising chancers”, “chauvinism”, “societal expectations about women’s role in parenting”, “sexism”, “equality for women” (*The Economist* 2016c), “mummy wars”, “working mothers”, “weak-kneed women”, “obstacles”, “motherhood penalty”, “female workers”, “penalised” (*The Economist* 2015c), shows how this is an important topic in her everyday life. It portrays her as not only a businesswoman but also a person fighting against such disparity. It also connotes that she does not take her status for granted and this can somewhat close the ‘gap’ between the readers and her as a person, resonating with the ‘human side’ again, much less abstract than the one of COO. On the opposite of her portrayal as an active supporter of gender equality, such feminist traits could be perceived negatively in the context of her marriage.

In her quest for gender equality, she might have been ‘lucky’ to be in a position where her husband was in accordance with her leading a high-profile career. He used to support her not only by giving her advice about her career, “he coached her to negotiate a better pay package” (*The Economist* 2015d) but by also taking care of their children alongside his occupation. An example of this can be that when their first child was born, “Mr Goldberg took charge of the baby for the first week” (*The Economist* 2015d). Those words connoting motherhood and the role of a mother are contrasted with the fact that her husband seems to be the one in charge. The publication thus, again, breaks common gender relation conventions established in society. Moreover, Sheryl Sandberg was also portrayed as a woman who had “a supportive spouse”, who sacrificed his own successful career to support his wife’s: “He gave his own stellar career (digital-music entrepreneur, Yahoo executive) lower priority than his wife’s even more stellar one” (*The Economist* 2015d). Although one can say that it was his choice to sacrifice certain aspects of his life, it could also be argued that this connotes a rather more ‘radical’ approach to feminism by Sheryl Sandberg, which could be considered as somewhat ‘selfish’, as she puts her own ambitions and needs above those of her husband.

The last portrayal identified within the overall ‘personal’ frame is the depiction of Sheryl Sandberg as somewhat a ‘hero’ both in terms of grief and her working life. It is important to note that by doing so, the publication idealises her. In this sense, it can acquire a rather negative aspect, as being a hero shows the expectations and amount of pressure placed on her, but also the impossibility of having such a status. Firstly, when talking about the book she wrote on grief after her husband passed away, one could say that she is seen as a hero because not only is she depicted as a woman who survived this tough ordeal and came out of it stronger, but also decided to share her tips to the world through a “self-help book” (*The Economist* 2017d). Also, to emphasise on how rare it is to handle such a situation positively,

she is said to have been able “to make something out of a sense of nothingness” (*The Economist* 2017d). The opposition between the words ‘something’ and ‘nothing’ connotes that only a genius could fix such an equation. In a more literal sense, only a hero can find the solution to handle and go through grief in the ‘best’ possible way. Secondly, she is also a hero for having broken the glass ceiling but also for becoming an executive in the male dominated technology industry. This is reinforced by the following lexical choice: “heroine”, “with vastly more resources than most”, “courage” (*The Economist* 2017d), “female superstars are still rare in Silicon Valley”, “a rising star at Google” (*The Economist* 2015d), “championed” (*The Economist* 2015b), “research shows that everyone does better when women share the reigns of power” (*The Economist* 2015e). It highlights the rarity of her situation, and how by using words which connote ‘heroism’, they aim to celebrate her professional achievements, alongside acknowledging her as a feminist fighting so that her situation no longer has to be unusual. This notion of ‘hero’ and achieving the impossible can also be shown through this sentence taken from an article speaking of working women’s struggles, indirectly implying that now a widow, she takes part in “the fight over how women can both raise healthy families and lead high-powered careers” (*The Economist* 2015c). This is reassured by the rest of the article mentioning how she became a single working mother against her will, and yet still manage to raise her family without her husband’s support.

### 6.1.2 Mary Barra

Mary Barra, who is the fifth on Forbes’ list, has worked at General Motors (GM) since the age of 18 and climbed the steps of the corporate ladder to become CEO of the company on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2014, aged 53. An article published by *The Economist* before she was appointed CEO points out that “in the more than three decades working in the men’s world of the auto industry, Mary Barra has gotten used to glass ceilings—and the feeling of crashing through them” (*The Economist* 2013). The word ‘crashing’ connotes that she is determined although she faced resistance. They also emphasise the scale of her new job title, by saying that when taking on her new job, she would become one of the most powerful executives in the world, partially thanks to the size of the company. Despite the fact that this article is not part of the sample because of its date of publication, it nonetheless offers relevant context regarding how *The Economist* covered Mary Barra at the beginning of her tenure as CEO in 2014. Furthermore, Mary Barra is also the first female CEO of a major car manufacturing company. Although General Motors is no longer the world’s largest company in the auto industry, it remains one of the biggest corporate structures. The company has met success and setbacks, especially in 2014 when a scandal revealed a long-lasting default in their cars, which was held secret and covered up by the company. This default was said to lead to dozens of deaths (*The Economist* 2013). This difficult moment for the company had to be handled by the freshly

appointed female CEO, Mary Barra. This previous information helps to give further context to the situation surrounding Mary Barra, and the ‘rarity’ of her career as an executive in this particular industry.

#### 6.1.2.1 As the ‘boss’

In examining how the second businesswoman of the Forbes’ list is portrayed, one could argue that the first main point of this analysis concerning Mary Barra is the way in which she is most commonly referred to in the articles. The recurrence of one specific word used to depict her shows that the editorial team of *The Economist* had made a conscious choice. The term being referred to in this case is the word ‘boss’. According to definitions provided by the Oxford Dictionary (2018), this word is informal in every context. Examples of such definitions depict a person who is “in charge of a worker or organization”, “in control of a group or situation”, but also a person who gives someone “orders in a domineering manner”, and can also be “excellent” and/or “outstanding” but also someone who makes “it clear that it is oneself who is in charge” (Oxford Dictionary 2018a).

The word ‘boss’ has strong power connotations, which one could argue reflect her working title. However, Baig (2015) posits that an author always faces a multitude of possibilities when choosing a noun to depict its subject of discussion, so when the author does, there are strong motivations behind it. She also claims that choosing a noun to name a person in a story, or in this case an article, represents great involvement from the writer, but also to choose the bonding of words as close to the subject as possible (Baig 2015). This suggests that this choice was not made randomly, as following Baig (2015), *The Economist* sees and frames Mary Barra as a ‘boss’ (2018b, 2018a, 2017h, 2016a, 2016e, 2015a, 2014a, 2014g). Indeed, one could argue that a more neutral way of referring to her would have been to functionalise her, by using her CEO working title for instance. As the definition of CEO is “the highest-ranking person in a company or other institution, ultimately responsible for taking managerial decisions” (Oxford Dictionary 2018b), such a term communicates the same level of power as ‘boss’, although the latter has more of a negative connotation on the personality of the individual.

However, this rather neutral definition arguably places more emphasis on the power that Mary Barra has through managing the business and making decisions, than simply calling someone ‘boss’ which more simply implies that she is merely ‘bossy’ and potentially not very well respected. Amongst the sampled articles, she is functionalised as “the chief executive of General Motors” only once, in an article published six months after she was appointed. This choice of word was possibly made in order to introduce her and her new job title to the

readers that might have not been aware of her appointment as CEO yet. Thus, this reinforces that by choosing the word 'boss' to commonly refer to Mary Barra, The Economist purposely selected a term which could be described as being somewhat 'colloquial' and 'playful'. Such words could have thus been chosen with the intention of breaking the bridge between the executive world and the readers of the publication, in an attempt to make them feel closer to the CEO for instance. However, it could also be said that her being the first female CEO in such male-dominated industry could be a reason as to why they chose to call her 'boss'. It would indeed reinforce the high responsibility and power in her possession, which could give her more respect in the eyes of potential sexist, sceptical readers concerning her appointment as CEO of a car-making company. This idea links back with the cultural feminist theory, which acknowledges the differences of both genders, but do not imply that those differences can be barriers for both men and women in achieving things in life (Ghodsee 2004, 734). It instead focuses on the fact that both have assets to accomplish whatever they want, simply in a different way. Ghodsee (2004, 734) argues that society places too much emphasis on the women "losers" who claim that they are victims of the system and who do not try to break conventions to change it. They may also alienate those "surviving" and more precisely those succeeding in areas where partisans of gender stereotypes could claim that women are not welcome. Ghodsee (2004) also claims that by doing so, more stereotypes are created in society:

The concentration of Western resources and academic research on the problems of women may perpetuate or actually create real barriers to women who must now fight against new stereotypes that women are less adaptable to the market economy. (Ghodsee 2014, 734)

Hence, one could see how by frequently referring to Mary Barra with a strong word such as 'boss' could intend to give her even more authority amongst the audience. Another possible interpretation could be to remind the readers that she earned her job as a CEO through hard work, as it was previously mentioned that she spent her career within General Motors. In order to erase her gender from her portrayal in the articles and images, The Economist did not highlight the 'abnormality' of her situation. Proof of this is that her gender is not directly called into question in the media texts. Whilst portraying her as the 'boss' seems to celebrate her work and the fact that gender does not interfere with her being in charge of a huge corporate company, this rather positive aspect of her representation can be challenged. Baig (2015) explains that when an author decides on the naming of the character of their story, it is important to take into consideration variables such as whether the noun is general or specific, and if it is abstract or concrete. In this case, one could say that being called a 'boss' is

rather general, as it focuses on power but does not give further detail about her role. Furthermore, a 'boss' can still have 'bosses' themselves. This is where the issues of using such a term arise: if The Economist functionalised Mary Barra as the CEO, the reader would be clear concerning the fact that she is at the ultimate level of the company's hierarchy, but by calling her 'boss' might mean that she is only responsible for a branch of the company for instance. This could be seen as an attempt to limit her successful reputation, suggesting that the author(s) of the articles are possibly sexist. Nevertheless, amongst the numerous times the term 'boss' is used when referring to her, it is often associated with General Motors. This indeed erases the doubts concerning who she is the 'boss' of, confirming her powerful status once again. However, this connotes and emphasises her belonging to General Motors as for example phrases such as "Mary Barra of General Motors", almost suggest that her job is what defines her. This could also be argued to be a 'normal' choice of word made by The Economist, with the neutral intent of informing the reader of who she is. Nonetheless, as previously explored, calling her a 'boss' focuses primarily on her power and authority rather than her actual working tasks and challenges she faces every day. Thus, it challenges the idea that their aim may not be completely focused on informing the reader, but rather, to construct an image of Mary Barra. However, this is corrected and becomes clearer when she is mentioned in the articles as 'General Motors' boss'. By doing so, they give more information about her job title so that readers immediately understand that she is the CEO, as the word is singular, but then functionalise her as they favour her role within General Motors above her name. One could argue that this is a rather simple yet degrading way to portray someone, through their working title rather than their names, which is their core identity. Machin and Mayr (2012, 81) suggest that by placing a person within such a limited frame, The Economist could have intended to "dehumanise" Mary Barra.

However, functionalising her could also be said to connote "legitimacy" (Machin and Mayr 2012, 81), and celebrate her achievement as a CEO by countering the sceptics or radical feminists who believe that gender stereotypes stop women from breaking the class ceiling. Moreover, some could argue that the word 'boss' has masculine connotations, thus, calling her this within her male dominated industry could be a positive message to people who say that this was not possible for a woman to achieve, or for sexist individuals who do not think she is the right fit for the job. Thus, by focusing on her role when portraying her, The Economist aims to make it sound more "official" (Machin and Mayr 2012, 82) and professional, rather than emphasising on her name, which would make it sound "more personal" with possible feminine connotations in some readers' minds. This shows how The Economist sought to avoid any mentioning of her gender which one could see as a way of reinforcing her legitimacy and entitlement to the job of chief executive officer.

### 6.1.2.2 As a good 'boss'

Now that the various interpretations of why *The Economist* chose to consistently call Mary Barra 'boss' throughout the articles have been discussed, one can wonder which type of 'boss' she is portrayed as. This is another frame that the publication chose to portray Mary Barra, instead of trying to remain as neutral as possible when mentioning her. It can be suggested that the lexical choices used to give the readers an idea of which type of 'boss' Mary Barra is, can arguably be the truth, as they would reflect the content of the articles showing real-life facts and events that General Motors and/or Mary Barra had to deal with. Nonetheless, the words chosen to speak for instance about how she handled a situation or which event she attended and what she did or said, are again subject to the author's choice and intention of shaping her and completing her representation in the reader's mind. For instance, the choices of verbs when she participates in events to represent her company have strong connotations. Examples of those verbs (coming with few words to give context) are the following: "likes to talk of" (*The Economist* 2018b), "gave an ebullient performance at an investor's conference" (*The Economist* 2018a), "states that" (*The Economist* 2017c), "said to have cracked the code" (*The Economist* 2016a), "unveiled a new production" (*The Economist* 2016e), "predicts" (*The Economist* 2014d), "announced" (*The Economist* 2014a) etc. These words all symbolise the notion of power previously mentioned in the analysis. Hence, by using such verbs prior to introducing her quote for example, these verbs give her even more authority and weight to what she says. One could claim that in journalistic terms, using the verb 'say' when quoting someone is basic but also the most neutral way of doing it. In comparison, when *The Economist* uses 'likes to talk of' in the sentence "GM's boss, Mary Barra, likes to talk of 'zero crashes, zero emissions and zero congestion'" (*The Economist* 2018b), it could connote that she does not just say something, she knows her topic well enough to develop the idea of comfort when talking about something technical from her industry. It gives her credibility and shows that she is not only a 'boss' as they like to call her, and does not only manage a big corporation, but she is also portrayed as an expert in her field. The same idea applies to the kind of landscape *The Economist* paints in the readers' minds when they report on Mary Barra making a speech. They seem to focus more on where she is doing the speech and in front of who, rather than the content of her speech itself. This can be illustrated by the sentence "gave an ebullient performance at an investor's conference" (*The Economist* 2018a), which connotes enthusiasm and could be said to be a subjective way of saying 'she spoke at a conference'. Furthermore, when the verb "said" (*The Economist* 2014e) was used, its neutrality was countered by the presentation of the setting surrounding the speech: "said during a speech at the annual Intelligent Transportation Systems World Congress in Detroit" (*The Economist* 2014e) or "said during a speech to 1,200 employees at GM's headquarters" (*The Economist* 2014e). Although it can be said that doing this is a part

of the job of CEO, by painting the ‘impressive’ settings of those speeches in the readers’ minds, one can say that it adds a fearless dimension to her portrayal in the articles.



Figure 3. Mary Barra (*The Economist* 2014d).

Source: <https://www.economist.com/news/2014/11/13/its-time-for-cars-to-talk>

This positive aspect of her being a ‘fearless’ and ‘skilled’ CEO can be corroborated with the characteristic of being confident, as it resonates with the fact that *The Economist* portrays her as being good at her job. This confidence is also something that can be found within her portrayal in a picture chosen by the publication to accompany an article. Pictures always have strong meanings, whether they are staged or spontaneous, there is always a meaning behind them, they can even be thought as “fulfilling the speech” (Machin and Mayr 2012, 70) in the same way that language would do. In the case of a typical resume picture like Figure 3, many factors were chosen in order to convey meaning.

For instance, either Mary Barra or the photographer chose aspects of the image such as it being a close-up, how her hair, her make-up and her clothing would be, as every element of the picture leads to a one could describe as a serious picture, which will possibly be used within a professional context. Moreover, it is important to highlight the fact that despite the ‘staged’ picture (which was not taken for the sole purpose of *The Economist*’s article), the choice of this particular image is entirely up to the publication itself, and this choice is logically made depending on which type of representation they want to give to the readers. This is what Machin and Mayr (2012, 70) express as being “the resources for guiding the viewer as to how they should evaluate the participant, even if this is not explicitly stated”. Alongside each other, the various elements of the image connote confidence and professionalism, which are both aspects closely linked to being a ‘boss’ and Mary Barra’s gaze

particularly expresses it. In visual semiotics, scholars such as Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) and Machin and Mayr (2012, 70) argue that real-life interactions have similarities to what images can offer. They claim that when we speak, “we can do one of four things: offer information; offer services or goods; demand information; demand goods and services” (Machin and Mayr 2012, 70). Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) claim that images can give two of those possibilities: ‘offer’ and ‘demand’ and that images can be seen by viewers as referencing actual acts of interaction in talk. More precisely, Mary Barra’s gaze looking at the viewer straight in the eyes leads to them to feel like they are being acknowledged, as the difference that the viewer cannot reply to her smile like they would potentially do in real life, this nonetheless creates a form of “visual address” (Machin and Mayr 2012, 71). By being acknowledged, Kress and van Leeuwen refer to a ‘demand image’, implying that a link is created between the character and the viewer. One could argue that this is a necessary step for the viewer to become more interested in Mary Barra, potentially feeling closer to her character, alongside the written content of the article. They might indeed learn things that may not be in the article, or it might complete her portrayal in their mind, which can be the purpose of *The Economist*. By feeling free to interpret whether the viewer finds her professional or confident, or as a feminine ‘boss’, the publication is still in control of her image, as they know those are interpretive possibilities. Her portrait involving positive connotations can imply that her ‘smiley’ gaze breaks social distance between her and the viewer, showing how peaceful and confident she is and that she is the right fit for her job, as no sign of worry can be perceived in her eyes.

Nevertheless, it can link back to the idea mentioned earlier as, despite the challenges of her title, she handles her job like any good executive, which overall presents the idea that her gender does not need to be taken into account, and reinforces the notion of her earning her position today. However, one could wonder if the same type of portrayal and settings would be depicted when introducing quotes, as mentioned above, of a male CEO in an article for instance. It could also be said that *The Economist* is doing too much to give her credibility and positive coverage, and might end up looking patronising instead of supporting her and the work she does. This idea of being ‘patronising’ could also be perceived when *The Economist* (2014e) mentioned the particularly difficult situation Mary Barra was in when she took on the CEO job, as the company was facing a major scandal concerning faulty defects held secret by the hierarchy of the company before she took charge. Again, one could question whether the same sympathy would be communicated in the case of a male CEO in a similar situation. As a matter of fact, when briefly speaking about the scandal that hit another major carmaker, Volkswagen, in 2015, they do not show any sign of sympathy. Instead, in comparison, by presenting various numbers referring to the amount of cars which had an

emission problem and their costs, the publication seems to do the maths for the readers in order to facilitate for them to realise that Volkswagen and its CEO might be fined 18 billion dollars by the US Department of Justice. They stick to the facts and figures without adding any comments or any sign of empathy towards their CEO, which implies that all he can do is take his responsibility. (*The Economist* 2015a). However, the fact that the publication finds vital to mention that Mary Barra “took the helm barely six weeks before the recall blitz began” (*The Economist* 2014g) in their article could be firstly interpreted as the simple truth, but also as a way to acknowledge again her hard work despite the abnormality of the situation when she took on the job, as she was the first female CEO of General Motors. This second interpretation would connote the fact that *The Economist* wants the readers to see her as the woman in charge, which reinforces their lexical choice of continuously calling her ‘boss’. Lastly, she seems to be portrayed as a boss with a strong mentality who knows what she wants and what she judges to be in the best interest of her company, which is possibly one of the most common characteristics needed to take on such working titles. Nevertheless, when speaking about her peer and competitor male executive and CEO of Fiat making Mary Barra an interesting business offer, the article implies that as long as the offer is not fully attractive to General Motors, Mary Barra will decline it and this was ‘unlikely to have changed her mind’, in the sentence “Mary Barra, GM’s boss, has repeatedly rejected Mr Marchionne’s overtures; selling Opel is unlikely to have changed her mind” (*The Economist* 2017h). On the other hand, this expression of ‘changing her mind’ belonging to everyday language and although its informality can connote strength as mentioned above, the ‘light’ dimension of the expression’s tone can also contrast with the executive world where one can say that everything is calculated, thoroughly thought about and advised etc. Indeed, the expression of ‘changing one’s mind’ connotes a rather easy situation, which does not involve important decisions. By using this expression, *The Economist* might touch upon her gender, reminding for the first time indirectly in the text that she is a woman after all, and that it is a common trait associated to this gender: that they are more sensitive than their peers and they change their mind more easily than men would (Brizendine 2006, 117). It however does not imply that Mary Barra is the type of boss who changes her mind often and takes her job lightly by taking rushed decisions. Nonetheless, in the representation of her person, one could see the relevance of exploring how *The Economist* mentioned her gender in a discreet and subtle way despite the often positive portrayal they provide.

Despite the overall positivity coming from functionalising her as ‘boss’, there is another indirect way that *The Economist* chose to speak about her, on the same idea of calling her boss, but in an even more abstract sense. Not as automatically referred to as ‘boss’, she is yet still repeatedly mentioned as one of the “carmakers” (*The Economist* 2017h, 2016e, 2014e) or

“carbasses” (*The Economist* 2017h) throughout the articles. One could argue that it relates to the functionalisation of her person again. However the word ‘carmaker’ connotes a broader sense of the industry and the consequent size of the company rather than its CEO herself. By doing so, it could be seen as showing the large scale of the car industry’s environment worldwide, and not only dehumanising her (Giannino and Campbell 2012, 66) but also giving a sense that she is like any other corporate working in this field, which has negative connotations and contrasts with the praise from her presentation as a ‘good boss’. One major thing that can be noted is that *The Economist* only use the expression “carmakers” or “car bosses” to indirectly speak about Mary Barra when the story of the article has negative aspects. This can be seen through the lexical choices employed: “carmakers need to get bigger”, “car bosses tend to be conservative and risk-averse”, “if carmakers do not take the plunge” (*The Economist* 2017h), “carmakers increasingly fret”, “carmakers have lots to learn”, “if diesel cannot deliver then carmakers will need to turn heavily towards hybrids and very efficient small petrol engines” (*The Economist* 2016e). By negative aspects, one can see that it links back to the idea of patronising mentioned earlier, where the lexical choices, notably the verbs, connote advice or questions that they have towards the company, but yet do not want to explicitly put on Mary Barra herself. One could perceive a ‘macho’ side in those expressions, as if although they recognise her for her title and the work she does, the publication makes it sound like a sexist man implying he knows better. Also, it could be said that this choice of words resonates with the macho industry she works in.

When the expression “carmaker” is singular, it connotes to the reader that they only speak about her, and it was found that, amongst the sample, this was only present in the article published the closest to her appointment as CEO. Possibly because she was asked to handle and fix the scandal the company was going through and not directly a consequence of her managerial choices, *The Economist* sounds like they have tried to protect her from having a negative image at the start of her career as a CEO. This can be seen with “the carmaker’s process of dealing with safety problems” (*The Economist* 2014e) for instance, it would have been grammatically correct to use her name instead of the carmaker. This is proof of the choice from the author of the article, aiming to possibly protect her name. Although one could see it as a good thing, one can also argue that it contrasts with the strong side they gave to her portrayal, showing her various qualities as a ‘boss’ and implying that she ‘needs’ her reputation protected, or that she cannot ‘take it’. When covering the 2014 scandal General Motors was facing, the picture below (Figure 4) is the one chosen to illustrate the article and reflects upon the same idea of *The Economist* ‘protecting’ her.



Figure 4. Mary Barra during GM's scandal (*The Economist* 2014e).

Source: <https://www.economist.com/schumpeter/2014/06/06/organisational-dysfunction>

That is in the sense that her gaze connotes forgiveness or guilt and, combined with the shape of her mouth, sadness. Many frames can be perceived when looking at this portrait. By looking down and ignoring the viewer, it gives even more room for interpretation, although they would overall lead to the same types of interpretations. However, if they chose a picture for this particular article where she was looking straight at the viewer, one could say that it shows that she takes responsibility for the previous bad decisions of her company. In this case, on the opposite, looking down shows that she seems to be a victim of this situation, and taking the blame unwillingly. Moreover, by looking outside of the frame, it is possible to imagine that, uncomfortable in this situation, she looks at a speech that the public relation's team of her company wrote for her, possibly apologies as this scandal involves deaths caused by the defaults on GM cars. This nonetheless does not discredit her as a CEO, but also portrays her as a victim of this situation, contrasting with the friendly and confident looking boss from the 2014 article published few months later. Despite that, it is arguable to mention that the picture connotes regrets and forgiveness. By choosing this picture, one could say that *The Economist* stayed on their stance of protecting her, focusing on the fact that this situation is not a consequence of her own choices as a CEO and that it is unfortunate for her to have to fix it. Now, by putting her in this position, one could see the confidence the publication place in her, as they aim for the viewer to feel sorry for Mary Barra, which links back of the mentioning in previous article of the difficulty of her job. This can be reinforced by the composition of the picture, as she only takes the bottom half of the picture, the room above her head might signify the amount of work she will have to do to get GM out of this situation.

Furthermore, the aspects of patronising and/or protecting her might also reinforce the idea that she is still an exception in working in such male-oriented industry, as the lexical choices

and word connotations tend to contribute to a rather ‘macho’ tone. Those aspects can also be explored through the last form of naming the publication uses, which is the generic ‘General Motors’. Maybe still to not blame her directly and give her the benefit of the doubt to see whether she will happen to be a ‘good’ CEO on the long term, as scepticism probably arises in this situation. This is shown in a study concerning ‘the obstacles to female leadership’ (*Pew Research Center* 2015), where the majority of the public doubts whether women executives can keep and deal with obstacles encountered within their careers in comparison to men executives. The lexical choice “GM is in retreat” (*The Economist* 2017b), “GM, which for years ignored problems with ignition switches that directly claimed 124 lives, was fined just \$900m earlier in September” (*The Economist* 2016e), “GM may just be about to deliver that promise” (*The Economist* 2014a), “GM was late” (*The Economist* 2014g), “GM failed” (*The Economist* 2014g) show how whenever they talk about business failure, the publication chose to put it on the ‘abstract’ naming of the business itself, depersonalising anyone that would be accountable for those things. Although the reader knows that it is the CEO’s primary job to take responsibility to whatever happens in the company, the publication prefers to make the reader create a gap in their mind, between Mary Barra’s responsibility as a manager and only associate to her positive traits.

This demonstrates how *The Economist* chose to frame her overall, but mentioning certain expressions that would remind the reader that although she is the ‘boss’, she is still a woman after all. This can be seen through the lexical choices attributed to women, such as “marriage” (*The Economist* 2018a) when talking about something which has no link to humans or feelings: “But the marriage of cutting-edge technology and large-scale manufacturing seems to be paying off” (*The Economist* 2018a). They could have chosen more neutral and technical words for this context such as tie or merger, but they purposely chose ‘marriage’ to contrast with the rest of the sentence. It had possibly the aim of reminding the reader in a subtle way that this is a woman in charge. By reminding discreetly of her gender throughout certain articles, it connotes that although it is unusual, her successful career is an example, but it can also connote that she does not belong there, to this working title, in this industry. Lastly, on the idea of not belonging, the publication speaks about a study’s results on gender equality (*The Economist* 2015e), and mentions that both men and women are capable of being good business leaders, but state that courage is a trait attributed to men executives whilst innovation is attributed to women. This is an element that could also be perceived in some articles, notably when using corresponding lexical choices such as “reticent about taking the plunge”, “a mega-merger would take courage” (*The Economist* 2017h), which could indirectly imply that Mary Barra does not have it. Also, when talking about an important merger between carmakers, the publication acknowledges her good idea as a

manager, but concluded by saying that “the idea is sound” (*The Economist* 2014g) although they would wait to see “whether she call pull it off” (*The Economist* 2014g). This colludes with the potential doubting of her because of her gender, or one could argue that this is a type of reporting that could also be applied when discussing a male CEO.

## 6.2 Discussion

The presentation of the results in the analysis showed the various frames and elements that The Economist chose to portray Sheryl Sandberg and Mary Barra. In order to answer the first research question of the paper concerning how the two businesswomen from the Forbes’ list were framed by The Economist, it could firstly be noted that neither of them was framed in a unique way but rather through different representations within the frames. In real life, it is difficult to give a complete portrayal of a person. However, through the extended time frame and variety of articles covering different events and topics that the businesswomen were involved in, it could be argued that The Economist provided a rather comprehensive portrayal of them. This also suggests that the elements used to represent them and the contexts chosen were specifically selected by the authors of the articles, manifesting the “manipulative” (Van Gorp and Vercruyssen 2012, 1275) aspect of media when portraying individual actors. Every choice of word and image were thus used to communicate symbols and underlying meanings. For instance, the publication did not only portray those two women in a neutral way, by focusing strictly on their job and careers, which would have linked to their places on the Forbes’ list of the ‘world’s 100 most powerful women’ from 2017 (*Forbes* 2017). Furthermore, one could question whether the overall notion of neutrality within media coverage is possible to achieve. This is also why Goffman’s (1986) framing theory was relevant and helpful in the conduct of this analysis, as one could say that even the results that seemed neutral were in fact frames chosen by the media outlet.

Instead, they also chose to show, in both cases, the types of corporate executives they are, giving positive sides such as passion and determination, but also traits that one could argue are commonly dedicated to male executives, such as mental strength and dedication to their job. By taking a cultural feminist stance when analysing these results, one can see how such constructions counter the gender stereotypes present in society, which imply that those are traits that women do not have, and thus one of the reasons as to why they cannot or do not belong to such high-level statuses. Countering such stereotypes was found to be a “central” aspect of The Economist’s representation of the businesswomen (Van Gorp and Vercruyssen 2012, 1275). Despite the fact that the publication shows how gender stereotypes are not barriers to women’s careers and celebrate their professional success, it is important to acknowledge that although framed as businesswomen, their gender is nonetheless

highlighted. In the case of Sheryl Sandberg, aside from being a professional, the CDA tools helped uncover that she was also mentioned as a wife, mother and widow, but also as a feminist. This personal aspect of her life represents the frames that the publication thought important to picture in the reader's minds. As mentioned in the analysis, one could say that by showing her outside of her role as an executive, it would break the gap between the viewer and this 'hard-to-access' business sphere. However, this can be challenged by the fact that they opened gates to weaknesses and personal battles for instance. Keeping in mind the theoretical framework used for the analysis, one can wonder if such frames and gender attributed traits would be applied for businessmen also. A fine line is drawn here, as on one side her 'professional side' breaks gender stereotypes, and on the other, by mentioning her 'personal side', they open up to more subjective interpretations which connote gender related assumptions.

The same can be seen for Mary Barra, although slightly different, when portraying her as a talented CEO who earned her place with such a prestigious working title. However, after presenting her and her success, the lexical choices used in the texts also revealed, in a subtle way, that she was nonetheless a woman in parallel of being a businesswoman. Mentions of traits commonly associated to male leaders such as courage and the ability to make risky decisions connoted that, although the glass ceiling was broken, she remained in a male-dominated world, and the words could have the potential to be interpreted as suggesting that she does not fully belong to this sphere. This is also how, after showing her talent and success as a good manager, the results showed that the publication slowly turned to a patronising tone every now and then, questioning whether she would last as a CEO (and she did). It seemed like they tried to give her credit and authority by calling her 'boss' in every article, which again was breaking gender stereotypes. However, the word boss' connotation could also be said to refer to the male domination of the car industry. This naming could in fact mean that it was necessary to place such emphasis on her 'leader' side, in order to counter the sceptics who would not think she was the right person for the job. Mary Barra's portrayal as a CEO could be considered as positive. However, the patronising tone used in certain articles gave the impression that The Economist was trying to protect her reputation amongst the readers. Again, one could question whether this would be applied for a male CEO and thus reinforces how gender comes into play, despite her being portrayed positively.

By using a patronising tone focusing very much on her success and using the name of the company instead of hers to speak about the business issues, they might have instead discredited her and reinforced the gender stereotypes, proving that The Economist does not think male and female executives can be treated equally. It is unlikely that a male CEO would receive such empathy from a media news outlet when going through a business scandal,

neither would he be questioned whether he would be brave enough to take certain business decisions.

The main difference between Mary Barra's and Sheryl Sandberg's portrayal is that Mary Barra's personal life is never mentioned in the articles, neither was it connoted in the pictures. They only focused on her professional image. A possible explanation could be to not worsen the opinion of sexist readers, as mentioning her family life could give her less credibility, reminding the reader that she is the first female CEO in such an industry. In comparison, Sheryl Sandberg exposed her personal life to the media by writing a book about grief related to her husband's death. In the second case, one can see why it was a topic chosen by the publication, and why they did not just stick to her and her career. In the case of Sheryl Sandberg, they used the pictures to reach out to the viewers' empathy, as she is always portrayed within a personal environment outside of work. Examples of this in the analysis showed that they chose a picture (Figure 2) connoting sadness where she seemed to seek sympathy, but also one hand in hand with her husband (Figure 1), which can connote that although she is an independent hard-working executive, she remained a wife/widow.

Although gender related connotations punctuated both of their portrayals, which were frames chosen by The Economist as part of their representation, both had one thing in common. It was the positive acknowledgement of their success despite both of their male dominated industries (technology and car) showing the battles and obstacles they had to overcome before accessing to such titles. No generalisation can be made as there are only two women analysed, however for both of them, this celebration of their success is always mentioned with background information on the difficult context surrounding them. This is where the second research question of this thesis is answered, as those frames, notably in this case being successful businesswomen in male-dominated industries, relate to stereotyping in the sense that their situations and titles are still uncommon, and also, their success leads to their "idealisation". This highlights the 'ideal' portrayal the publication wants the reader to see in these women's representations. It can be seen in a more explicit way in Sheryl Sandberg's case where the lexical choices demonstrate it well. Being a woman breaking the glass ceiling in a not so welcoming industry portrays her as a hero, who achieved her goal despite the context of the situation, where gender and barriers set up by a so-called patriarchal society tried to stop her from doing so. Added to that is the notion that she is not only seen as a hero overcoming professional battles like Mary Barra, but also her portrayal as a widow who wrote a book to help others try to go through and handle grief with her personal advice, as well as her as a feminist who fights so that her situation becomes common within the society. These frames all connote a sense of idealisation, through words and images chosen. In the case of Mary Barra, although her idealisation can be identified as her success in a male dominated

industry like for Sheryl Sandberg, this can be seen through the usage of quotes, in comparison to the other businesswoman, which was through the 'heroic' lexical choice. Thus, in the numerous articles covering business decisions and mergers amongst carmakers, including names of various male CEOs, Mary Barra was the only one quoted in the texts. One can understand that after giving a eulogistic presentation of the woman as a talented CEO, The Economist chose to give her voice to give her credit and authority within this industry and show that her opinion matters. Moreover, it also amplifies her uniqueness and the hard work dedicated to her company. This idealisation due to her breaking the glass ceiling and working in such industry is re-emphasised by the fact that they compared her to a female politician in one of the articles. The publication chose to frame her success and compare it to the one of Hilary Clinton, portraying Mary Barra as "an exception to the rule" (*The Economist* 2015e) connoting the hostile working environment, but nonetheless highlighting her career as a CEO and representing her as an example for society.

## 7. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore how Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook and Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors, were framed in text and images amongst the sampled articles published by The Economist online. The study shows how the two businesswomen had common and diverging points of representation. One of the main frames was their portrayal as businesswomen, which can be perceived as rather neutral, but taking a cultural feminist stance on it, one can see how the seriousness of the articles on their jobs show respect and approval of them being leaders before being women. They were also both positively presented in terms of managers, as the frames used were being talented, hardworking, passionate and determined managers. However, gender-related content was also explored in the text and images, presenting traits attributed to females. This was also demonstrated through the questioning of potentially missing male traits such as courage could hold back the two businesswomen in their careers. This implies that despite acknowledging their success and breaking the glass ceiling, the two women were still portrayed by their gender, and more in a negative than positive way.

However, in the case of Sheryl Sandberg, her woman side seemed to be used in order to make the reader feel empathy when showing her as a widow, or sympathy when portraying her as an active feminist. Concerning Mary Barra, the use of patronising expressions and possible doubting of her capabilities as a leader counters her representation as a good 'boss'. A possible interpretation could be that, aware of such a difficult position to be in, they aimed the reader to feel sympathy towards her again, and chose to use the name of the company rather than hers when the articles were covering a scandal for instance, giving a protective

stance. Although it can be seen as a 'nice' thing to do, it reinforces the gender stereotypes showing that the publication does not treat in the same way within the text and images that they would treat a male executive. Hence, those frames vary between being positively connoted, but also negatively when involving gender in the articles. However, in terms of positive stereotypes, their presence in the executive world as well as male dominated industries such as cars and technology lead them to be idealised in the content published and portrayed as examples for society.

As the portrayal of only two businesswomen were analysed in such limited size and time sample, no generalisation can be made. However, one can see how the various frames nonetheless celebrate them and their work, as being women part of the executive world. Although gender related stereotypes are mentioned, they do not radically put into question their job titles and whether they should have those roles or not. It shows how this contrasts with the 'masculinity values' index (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel 2010, 206), which implies that a famous national media outlet such as The Economist does not automatically echo these societal values. It is important to note that although the publication did not take a sexist stance as it could have been implied if based solely on the masculinity index, gender remains an aspect mentioned amongst the frames of Sheryl Sandberg and Mary Barra.

The results lead to further research, especially in exploring if those results could apply to other businesswomen present on the Forbes list for instance, or if idealisation in the case of this thesis was a coincidence due to the fact that the fourth and fifth women of the list worked in the car and technology industries. Also, one can wonder if the portrayal of Sheryl Sandberg as a wife was only due to her making her husband's death public through her book, as there was no mentioning of Mary Barra's private life. This would be an important aspect to further research, as the 'wife' frame could be an exception to this businesswoman in link to her tragic life event. These are possible new paths to explore in conclusion of this thesis, although the main point would be to enlarge the sample in order to make more accurate results on the way businesswomen are framed in the media, as this is what this study could not achieve due to the limited sample.

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## 9. Annexe

Article reference in text	Title of the article	Hyperlink	Date	Sheryl Sandberg/ Mary Barra	Includes photos?
2014a	Coming to a street near you: Autonomous motoring comes a step closer	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/business-and-finance/21618531-making-autonomous-vehicles-reality-coming-street-near-you">https://www.economist.com/news/business-and-finance/21618531-making-autonomous-vehicles-reality-coming-street-near-you</a>	Sep 18, 2014	Mary Barra	Yes
2014b	Control-Jobs-Delete	<a href="https://www.economist.com/blogs/schumpeter/2014/04/tech-companies-and-hiring">https://www.economist.com/blogs/schumpeter/2014/04/tech-companies-and-hiring</a>	April 25, 2014	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes
2014c	Imperial's March	<a href="https://www.economist.com/whichmba/blog?page=21">https://www.economist.com/whichmba/blog?page=21</a>	Jul 16, 2014	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes
2014d	It's time for cars to talk: Intelligent and connected technologies are about to transform driving, predicts Mary Barra	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/21631872-intelligent-and-connected-technologies-are-about-transform-driving-predicts-mary-barra-its-time">https://www.economist.com/news/21631872-intelligent-and-connected-technologies-are-about-transform-driving-predicts-mary-barra-its-time</a>	Nov 13, 2014	Mary Barra	Yes
2014e	Organisational Dysfunction: GM's safety problems	<a href="https://www.economist.com/blogs/schumpeter/2014/06/gm-s-safety-problems">https://www.economist.com/blogs/schumpeter/2014/06/gm-s-safety-problems</a>	Jun 6, 2014	Mary Barra	Yes
2014f	The look of a leader: Getting to the top is as much to do with	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/business/21620197-getting-top-much-do-how-you-look-what-you-achieve-look-leader">https://www.economist.com/news/business/21620197-getting-top-much-do-how-you-look-what-you-achieve-look-leader</a>	Sep 27, 2014	Mary Barra	Yes

	how you look as what you achieve				
2014g	Total recall, the sequel: The firm is running out of cars to recall, but still has plenty of problems	<a href="https://www.economist.com/blogs/schumpeter/2014/07/gm-s-travails">https://www.economist.com/blogs/schumpeter/2014/07/gm-s-travails</a>	Jul 2, 2014	Mary Barra	Yes
2015a	A mucky business: Systematic fraud by the world's biggest carmaker threatens to engulf the entire industry and possibly reshape it	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21667918-systematic-fraud-worlds-biggest-carmaker-threatens-engulf-entire-industry-and">https://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21667918-systematic-fraud-worlds-biggest-carmaker-threatens-engulf-entire-industry-and</a>	Sep 26, 2015	Mary Barra	Yes
2015b	How to bag a geek: In the battle for software talent, other industries can learn from Silicon Valley	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/business/21644150-battle-software-talent-other-industries-can-learn-silicon-valley-how-bag">https://www.economist.com/news/business/21644150-battle-software-talent-other-industries-can-learn-silicon-valley-how-bag</a>	Feb 19, 2015	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes
2015c	Juggling mums and halo dads: Why organisations will have to	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/books-and-arts/21672012-why-organisations-will-have-change-radically-make-work-life-balance">https://www.economist.com/news/books-and-arts/21672012-why-organisations-will-have-change-radically-make-work-life-balance</a>	Oct 8, 2015	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes

	change radically to make work-life balance a reality				
2015d	The first man of Silicon Valley: A feminist icon for the tech world	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21650535-feminist-icon-tech-world-first-man-silicon-valley">https://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21650535-feminist-icon-tech-world-first-man-silicon-valley</a>	May 9, 2015	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes
2015e	What's holding women back? Americans think highly of women but remain reluctant to promote them to leadership roles	<a href="https://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2015/01/women-and-work">https://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2015/01/women-and-work</a>	Jan 23, 2015	Mary Barra and Sheryl Sandberg	Yes
2016a	A plug for the battery: Virtual reality and artificial intelligence are not the only technologies to get excited about	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21688394-virtual-reality-and-artificial-intelligence-are-not-only-technologies-get-excited-about">https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21688394-virtual-reality-and-artificial-intelligence-are-not-only-technologies-get-excited-about</a>	Jan 16, 2016	Mary Barra	No
2016b	Free exchange: A proper reckoning	<a href="https://www.economist.com/node/21694529/all-comments?page=1">https://www.economist.com/node/21694529/all-comments?page=1</a>	March 12, 2016	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes
2016c	Of creeps and crèches:	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21699477-french-working-">https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21699477-french-working-</a>	May 28, 2016	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes

	French working women get universal child care – and universal harassment	<a href="#"><u>women-get-universal-child-careand-universal-harassment-creeps-and-cr-ches</u></a>			
2016d	On the stump: Why tech bosses are playing at being statesman	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/business/21693574-why-tech-bosses-are-playing-being-statesmen-stump"><u>https://www.economist.com/news/business/21693574-why-tech-bosses-are-playing-being-statesmen-stump</u></a>	Feb 25, 2016	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes
2016e	The driverless, car-sharing road ahead: Carmakers increasingly fret that their industry is on the brink of huge disruption	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/business/21685459-carmakers-increasingly-fret-their-industry-brink-huge-disruption"><u>https://www.economist.com/news/business/21685459-carmakers-increasingly-fret-their-industry-brink-huge-disruption</u></a>	Jan 9, 2016	Mary Barra	Yes
2016f	Women and leadership: Well-being in the executive suite	<a href="http://perspectives.eiu.com/healthcare/womens-health-and-well-being/blog/women-and-leadership-well-being-executive-suite"><u>http://perspectives.eiu.com/healthcare/womens-health-and-well-being/blog/women-and-leadership-well-being-executive-suite</u></a>	Sept 5, 2016	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes
2017a	American business leaders break with Donald Trump: The president's corporate advisory	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/business/21726749-presidents-corporate-advisory-councils-now-disbanded-had-achieved-little-american-business"><u>https://www.economist.com/news/business/21726749-presidents-corporate-advisory-councils-now-disbanded-had-achieved-little-american-business</u></a>	Aug 19, 2017	Mary Barra	Yes

	councils, now disbanded, had achieved little				
2017b	General Motors is getting smaller but more profitable: Yet uncertainty about how it will fare in future still weighs on its share price	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/business/21723869-yet-uncertainty-about-how-it-will-fare-future-still-weighs-its-share-price-general-motors">https://www.economist.com/news/business/21723869-yet-uncertainty-about-how-it-will-fare-future-still-weighs-its-share-price-general-motors</a>	June 14, 2017	Mary Barra	Yes
2017c	Improving the business environment	<a href="http://perspectives.eiu.com/industry/strategy-leadership?page=50">http://perspectives.eiu.com/industry/strategy-leadership?page=50</a>	Oct 19, 2017	Marry Barra	No
2017d	Sheryl Sandberg on grief: A Silicon Valley heroin explains how to make something out of a sense of nothingness	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/books-and-arts/21721360-silicon-valley-heroine-explains-how-make-something-out-sense">https://www.economist.com/news/books-and-arts/21721360-silicon-valley-heroine-explains-how-make-something-out-sense</a>	April 29, 2017	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes
2017e	Tech MBAs: Catching up	<a href="https://www.economist.com/whichmba/tech-mbas-catching-up">https://www.economist.com/whichmba/tech-mbas-catching-up</a>	June 26, 2017	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes
2017f	The rise of 'deep-tech' is boosting Paris's	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/business/21717411-capital-now-leads-europe-number-venture-">https://www.economist.com/news/business/21717411-capital-now-leads-europe-number-venture-</a>	Feb 23, 2017	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes

	startup scene: The capital now leads Europe for the number of venture-capital funding rounds	<a href="#"><u>capital-funding-rounds-rise</u></a>			
2017g	Travis Kalanick steps down as chief executive of Uber: A new era begins at the ride-hailing giant	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/business/21723860-new-era-begins-ride-hailing-giant-travis-kalanick-steps-down-chief-executive-uber"><u>https://www.economist.com/news/business/21723860-new-era-begins-ride-hailing-giant-travis-kalanick-steps-down-chief-executive-uber</u></a>	June 22, 2017	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes
2017h	Why carmakers need to get bigger: GM's recent sale of Opel has revived talk of mega-mergers	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/business/21720658-gms-recent-sale-opel-has-revived-talk-mega-mergers-why-carmakers-need-get-bigger"><u>https://www.economist.com/news/business/21720658-gms-recent-sale-opel-has-revived-talk-mega-mergers-why-carmakers-need-get-bigger</u></a>	Apr 12, 2017	Mary Barra	Yes
2018a	GM takes an unexpected lead in the race to develop autonomous vehicles: But it may not safeguard the car-maker's future	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/business/21735600-it-may-not-safeguard-carmakers-future-gm-takes-unexpected-lead-race-develop"><u>https://www.economist.com/news/business/21735600-it-may-not-safeguard-carmakers-future-gm-takes-unexpected-lead-race-develop</u></a>	Jan 25, 2018	Mary Barra	Yes

2018b	Self-driving cars will profoundly change the way people live: Foreseen and unforeseen consequences	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21737425-foreseen-and-unforeseen-consequences-self-driving-cars-will-profoundly-change-way">https://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21737425-foreseen-and-unforeseen-consequences-self-driving-cars-will-profoundly-change-way</a>	March 1, 2018	Mary Barra	Yes
2018c	The Facebook scandal could change politics as well as the Internet: Even used legitimately, it is a powerful, intrusive political tool	<a href="https://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21739167-even-used-legitimately-it-powerful-intrusive-political-tool-facebook-scandal">https://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21739167-even-used-legitimately-it-powerful-intrusive-political-tool-facebook-scandal</a>	March 22, 2018.	Sheryl Sandberg	Yes