In early 2011, Germany’s most influential forces considered implementing quotas to increase female representation in board rooms. Government officials and investors are pressuring companies to take action on the issue by threatening to set mandatory quotas. Deutsche Telekom, a German telecommunications company, was the first of the DAX 30 to propose voluntary quotas. When reacting to Deutsche Telekom’s voluntary quotas in a press conference, Josef Ackermann, the CEO of Deutsche Bank, who is supposedly in favor of female representation, commented that his all-male board would be “more colorful and prettier,” with a women on it. Following these events, news sources instantly began attacking Ackermann and publicizing the debate as to whether women should be represented on boardrooms, and whether female quotas should be put in place in Germany. While some new sources present similar content and have comparable opinions, each publication uses a cultural, commercial, or dogmatic perspective to present its argument. For example, *The Financial Times* uses quantitative information from different levels in Germany to display the standard lack of female representation, while others, such as *Forbes,* advocate strong opinions in favor of female representation. *The Economist*, a seemingly neutral publication, attempts to objectively outline the gender debate from a business perspective, yet it uses a sarcastic undertone to emphasize negative feelings toward women in Germany. While most articles focus on present day Germany, the *New York Times* interestingly acknowledges Germany’s history to emphasize that culture and tradition are substantial influences in German business and politics today. While *The Economist* and the *New York Times* address the debate through a limited perspective, *Bloomberg* considers more than one viewpoint to produce an expansive debate that women are not meant to be in executive positions. One *Wall Street Journal* article strategically focuses on women as an asset and discourage quota implementation by discussing alternatives.

The *Financial Times* article, “Ackermann Stirs Gender Debate with ‘Beautiful’ Board Remarks” by Daniel Schafer and James Wilson uses statistics from different hierarchical levels of civilization to represent the standard lack of female representation in the corporate business and culture of Germany. The article provides statistics from different corporate levels of German companies to Germany as a whole to illustrate that the inequality of gender diversity is widespread throughout the nation. The article pinpoints Deutsche Bank individually to demonstrate the absence of powerful women in boardrooms on a microcosmic level, as it mentions that there are no female executives on Deutsche Bank’s twelve member executive board. While Deutsche Bank represents one company, the article epitomizes the commonly accepted German corporate culture by addressing national statistics such as, “last year only 2.2 percent of executive board members at the 30 companies in German blue-chip DAX index were women” and “none of Germany’s 80 largest companies by stock market capitalization has a female chief executive.” Finally, to demonstrate that this problem is more prevalent in Germany compared to other nations, the author refers to a study by McKinsey, which has found that “on gender diversity in 11 large economies worldwide, Germany and India came in last in a ranking of women’s representation on executive boards.” These statistics demonstrate that Germany is lacking high-power women on a multitude of levels.

The article “Too Many Suits and Not Nearly Enough Skirts in the Boardrooms,” published in *The Economist*, attempts to provide an unbiased account of the gender debate with objective evidence from a commercial perspective, yet the sarcastic undertone of the article portrays the unfavorable opinions of females in high-power positions in many German companies. For example, the article discusses multiple studies suggesting a strong positive correlation between the number of women in senior management and the success of the company; however, the author writes, “the results are so consistent that promoting women seems like a good idea*, just in case*.” Instead of recommending females for higher management because of the positive study results, the author sarcastically dismisses their success. The article uses words and phrases that typically have a negative connotation to describe women, which implicitly expresses how the German society views female workers. By claiming that women are “less ambitious,” “setting for careers below their potential,” and more likely to “go for a balanced life rather than aim for the top” the author implies that women are not competitive, and therefore are not compatible for top executive positions.

Katrin Bennhold, author of the *New York Times* article, “Women Nudged out of German Workforce,” pinpoints symbolic historical references relevant to the debate surrounding females in the workplace to strengthen her claim that although Germany is a powerful nation, it is unable to modify its male-dominated culture that suppresses women. The article uses strong language such as, “Europe’s economic powerhouse” and “boldness at the top” to herald Germany’s reputation as a powerful nation; mentions of past triumphs like its successful recovery from the financial crisis and rebound from two world wars are referenced to justify its prominence in Europe. According to Bennhold, promoting women is one of Germany’s “hardest questions to solve,” which seems ironic in such an authoritative nation, especially with Angela Merkel, one of the world’s most powerful women, as its chancellor. Bennhold asserts that enduring barriers such as culture and male-networks explain this unattainable reform. The article elaborates on German traditions of “female mother cult and male fraternity” – the accepted culture from the Third Reich, or the Nazi regime – that are still widespread throughout Germany, as evidence of its unchanging culture. Konrad Adenauer’s renowned proverb “Kinder, Küche, Kirche” (children, kitchen, church) standardized a tax and education system that discouraged women in the workforce during his chancellery in in 1950s; she discusses this historical principle because women are still affected by it today, affirming the standing patriarchal nature of German culture.

*Bloomberg* article “Merkel Seeks Women on Boards as Ackermann Draws Howls,” primarily writes from a business viewpoint to dismiss the importance of gender quotas by exemplifying how and why women do not fit in authoritative positions, but it also acknowledges the German culture and prejudice toward women to intensify the claim. Angela Cullen, the author, uses a tailored set of quotes to imply that women are not suitable for high executive positions in corporate Germany, thus alleviating the need for female quotas. By comparing women to lambs in the quote, “If you recruit lambs, they stay lambs, and you can’t make wolves out of them,” the analogy implies that women are not, nor will they ever be, aggressive enough to attain highly competitive positions in the corporate world. After characterizing women as incompetent, the article uses political discrepancies to prompt readers to question the validity of women’s decision making skills. Ackermann’s doubt in Merkel’s decisions facing the sovereign-debt crisis and his claims that Merkels’s remarks were “roiling markets and raising borrowing cost” demonstrate the skepticism of women’s capabilities. Cullen also explains that quotas are unnecessary because many DAX 30 companies, including Deutsche Bank, have put forth voluntary efforts to promote women in business; if these programs improve female boardroom representation, quotas will be superfluous. In addition, she more realistically asserts that women struggle to have a family and a career because of social pressures and historical culture norms. Cullen explains the significance of the derogatory term, “Rabenmutter,” which has been used historically to criticize mothers who “leave the nest to go to work” to illustrate these social critiques. Cullen discourages quotas from every aspect of German life.

The *Wall Street Journal* article, “Deutsche Telekom’s Quota Spurs Management Debate” by Lauren Stevens and Javier Espinoza, clearly rejects quota implementation but focuses on women as a business asset as an alternative to quotas, instead of reasoning why women aren’t in executive positions like other articles. The article uses expert opinion and real business situations to explain how positive attitudes toward women can eliminate the need for quotas. The authors write, “Some human resources and legal experts say meeting a quota is not the way to create a working environment where gender discrimination happens less” to clearly emphasize that they disapprove of quotas. Citing professionals who reciprocate their claim – like Myrtha Casanova, who founded the European Institute for Managing Diversity and Will Draper, an expert telecoms analyst – influences readers to trust their argument. While government officials promote quotas as the only solution to the gender inequality in boardrooms, professionals offer alternate solutions for those who feel that quotas are not “suitable” for their institution. One diversity professional suggests a continuation and extension of professional development programs offered by some companies for women; however, another encourages companies to think of gender diversity as a “business strategy” to help the company achieve its objectives. By using recognized professionals and legitimate alternatives to quotas, the authors make it clear that quotas are not necessary if companies take the right steps.

The blog post in *Forbes* called “Sexism Debate Not So ‘Pretty’ For Deutsche Bank CEO – But Should We Thank Him?” by Moira Forbes uses the debate surrounding women in business to discuss that unfortunately many serious issues go unaddressed. She discusses Ackermann’s off-the-cuff comment to prove that a simple remark can spark the much-needed, but often disregarded debate of gender equality in boardroom positions. As the Publisher for *ForbesWoman*, Forbes focuses solely on the importance of “rigorous debate” and “vigorous conversations” on women in business, instead of the implementation of quotas in Germany. Her persistence implies that the unacceptable conditions of these overlooked problems will improve when the debate is in “continuous media discourse,” as it will focus attention on the obstacle Germany is facing. Forbes mentions that only 16% of board seats in the US are occupied by women and that “dynamic startups” such as Twitter and Facebook lack female board representatives to emphasize the gravity of gender inequality in boardroom positions around the world.

As gender inequalities in Germany have spurred rigorous debate throughout the country, media sources have each taken three different approaches to portray this debate regarding low female representation in board rooms and whether gender quotas should be implemented to solve this problem. While each major publication uses specific content to support its article’s argument, the strategies that present the information are equally as important, and actually reveal more about the underlying argument and the publication’s intentions. The articles written from a cultural, corporate, or dogmatic perspective, or some combination of those three, use evidence to provide information to the public regarding the debate, but how they portray that information give readers a better sense of the publications’ underlying opinions.

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