Female Representation
at the World Economic Forum

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Abstract

The World Economic Forum (WEF) is an influential global actor that in recent years has been criticised for the lack of female representation at their annual Davos summit. The WEF has justified this disparity as simply reflecting the current state of female leadership worldwide. This thesis explores both descriptive and substantive representation within the forum in order to determine whether or not the WEF is restricted in its ability to increase female representation within the organisation, and uses theories of hegemonic masculinity and inequality regimes in order to identify structural limitations to greater substantive participation. The analysis reveals that although female participation at the WEF is reflective of global levels, it is not increasing in line with current global trends, which can be attributed to three main factors: the dominance of the Davos Man as an expression of hegemonic masculinity; inequality regimes within the organisation; and the sustained inequality of gender in global power and decision-making.

Key words: World Economic Forum, Davos Man, Hegemonic Masculinity, Female Representation, Inequality Regimes
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1   Introduction

The World Economic Forum (WEF) is an influential yet under-researched global actor that plays a significant role in agenda setting and establishing powerful connections between global leaders. In recent years, the lack of women present at the WEF's annual Davos summit has come under increased public criticism, in spite of attempts to champion various gender-related issues and causes.[1] The WEF has justified this gender disparity as simply reflecting the current state of female leadership and elitism worldwide, rejecting notions of structural or social impediments within the forum. Scholars thus far have overlooked the internal dynamics of the WEF and its Davos summit in favour of examining its influence as an economic actor or critiquing its role in neoliberalisation and globalization. Given this current lack of research on the WEF regarding internal gender equality, I propose looking at both descriptive and substantive representation within the forum in an attempt to identify whether or not the forum is confined by global trends, or if there are other social or structural impediments to female inclusion, such as hegemonic masculinity or inequality regimes.

1.1   Background Information

The WEF is a private, non-governmental economic organisation with a corporate membership, which plays a significant role in competitiveness benchmarking and economic agenda setting.[2] Founded in 1971 by Klaus Schwab, the WEF's official mission is *"committed to improving the state of the world through public-private cooperation, [engaging] political, business, academic and other leaders of society in collaborative efforts to shape global, regional and industry agendas."*[3] Some of the deepest pockets and most influential voices in the world meet at the annual invitation-only summit in Davos, Switzerland, as well as attending regional events throughout the year. Editorials have described the Davos summit as the "meeting place of the masters

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[1] Mendoza, M. 2009 "Davos 2009: Where are all the women?" *BloombergBusiness* 1/27/09
[2] Elias, J. 2013 "Davos Woman to the Rescue of Global Capitalism: Postfeminist Politics and Competitiveness Promotion at the World Economic Forum" *International Political Sociology* 7 p. 157
[3] Graz, J. C. 2003 "How Powerful are Transnational Elite Clubs? The Social Myth of the World Economic Forum" *New Political Economy*, 8:3:327; WEF 2015 "About Us" *WEForum Website*

of the world" and the term 'Davos man' has become synonymous with a caricature of the global capitalist elite.[4] Hierarchies within the conference are established through an elaborate coloured badge system, and facilities for high-level meetings, private events and informal networking are provided as the power of Davos lies in its connection opportunities.[5] Over the past 10 years the WEF has developed its own series of gender initiatives including producing the annual Gender Gap Report, Gender Parity Taskforces and the Global Agenda Council on Gender Parity, which have focussed primarily on increasing female inclusion in economic systems.[6] However, the WEF retains its own internal representative challenges: women have only twice been included on the managing board and the percentage of female Davos participants has wavered between 15-17% over the past 10 years.[7] Beyond these descriptive imbalances, the effects of hegemonic masculinity on the participation and inclusion of females in the WEF and its effects on agenda setting have been repeatedly criticised within popular media and by prominent female attendees, who have argued that there are structural and social impediments to substantial female representation at Davos.[8]

1.2 Research Focus

While studies on gender representation and policies have been carried out on other state and non-state actors (such as the UN and national parliaments) and analyses of the WEF's role in global structures, the globalization process and gendered economics have been undertaken, my review of the literature revealed that there has thus far been no scholarly analysis of descriptive or substantive gender representation within the forum itself.[9] Within my thesis I intend to address this gap in the literature and, building upon existing analyses of gender in global governance, examine descriptive and substantive representation at the WEF. The aim of this thesis has been to analyse whether or not the WEF is limited in its ability to increase female representation within the organisation, and in what forms these limitations appear. I will focus on limitations in the form of numerical restrictions, inequality regimes and the influence of hegemonic masculinity.

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[4] Ignacio R. (1996) *Le Monde Diplomatique*, p. 1
[5] Waki, N. 2011 "Davos' badge hierarchy explained' *Reuters Online* 25/01/11
[6] Elias, J. 2013 p.152, WEF Annual Reports, Various Years
[7] WEF Annual Reports, Various Years
[8] Yanofsky , D. 2014 "Only 15% of Davos attendees are women, even fewer than last year" *Quartz Online* 21/01/14; Yanofsky, D. 2014 "This week women are 66% harder to find at Davos than anywhere else" *Quartz Online* 24/01/13
[9] Beneria, L. 1999 "Globalization, Gender and the Davos Man" *Femininst Economics 5:3;* Bullough, A., Kroeck, K., Newburry, W., Kundu, S., & Lowe, K. 2012 "Women's political leadership participation around the world: An institutional analysis" *The Leadership Quarterly*. 23; Elias, J. 2013; Haack, K. 2014 "Women's Representation and Leadership at the United Nations" *Global Governance* 20

In order to do this I will focus on two research questions, the first addressing descriptive representation:

Is the paucity of women within the WEF a re-presentation of global trends or indicative of structural obstacles to female representation?

The second focussing on substantive representation:

What role does hegemonic masculinity play in maintaining gender disparity and inequality regimes at the Davos summit?

I will begin by providing a summary of the literature around gender representation in global governance, as well as examining theories of hegemonic masculinity and inequality regimes. I will then provide an explanation of my methodology, data collection and analysis. Finally I will provide an analysis of female representation within the WEF divided in two sections: descriptive representation and substantive representation. This thesis concludes with a discussion of the findings, revealing that the while female participation is reflective of global levels, it is not increasing in line with current global trends, which can be attributed to three main limiting factors: the dominance of hegemonic masculinity within the Davos forum; inequality regimes within the organisation; and the inequality of gender in global power and decision-making.

2 Theoretical Framework

This section provides a theoretical foundation for my analysis of the WEF. I will begin by outlining the business case for greater female representation, and theories of descriptive and substantive representation. Further to this I will discuss the application of hegemonic masculinity theory within informal summitry as a means of understanding social impediments to female representation. As my analysis will focus exclusively on gender, intersectional dimensions of these theories have been omitted. This has been made to reflect available data from the WEF within a limited scope paper, although I am aware there are other factors (such as sexuality, ethnicity, economy and geography) that could be seen to influence power hierarchies at the forum, and there is definitely room for further intersectional research in these areas. Furthermore, I will use dichotomous terms 'men/male/masculinities' and 'women/female/femininities' throughout the course of this paper referring to two dominant constructions of gender, a choice that has also been made in order to reflect the available data.

2.1   Literature Review

My review of the literature revealed that the WEF is relatively under researched in terms of gender representation. The majority of the literature focuses on the WEF's role in the global political economy. Pigman has written extensively on the WEF's role in multi-stakeholder problem solving, focusing on its role as a global governance institution in economic and security and agenda setting.[10] Graz has discussed the WEF's power as an elite social forum and as an embodiment of hyperliberalism.[11] Prügl & True address the WEF as part of their analysis of transnational public-private partnerships, looking at gender initiatives as a product of neoliberal economics.[12] Finally, Elias provides the most comprehensive analysis, looking at Davos and the WEF's neoliberal economic approach to female inclusion in global economics.[13]

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[10] Pigman, G. A. 2007 *The World Economic Forum: A Multi-Stakeholder Approach to Global Governance* London: Routledge
[11] Graz, J. C. 2003
[12] Prügl, E & True, J. 2014 "Equality means business? Governing gender through transnational public-private partnerships" *Review of International Political Economy* 21:6
[13] Elias, J. 2013

2.2 The Business Case for Female Representation

The push for greater female representation within economic institutions has focussed primarily on a business case. McKinsley & Co's annual report "Women Matter" has shown that companies with more women in top management positions tend to exhibit better organizational and financial performance.[14] Acker argues that when women occupy higher positions, the gender wage gap at lower levels tends to decrease, and other manifestations of gender discrimination may also be reduced. Thus, having more women in power and decision-making can affect larger economic and organizing processes that generate inequalities.[15] Catalyst's president, Ilene H. Lang, has vehemently argued this business case, and the fact that gender diversity is a smart economic move, stating that the Catalyst studies of corporate performance and female representation over the past 10 years have continuously revealed a "*strong correlation between corporate financial performance and gender diversity… diversity, well managed, produces better results. And smart companies appreciate that diversifying their boards with women can lead to more independence, innovation, and good governance and maximize their company's performance.*"[16] Rai has noted that although the number of women participating in organisations and economies may be increasing, gendered hierarchies serve to maintain male dominance in power roles.[17] Elias and Prügl & True have furthered these discussions by examining the gender policies and initiatives of major international organizations (such as Nike, Goldman Sachs, the WEF and the World Bank), criticizing them for their focus on economic inclusion at the production level while failing to address structural inequalities in the male-dominated power hierarchy.[18] Elias in particular has discussed the WEF's initiatives regarding gender and development, and their efforts to position greater female inclusion as a strategy for economic competitiveness.[19] These concerns will be explored in more detail in section 2.3.

2.3 Descriptive Representation

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[14] McKinsley & Co 2013 "Gender diversity in top management: moving corporate culture, moving boundaries" Women Matter Annual Report: McKinsley & Co
[15] Acker, J. 2009 "From glass ceiling to inequality regimes" *Sociologie du travail 51* pp.200
[16] Catalyst 2014 "Companies with more women board directors experience higher financial performance, according to latest catalyst bottom line report" *Catalyst Online Media Announcements*
[17] Rai, S. 2004 "Gendering Global Governance" *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 6:4
[18] Elias, J. 2013; Prügl, E. & True, J. 2014
[19] Ibid.

Descriptive representation focuses exclusively on quantitative measures, identifying how many women are present in positions of power and business, or looking at the ratio of men to women, and efforts are centred on increasing the number of women in power structures. Sheryl Sandberg, CCO of Facebook, popularized this concept in public discourses through her book *Lean In*, in which she argues for women to have a 'seat at the table'.[20] Peterson & Runyan have contributed to this in a scholarly setting, referring to a 'crisis of representation' when discussing the lack of women present in global governance and decision-making and arguing that this absence leaves a myriad of perspectives un- or under- represented. This means that those who speak for 'women' often misrepresent or essentialise issues, concerns and solutions, feeding into the cycle of the suppression of female agency and hierarchical power dynamics. [21] One means of addressing descriptive representation has been to quickly raise the number of women present through the imposition of quotas, which have remained a controversial topic since their introduction to the global discourse at the UN World Women's Conference 1995. Countries and organisations which lead the way in gender representation have advocated strongly for the imposition of quotas, and in many cases have seen a successful increase in the amount of females present.[22] Prominent leaders such as Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, have argued that whilst not ideal, quotas are necessary in order to rapidly adjust the gender landscape, while others such as Sandberg have remained set against them based on the belief that arbitrarily imposing structural adjustments fails to solve deeper-rooted structures of inequality.[23] However Dahlerup has written extensively on the issue of gender quotas, their effects and their expressions and argues that unless one sees gender quotas as counterproductive to gender equality, it can form a significant part of a larger opportunity to reform male-dominated spaces.[24]

Demands for greater female involvement in power and decision-making often revolve around the premise that descriptive representation will facilitate greater substantive representation of 'women's issues'.[25] This is based on the expectation that women will prioritise 'female' issues and speak on behalf of 'womankind' if they are involved in the decision-making process.[26] Whilst this holds some truth, as having more women present in discussions allows for a greater diversity of experiences to be voiced,

[20] Sandberg, S. & Scovell, N. 2013 *Lean in: women, work, and the will to lead* New York:Alfred A. Knopf
[21] Peterson, V. S. & Runyan, A. S. 2010 *Global gender issues in the new millennium* Westview Press: Boulder p. 105
[22] Dahlerup D. 2008 "Gender Quotas – Controversial but Trendy" *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 10:3 p. 28
[23] Simmons, J. and Martinuzzi, E. 2014 "Participation of women at Davos is still low despite high-profile appointments of female business leaders" *Financial Post Online* 29/01/14
[24] Dahlerup, D. 2008 p. 327
[25] Squires, J 2007, *The new politics of gender equality*, Basingstoke:Palgrave Macmillan p.25;
[26] Childs, S. 2006 "The Complicated Relationship between Sex, Gender and the Substantive Representation of Women" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13:1

to group all women into one female experience and claim that they are more likely to act on behalf of women simply because the share the same gender is both reductionist and essentialist. This does not address the fact that presence does not necessarily confer power within the agenda or the discussion, or that descriptive representation is not a guarantee that female concerns will be heard.[27] This perspective also fails to acknowledge the presence of hegemonic masculinities and the likelihood that women in positions of power or leadership may have been required to exhibit socially idealised 'masculine' qualities in order to gain their position, and may feel the need to exhibit hyper-masculine qualities in order to maintain it.[28] While initial strides towards equality must be made in descriptive representation, there are a myriad of hurdles to overcome in the process of feminizing the agenda and restructuring male-dominated processes, which will be addressed later in section 2.4.

2.4   Substantive Representation

While descriptive representation focuses on how many women are present within power structures, substantive representation focuses on where they are positioned within these structures and how this affects individuals' ability to contribute. If descriptive representation is having a 'seat at the table' then substantive representation is having a 'voice at the table'.[29] The primary means of addressing substantive challenges has been through the adoption of gender mainstreaming policies.[30] This process involves "*the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages by the actors normally involved in policy-making*".[31] This has been championed as a way to shift away from a focus on 'women's issues' and ensure that gender equality is represented throughout core policies, and since being embraced by several major IGOs, NGOs and states, gender-mainstreaming has become an international norm.[32] However, gender mainstreaming in these institutions has focused primarily on 'integrating women into markets' rather than addressing hierarchical and vertical

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[27] Childs, S. 2006 p.9
[28] Bexell, M. 2012 "Global Governance, Gains and Gender UN – Business partnerships for women's empowerment" International Feminist Journal of Politics, 14:3 p.400
[29] Sandberg, S. & Scovell, N. 2013
[30] Griffin, P (2010) "Gender, governance and the global political economy" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64:1; Hafner-Burton, E. & Pollack, M. A. 2002 "Mainstreaming Gender in Global Governance" *European Journal of International Relations* 8:3; True, J. 2003 "Mainstreaming Gender in Global Public Policy" *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 5:3; Waylen, G. 2004 "Putting Governance into the Gendered Political Economy of Globalization" *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 6:4; Youngs, G. 2008 "From Practice to Theory: Feminist International Relations and Gender Mainstreaming" *International Politics*, 45
[31] Hafner-Burton, E. & Pollack, M. A. 2002 p. 40

segregation of gender, power and occupation, or seeing a reform of gendered structures.[33] Furthermore, those in decision-making roles are primarily men and not gender experts, meaning that often those trying to incorporate a gender perspective into policy have a limited understanding of how or what to incorporate.[34]

Therefore, addressing substantive representation requires a deeper analysis of social and structural impediments to female representation, and moving beyond a model of inclusion to integration of both female and male structures and processes. Acker in particular has written on the subject of 'inequality regimes' and the 'glass ceiling' phenomenon, arguing that increasing inclusion or seeing a few women achieve high-ranking positions does not generate change unless the larger economic and organizing processes (which generate and sustain such inequalities) are addressed.[35] Building on the concept of the glass ceiling, these 'inequality regimes' refer to the "cumulative disadvantage of blocked opportunities" which causes the underrepresentation of women at higher levels. These are "complex, overlapping practices and processes that result in continuing inequalities" in gender, race, class and sexuality.[36] Acker argues that the result of inequality regimes is that top positions in organisations are likely to be held by white men, who reproduce the same structures that privileged their own initial advancement.[37] These inequality regimes shape the experiences of individuals at every level throughout the organisation, often leading to gender segregation within certain subjects or roles.[38] Acker also asserts that elites tend to reproduce themselves through the inclusion of those like themselves, and hiring through social networks, these processes and inequalities become self-reinforcing, with the invisibility of gender inequalities often making it difficult to confront these patterns.[39]

2.5   Hegemonic Masculinity and the 'Davos Man'

While inequality regimes focus on structural impediments to substantive female participation, hegemonic masculinity is particularly pertinent in understanding social obstacles at informal summits such as the WEF. Connell developed this notion of

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[32] True, J. 2003 p. 370
[33] Peterson, V. S. & Runyan, A. S. 2010 p. 183
[34] Hafner-Burton, E. & Pollack, M. A. 2002 p. 342
[35] Acker, J. 2009 p. 200
[36] Ibid. p. 201
[37] Ibid. p. 202
[38] Ibid. p. 206
[39] Ibid. p. 209

'hegemonic masculinity' in 1995, based on the understanding that gender differences have hierarchical power implications and there is an idealised form of masculinity that affords the greatest power attributes.[40] This idealised masculinity can vary, from stereotyped notions of sexual, physical or militaristic dominance, to certain character traits or behaviours, and multiple patterns of masculinity have been identified across different institutional and cultural settings.[41] Those who exhibit these 'masculine' qualities (regardless of their gender) occupy higher levels of power than those who exhibit 'feminine' qualities. This theory is based on the understanding that gender is relational, as "*patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model… of femininity.*"[42] In this sense, hegemonic masculinity is not considered to be the statistical norm, but a socially normative concept, actively and passively reproduced through the privileging of 'masculinized' qualities to the exclusion or discredit of those deemed 'feminized'.[43] This theory has been posited to explain the paucity of females in leadership, why powerful women are often accused of being 'masculine', and why men accused of exhibiting 'feminine' qualities are rarely found in the upper echelons of leadership.[44]

Dobson has examined major agenda-setting summits such as the G8 and G20, and argues that informal summitry can allow a particular form of masculinity to be privileged so much so that it can be regarded as assuming a hegemonic form. Popular media and civil society reflect and represent this contextually idealised masculinity, both strengthening it and marginalising other forms of masculinity or femininity that may be present.[45] Dobson also notes that the dynamics within elite communities largely replicate themselves, providing structural challenges for those who do not conform to the dominant masculinity to rise into positions of power and change the dynamics. Therefore even when women participate they either conform to the dominant masculinity present or are forced into feminised roles and issue areas, ultimately reinforcing the dominance of masculinised patterns of conducting global governance.[46]

Within my analysis I will explore these theories, in particular focussing on how quotas have been used to address gender representation within the forum, and how hegemonic masculinity and inequality regimes affect female attendees' ability to substantively contribute to the Davos summit.

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[40] Connell, R. W. & Messerschmidt J. W. 2005 p. 844
[41] Ibid. p. 846
[42] Ibid. p. 848
[43] Connell, R. W. & Messerschmidt J. W. 2005. p. 844
[44] Peterson, V. S. & Runyan, A. S. 2010, Tickner, J. A. & Sjoberg, L. (Eds) 201
[45] Dobson, H. 2012 p. 434
[46] Ibid. p. 437

3   Methodology

In this section I shall elaborate on the methods used in my study. Given my desire to address both descriptive and substantive representation within the WEF, I will be utilising two methodological approaches: descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis. Within each of these I shall present the theoretical foundation for the method, the reasons why it has been selected and the specific application within my research. In using this mixed methods approach I am able to achieve a more complete answer to my two research questions, addressing both quantitative understandings of representation and qualitative analyses of possible causes.[47] I have limited my research to the years 2006-2014, as this reflects the beginning of the publishing of the annual Global Gender Gap report, from which a consistent and comprehensive data pool can be obtained.

3.1   Descriptive Statistics

In order to address descriptive representation within the WEF I will undertake a comparative analysis between the levels and trends of female participation within WEF structures and those in global power and decision-making. The best means of achieving accurate data for this analysis is through the use of descriptive statistics.[48] Descriptive statistics are a quantitative method that provides a summarization of raw data focussing on one variable, presented in a clear and understandable way, without including further redactions that could infer causality or connections.[49] This is often presented in a graph or a chart in order to visually identify trends or commonalities.[50] As my aim is to compare levels and trends in the WEF with global trends, this will allow for an easily understandable overview of WEF and global levels, the results of which I can build upon and interpret through qualitative analysis. While the use of second-hand statistics is limiting, as I am unable to control the criteria by which levels of inclusion are evaluated, I believe this has been mitigated through the selection of reputable, well known sources and a broad selection of data. Utilising quality second-hand data is also

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[47] Bryman, A. 2012. Social Research Methods 4th ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press p. 637
[48] Schreiber, J. 2008 "Descriptive Statistics" *Sage Research Methods Online*
[49] Ibid.

much more practical within the scope of this paper than collecting my own empirical measures. In line with this method, I have collated raw statistics on female inclusion within WEF's leadership, communities and Davos participants, as well as global statistics. In order to identify wider global trends in female representation, I first identified who attends Davos, and from which sectors their managing boards are drawn. Based on the information available from the WEF website and previous years' participant lists, I have identified participants within three major categories: business, political and social. I have therefore examined at least two lists which reflect each category. For global political representation I have chosen the Global Gender Gap Reports 2006-2014 and business representation Catalyst's annual reports on the gender composition of Fortune 500 CEOs, board members and executive officers for the years 2006-2014. For global social leaders and influential personalities I have compiled figures from the 2006-2014 Time 100 Most Influential People lists as well as the Forbes Most Powerful lists. Whilst not a complete sample of the arenas from which Davos participants and WEF boards can be invited, it is a reasonable sample from which to gain insights into the global presence of female leadership.

3.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

In order to analyse substantive representation within the Davos summit, focusing in particular on self-reported female experiences, I have chosen to undertake qualitative content analysis (QCA). QCA is a systemic method of classifying texts into identified categories and similar meanings, reflecting both inferred and explicit communication.[51] The texts can include official, cultural and personal documents, which provides a wide base to examine multiple aspects of the issue.[52] In the case of the WEF where there are officially produced documents, cultural criticisms as well as personal reflections, this method provides a framework for eliminating biases through the systematic analysis of each category.[53] QCA also recognises three levels of content - primary content, context information and latent content - and therefore makes provision for a deeper analysis of the texts as well as an understanding of the constructed meanings and underlying assumptions.[54] This allows for the flexibility of exposing underlying meanings in the text, highlighting motives, purposes, meanings, norms and values and thus allowing for

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[50] Schreiber, J. 2008
[51] Cho, J. Y. & Lee, E. H. 2014 "Reducing Confusion about Grounded Theory and Qualitative Content Analysis: Similarities and Differences" *The Qualitative Report* 19:64 p. 4, Bryman, A. 2012 p. 557
[52] Halperin, S. & Heath, O. 2012. Political research: methods and practical skills. Oxford: Oxford University Press p. 318
[53] Bryman, A. 2012 p. 557
[54] Mayring, P. 2000 "Aualitative Content Analysis" *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* p. 3

a revisiting of information and understandings as new information comes to light.[55] Categorization occurs through a combination of inductive and deductive processes, giving greater flexibility in the coding phase.[56] I have selected QCA as it allows the researcher to explore a much wider range of data, much of which would be difficult to obtain through interviewing or other participatory methods (especially in the context of the WEF, in which interviewees may be bound by time or social conventions to reveal less than may be found in textual sources). Further to this, I believe that analysing both latent and surface content will be essential in this context, and this combined with the provision for both inductive and deductive coding makes QCA a more suitable choice than grounded theory or discourse analysis. Although in approaching the problem through second-hand textual sources I will be limited in my ability to pursue certain lines of enquiry (which interviews would have allowed me to do), I feel that the topic of gender in the WEF is sensitive and interviewing would not produce the breadth of opinions that can be obtained through content analysis.[57]

I have chosen to analyse media articles and self-published reflections on female involvement at Davos and in the WEF during the period 2006-2014, reflecting Dobson's observation that conceptions of hegemonic masculinity at global summits are often mentioned and re-affirmed by media representations.[58] This also gives me access to formal statements, informal interviews and personal statements on gender at Davos. A comprehensive Internet search was performed to identify and collate all articles and blogs mentioning Davos and women, females, gender of the Davos Man from 2006-2015 (reflecting on the 2014 summit). These have been coded in order to identify:

1) reasons given for the paucity of female attendance
2) actions taken to address these descriptive challenges
3) positioning of women within the forum

I have used an inductive method of categorization within each of these larger themes, utilising the texts themselves to guide the coding process rather than conforming the texts to my preconceived understandings of the issues.[59]

Whilst this does not provide us with a comprehensive look into the halls of Davos, it does provide a sample from which preliminary conclusions about substantive challenges can be explored.

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[55] Halperin, S. & Heath, O. 2012 p. 319
[56] Cho, J. Y. & Lee, E. H. 2014 p. 9
[57] Bryman, A. 2012 p. 529
[58] Dobson, H 2012
[59] Mayring, P. 2000 p. 8

4 Analysis of the gender representation within the World Economic Forum

As previously mentioned, in analysing the state of gender representation it is essential to address both descriptive and substantive issues. Therefore this analysis has been divided into two sections; the first addressing descriptive representation within the organisation, and the second examining substantive representation, hegemonic masculinity and inequality regimes at the Davos summit.
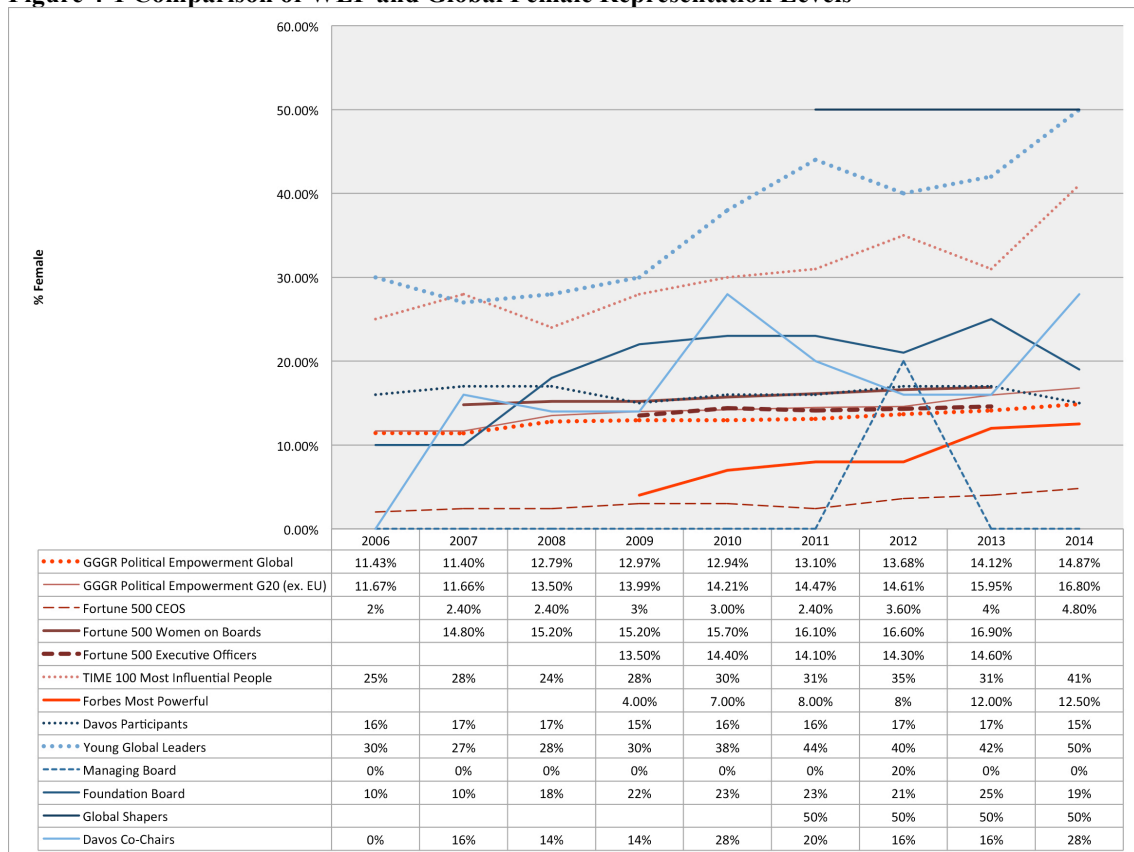
4.1 Descriptive Disparity within the Forum

In this section I shall analyse the descriptive representation of women within the WEF, compared to global leadership in politics, business and society. Within my analysis I seek to understand whether the WEF is acting as a mirror to the global state of female leadership or if there are indications of structural impediments to inclusion. I will do this by contrasting global leadership levels with the WEF, as well as examining the reasons the WEF and its attendees have given for the lack of female representation, and the measures which have been implemented to address this. My research question in this section is: *Is the paucity of women within the WEF a re-presentation of global trends or indicative of structural obstacles to female representation?*

First and foremost, I have collated a series of descriptive statistics on the percentage of females present within different sectors of the WEF, including the Davos summit, the managing board, the foundation board, the Young Global Leaders community and the Global Shapers community. I anticipate seeing a differentiation between the WEF's internal representation (boards, communities etc.) where the WEF has discretion and their external representation (Davos summit) that may be constrained by global trends. In order to see whether either of these levels are an accurate reflection of global female inclusion levels I have gathered a series of statistics which reflect global leadership and elite power circles, namely the Fortune 500 companies, Forbes' Most Powerful and Time's Most Influential lists as well as the Global Gap Report on female political empowerment and engagement.

Figure 4-1 Comparison of WEF and Global Female Representation Levels

|	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GGGR Political Empowerment Global	11.43%	11.40%	12.79%	12.97%	12.94%	13.10%	13.68%	14.12%	14.87%
GGGR Political Empowerment G20 (ex. EU)	11.67%	11.66%	13.50%	13.99%	14.21%	14.47%	14.61%	15.95%	16.80%
Fortune 500 CEOS	2%	2.40%	2.40%	3%	3.00%	2.40%	3.60%	4%	4.80%
Fortune 500 Women on Boards		14.80%	15.20%	15.20%	15.70%	16.10%	16.60%	16.90%	
Fortune 500 Executive Officers				13.50%	14.40%	14.10%	14.30%	14.60%	
TIME 100 Most Influential People	25%	28%	24%	28%	30%	31%	35%	31%	41%
Forbes Most Powerful				4.00%	7.00%	8.00%	8%	12.00%	12.50%
Davos Participants	16%	17%	17%	15%	16%	16%	17%	17%	15%
Young Global Leaders	30%	27%	28%	30%	38%	44%	40%	42%	50%
Managing Board	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%
Foundation Board	10%	10%	18%	22%	23%	23%	21%	25%	19%
Global Shapers						50%	50%	50%	50%
Davos Co-Chairs	0%	16%	14%	14%	28%	20%	16%	16%	28%

Source: WEF Reports - Various Years, Time 100 Lists – Various Years, Catalyst Fortune 500 Reports – Various Years, Global Gender Gap Reports – Various Years, Forbes Most Powerful Lists – Various Years.

Through an observation of the WEF's statistics on female representation, we can see that the WEF is far from achieving gender parity across all of its institutions, a feature which is also seen in global leadership and power levels. Davos participation rates have remained between 15%-17% over the past 10 years, fluctuating consistently within that range. The WEF Foundation Board and Davos co-chairs overall have increased in female representation over the 10-year period, yet with no consistency or pattern to their increase, with numbers rising and falling from year to year, generally due to the inclusion of one or two women within the small committees. The Young Global Leaders community figures reveal a steady increase towards gender parity, and its starting figures are much higher than other areas within Davos. The Global Shapers Davos attendees have maintained gender parity since its inaugural appearance at Davos. The WEF's managing board has the lowest figures, with only one year out of 10 seeing the inclusion of a woman on the board. Global leadership levels show a steady (if only incremental) increase throughout the same period, and with the exception of the Times' 100 Most Influential lists avoid the large swings we see in the WEF data.

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4.1.1 Comparison to Global Trends

When we begin to compare the figures to global levels, women are comparably represented, if not overrepresented in some areas. Looking at global rates of political inclusion, we see a range of approximately 11-17%, which compared to Davos attendees would indicate an initial overrepresentation of women at Davos, with global levels eventually catching up. In the business arena, we see that Davos has significantly higher levels of female representation when compared to female CEOs; however the female representation amongst Davos participants is comparable to female board and executive officer representation. When comparing the WEF boards to global averages, the WEF is comparably positioned, with the exception of its managing board. When looking at social influencers, Davos has much lower levels of female representation, however considering that Davos' participants are drawn primarily from the business and political communities (see figure 4.2) with a sprinkling of cultural influencers this is not surprising.

Figure 4-2 2014 Davos Attendees by Sector
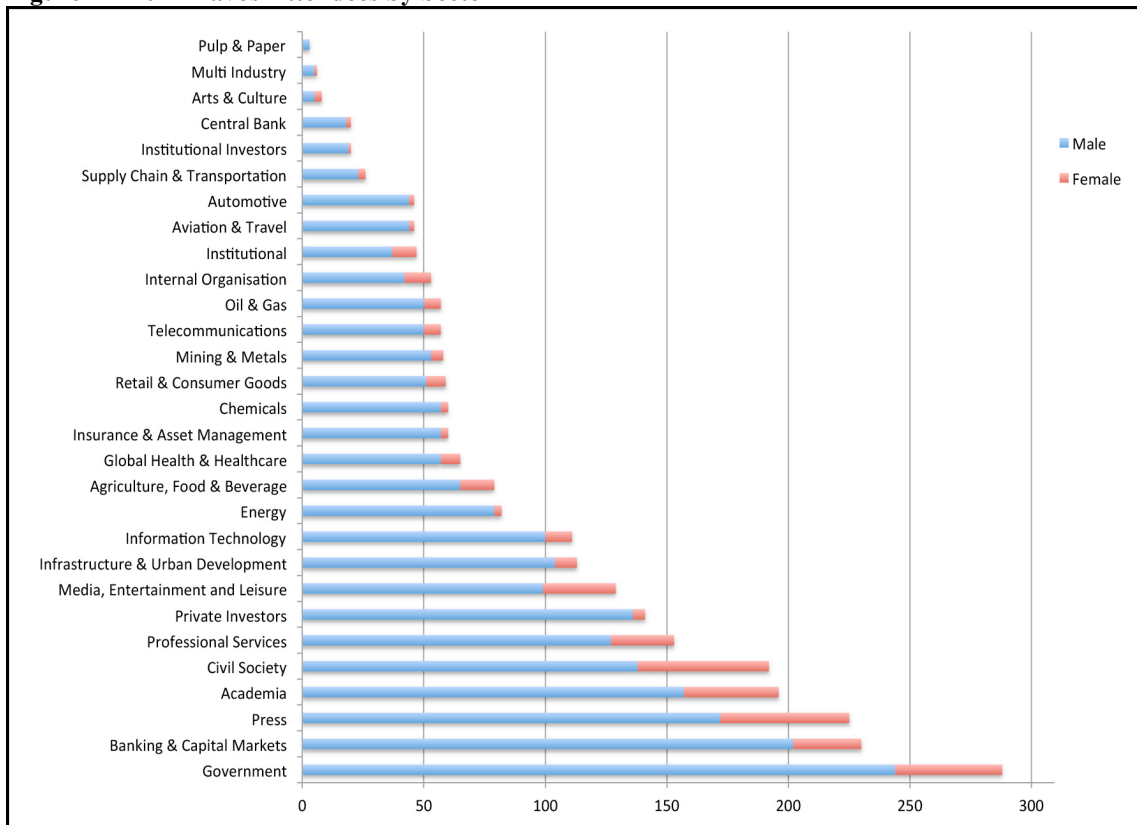
While the trend in global leadership is an across-the-board steady increase in female representation, we do not see the same consistency reflected within the WEF. While Davos Co-Chairs and the WEF's Foundation Board have increased over the

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years, this increase has in no way been the steady incremental increase we see in the global levels, and has progressed significantly backwards some years. The large swings in these figures reflect the addition or removal of one or two women from relatively small boards, resulting in a large statistical difference – though we are not seeing women consistently join or remain on the boards at the same rate global board levels are rising. We do not see a steady increase in Davos participation either, which one would expect to see rising in line with global levels. This may be because representation of women was arbitrarily high initially, and has now come into line with global levels, and may also be indicative of structural impediments to female representation.

From a descriptive perspective it would appear that women at Davos are overrepresented when compared to global levels, however as there is no consistent rate of increase it is therefore is not reflective of global trends towards greater female inclusion over the same period. Possible reasons for this will be explored in the following section.

4.1.2   Justifications for disparity

Simply identifying how the WEF is performing within a global context does not allow us to fully understand why this is occurring. Therefore I will analyse some of the reasons given for fluctuating gender representation and an overall lack of parity within the WEF. I will focus on two main reasons provided for Davos participation levels: first that the WEF is simply a re-presentation of global leadership levels, in which there are not sufficient women present in the global elite to increase representation at the forum, and secondly that the WEF's current criteria for invitation act as a structural impediment to increasing female participation. Further to this, I will explore the lack of reasons provided for the WEF's internal disparity.

The WEF has long argued that it does not have control over the gender balance of its Davos attendees, who are selected to attend by the WEF's member organizations. Adamant that the disparity seen is a reflection of the scarcity of women in the highest level of global leadership and not of gender bias or structural hurdles, WEF founder Klaus Schwab called it "ridiculous" to suggest women are not well represented at the forum, stating in an interview with CNN "*If you look at participation here, you have the most famous women in the world.*"[60] Other WEF spokespeople have echoed these sentiments, with, Managing Director and Head of Communications Adrian Monck

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[60] Simmons, J. and Martinuzzi, E. 2014

asserting that the organization would prefer Davos participants to be more evenly spread, but its hands are tied by its mission of bringing together the world's most powerful and influential people, stating, *"We're on the front line of reflecting the world as it is, not how we want it to be… If we hold the glass up to global leadership, the reflection that comes back is this, and it's just not good enough."*[61] Saadia Zahidi, head of the WEF's Gender Parity Program, has also followed suit, arguing that "*The World Economic Forum annual meeting engages the highest levels of leadership from a variety of sectors and participation figures are a reflection of the scarcity of women in this external pool.*"[62] This may indeed be the case, as while Davos is an invite-only event, its invites go primarily to member organizations, successful CEOs and business people who self-select individual membership, as well as heads of state and government and social influencers, of which we have seen the majority are male. Organizations who receive tickets reserve the right to internally select who attends, and with the majority of executives, CEOs and board members being male, it is not hard to see how a bias could quickly emerge. A prominent Davos attendee, Laura Liswood, secretary general of the Council of Women World Leaders has defended the WEF's role in the disparity, stating that the "*WEF can't manufacture CEOs, their delegates are reflective of who's on boards.*"[63] Herminia Ibarra, Prof. INSEAD Business School also reflects this sentiment, asserting *"What makes Davos Davos is that Bill Gates and Richard Branson and the Nobel Prize winners are there, women are not at the top of non-profits, government or business."*[64] Therefore the WEF has little control over the gender of its Davos attendees.

Others have argued that these explanations are surface-level justifications, and that the WEF's definition of who warrants invitation into the exclusive club is simply too narrow, focused on sustaining existing hierarchies and the elite 'boys club' atmosphere Davos is renowned for. These critics have argued that the greatest obstacle to gender parity is the WEF itself. Barbara Stocking, Oxfam UK CEO, has been lobbying the WEF for several years to bring in more women and believes that the current definition of leadership should be broadened to include prominent social influencers, female entrepreneurs from developing economies and female politicians traditionally overlooked for invitations.[65] Former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell (who chairs the international advisory board for the Foundation for Effective Governance) has seconded this notion, asserting *"If you want to insist on only the CEOs and the very top people, you get the same- old, same-old, same-old… if they were very*

[61] Horansky, C. 2015 "Lack of Women At Davos Reflects the Gender Gap in Global Leadership" *Diplomatic Courier Davos Special* p. 14, 2014; Yanofsky , D. 2014
[62] Moya, E. 2011 "Davos imposes Gender Quota" *The Guardian Online* 12/01/11
[63] Boyle, C. 2014 "Where were all the women in Davos?" *CNBC Online* 25/01/14
[64] Kassenaar, L. 2011 "Davos excludes half the world in global agenda as women miss 30%" *BloombergBusiness Online* 24/01/11
[65] Sunderland, R. 2009 "This mess was made by men. Now let the women have their say." *The Guardian Online* 01/02/09

serious, they could say 'Who are the most interesting woman entrepreneurs?'[66] This reflects Acker's theory regarding inequality regimes, in which the privileged few reproduce the same dynamics and structures that afforded them privilege initially.[67] These critiques also highlight what has been an ongoing discussion around the WEF, if it is simply an 'old boys club' for Americanised business elites, or if the forum is changing as it adopts a new role in the global system.

However, while both of these arguments have their merits in explaining disparity amongst Davos delegates, it does not explain why the WEF has failed to address its internal gender disparity, especially within its managing board. On this issue the WEF has remained silent, and has released no justifications or explanations for the continued disparity. While to a certain extent one can argue that Davos is a mirror of global elitism the WEF's boards are completely at the discretion of the WEF, yet remain significantly disparate. This silence may indicate a denial of gender as an issue within the upper echelons of the WEF, or reflect Acker's discussions on the invisibility of inequalities to those who occupy the highest levels of power.[68] It may also be reflective of Acker and Dobson's assertions that the elite recruit from networks of those similar to themselves, reproducing the systems that afford them the greatest power.

4.1.3   Efforts to address descriptive representation

Since the establishment of the Gender Parity Program in 2006, the WEF has sought to address descriptive disparity through several measures. I will analyse what actions have been taken towards increasing female representation, and in what areas progress has been made to see if their actions reflect a push towards greater gender parity.

As previously mentioned in section 2.2, quotas have often been used as a means of rapidly transforming the gender landscape within power and leadership communities, and the WEF has embraced quotas in some areas of the organisation. Whilst the WEF's Global Shapers community (consisting of leaders under 30 years old) consists primarily of self-appointed members in local hubs around the world over which the WEF does not have gender control, the selection committee has ensured that 50% of those Global Shapers chosen to attend Davos each year are female.[69] The Young Global Leaders

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[66] Kassenaar, L. 2011
[67] Acker, J. 2009
[68] Ibid.
[69] Horansky, C. 2015 p. 14

Community also embarked on a gradual process of pursuing gender equality through yearly soft targets, and saw a yearly increase in the number of females in the community until it reached parity in 2014, subsequently implementing hard quotas to ensure this is maintained.[70] Since 2011 the WEF's 100 strategic partners have their Davos tickets limited at 4 per company, yet are offered a fifth ticket if they will bring a female delegate, yet a fifth of those companies decided to bring just four people.[71] This 20% female quota offered a potential 100 tickets to females (of the 2,500 participant slots at Davos), increasing female representation amongst strategic partners by 43 women from the previous year.[72] Looking at the statistics, while the quota may have increased the number of women attending Davos from strategic partners, it had no overall impact on the number of women present at Davos, with the percentage remaining at 16% both pre and post quota. This is surprising and no official explanations have been posited as to why this was not more successful, though it may reflect the self-selection of attendees throughout the rest of the forum, with female presence outside of the strategic partners decreasing.

The Gender Parity Program (which initiated the strategic partners quota) has made some headway into shaping the gender constitution of Davos panels and speakers. Whilst not implementing strict quotas, Zahidi initiated a programme attempting to increase diversity at Davos, and says they have actively sought out female speakers for panels (with female representation hovering around 16%-20% since 2009) and in general have sought to include the issue of gender in more sessions.[73] Furthermore, the Gender Parity Program has developed a 'repository of best practices' aimed at closing the gender gap within organisations, including specific recommendations for boards and c-suites on how to increase female representation.[74]

Returning to my original research question: *Is the paucity of women within the WEF a re-presentation of global trends or indicative of structural obstacles to female representation?* The levels of representation within the Davos summit would appear to be reasonably reflective of global levels, if not over representative in some cases, inferring that the gender imbalance is a re-presentation of global levels. However, female representation within the forum does not reflect global trends, and appears to have stagnated in its current state. The WEF has been silent on any desire, need or strategy to increase internal female representation, in spite of its gender parity

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[70] WEF Annual Reports, Various Years
[71] Kassenaar, L. 2011; Moya, E. 2011
[72] Lepore, M. 2012 "Why are there no women at Davos?" *The Grindstone* 25/01/12
[73] Ibid.
[74] WEF Gender Parity Program 2015 'Repository of Best Practices' [Electronic]

programme advocating the business case for women on other boards. It would appear that the WEF has focussed on addressing descriptive representation in the areas where it has least control (such as Davos) and in establishing new communities (such as the Young Global Leaders and Global Shapers) yet has not addressed descriptive challenges at the top of the organisation. Furthermore, this absence of female representation within the WEF's own leadership structure (which ultimately sets the agenda for Davos) suggests deeper structural obstacles to gender equality, which will be explored in the following section.

4.2   Substantive Representation and Hegemonic Masculinity

In this section I shall analyse the substantive representation of women at Davos by looking at where and how women are positioned within the forum and using theories of hegemonic masculinity and inequality regimes to guide my analysis of self-reported female experiences. These experiences have been separated into four distinct areas; Davos spouses, female participants, panels and topics and finally high-level networking. My research question for this section is: *What role does hegemonic masculinity play in maintaining gender disparity and inequality regimes at the Davos summit?*

Building upon Dobson's analysis, I will focus on hegemonic masculinity within the Davos summit as characterized by the 'Davos Man' concept. The 'Davos Man' is a caricature of the idealised masculinity present within the forum, referring to the archetypal wealthy neoliberal businessman, with deep pockets and a dominant, Americanised personality style, utilising informal social networks to exert power over individuals and the agenda.[75] The term 'Davos Man' originated in *The Economist* in 1997 and gained popular traction within media coverage of Davos, and in Huntington and Beneria's critiques of the global capitalist elite.[76] The Davos Man ideal (while perhaps not statistically reflective of the majority) has a normative effect on the dynamics within the summit, exerting hegemonic dominance and positioning other masculinities and femininities in relation to it. Dobson speaks of prominent female leaders finding their influence within the G8/G20 summits confined to 'feminized' agendas.[77] Similarly, within the 'Davos Man' ideal certain subjects are 'masculinised'

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[75] *The Economist* 1997 "In Praise of the Davos Man" *The Economist* p. 18
[76] Beneria, L. 1999; Huntington, S. P. 2004 "Dead Souls: the Denationalization of the American Elite" *The National Interest* Spring
[77] Dobson 2014:437

(such as technology, economics, politics and military) while others are 'feminized' in relation to the ideal (such as culture, arts, climate and health). I shall use this caricature of the 'Davos Man' as a symbol of the dominant masculinity and analyse its normative effects within the Davos experience.

4.2.1 Davos Spouses

While Davos attendees are allowed to bring their partners, spouses are not guaranteed entry into Davos events or the official program. Spouses can however bid for last minute places in less-popular panels – which for the most part are sessions on health, arts, science and philanthropy. According to one wife, the 2012 panel on oceanic pollution was packed with Davos wives.[78] This highlights the gendering effects of the 'Davos Man' ideal; those topics in line with the businessman ideal are considered worth attending, especially if the session is high profile and therefore 'masculinized' within the summit. However, topics that fall outside of this 'Davos Man' caricature, such as health, ethics, climate etc., are avoided and therefore normatively 'feminized' within the summit. This concept is reinforced when spouses (rather than Davos delegates) consist of a large part of the attendees, signifying that the topic is low down on the Davos Man agenda and further 'feminizing' the subject area.

Further to this, Davos attendees are arranged in a badge hierarchy, with different colours denoting different levels of access, and most importantly information about the individual that provides an in-road to conversation and a quick means of identifying who is worth talking to alongside the official program. Official wives and girlfriends find themselves at the bottom rung of the badge hierarchy, and until 2012 were given blank badges with their name and no other information.[79] In the words of one wife;

> *"If you don't use your husband's name then you are guaranteed virtual anonymity. The wives' name-tag guarantees that the Davos man in question will instantly decide you are of no value and so he immediately looks over your shoulder for the next best opportunity, i.e. someone without a white name tag who is, by definition, more important than you. Many wives refuse to be Davos wives and the white name tag is the reason they most often cite for their decision to stay home."*[80]

While on the surface the information found on the badges of spouses would appear to be a side issue at a high-level economic conference, it highlights an aspect of hegemonic

[78] Schriffin, A. 2012 "Confessions of a Davos spouse" *Reuters Online* 17/01/12
[79] Schriffin, A. 2012 "The fine art of the Davos snub" *Reuters Online* 27/01/12

masculinity at work, the absence of information on badges denotes wives as unworthy of talking to, or only worth the effort if they have an important spouse. While this has changed in recent years, it provides important insight of hegemonic masculinity habitually and normatively supressing the female presence at the forum. This reinforces the dominance of masculinity within the forum, and also acts as a structural barrier to greater female participation at higher levels.[81]

4.2.2　　　Female Davos Participants

Female participants present another challenge to the 'Davos Man' ideal. The idea of the Davos *man* (rather than female participant) whilst in some ways generated through the historical pre-eminence of males within the business community as well as the continued paucity of females at Davos, has been maintained by founder Klaus Schwab, who habitually speaks of the 'Davos *man'* and refers to participants as 'he'.[82] It would appear that due of the legacy of the Davos man, and the continuity of participants from year to year, it is hard for female participants to break into the Davos community. This reflects Acker's argument that elites reproduce themselves and the systems that sustain their privilege and dominance, drawing in new participants from others who are 'like' them.[83] We see here that the normative dominance of the 'Davos Man' provides a significant hurdle to advancing gender equality and representation at the forum.

Although not issued the blank badge of the Davos spouse, the average 'Davos Man' has been known to assume the women present are spouses, and treats female attendees the same way, passing them over for someone deemed more important thus jeopardizing the ability of females to connect into the higher levels and networking which drive Davos. Françoise Gri, the president of Manpower France, who has made Fortune magazine's list of 50 most powerful women in the world for the past eight years said "*At a Davos cocktail party people tend to assume you're a 'wife' rather than a C.E.O.*"[84]. Barri Rafferty, CEO for North America at Ketchum affirmed this, stating;

> "*In the evening events in particular, a lot of men take their wives. When you are in [those] social settings, often people assume that you are someone's wife… you are used to not being in the majority so you really have to go*

[80] Schriffin, A. 2011 "Jealous Davos Mistresses" *Reuters Online* 25/01/11
[81] Acker, J. 2009; Connell, R. W. & Messerschmidt J. W. 2005; Dobson, H 2012
[82] Schatzker, E. 2014 "Schwab sees 'fight' to keep Davos man's money from tainting WEF" *BloombergBusinessOnline* 21/01/14
[83] Acker, J. 2009
[84] Bennhold, K. 2011 "Women Make Their Mark at Davos, Though Still a Distinct Minority" *The New York Times* 26/01/11

> *into it with the kind of attitude that you are going to be there out drinking*
> *with the guys and enjoy the whole thing.''*[85]

This provides insight into the assumption that females at the forum are there in a supporting role, rather than a participatory role – further cementing the normative dominance of the Davos man.[86] It highlights the belief that Davos participants will be male, and also the habitual marginalization of female voices within the forum. In line with hegemonic masculinity theory it also highlights the perceived need for female attendees to conform to the ideal, becoming one of the 'guys' and adopting the characteristics of the dominant masculinity in order to participate completely in the Davos experience. Dobson mentions this in the context of the G8/G20 summits, in which female participants felt the need to become 'one of the boys' in order to fully participate and affect 'masculinized' areas of the agenda.[87]

Françoise Gri also mentions *"It still feels a little like a white men's club… as a woman, one doesn't entirely feel like one belongs."*[88] Christine Lagarde, the French finance minister and a Davos regular for over a decade, has added to this, describing how *"the male-dominated chemistry"* at the forum has presented challenges, saying *"You know you're competent, you've looked at your files, but somehow you feel inhibited."*[89] This connects back to Connell's theory, as while perhaps not the statistical average of all male participants, this 'Davos Man' ideal has a normative effect that shapes the behaviour of other participants in relation to it.[90] This also refers back to arguments around descriptive inclusion vs. substantive representation – presence does not necessitate a voice, let alone an authoritative voice, and the continuation of masculine norms reinforces the minority status of women at Davos. Prominent female delegate, Margery Kraus, CEO APCO Worldwide, described a lunch where she was the only female attendee. When the time came to distribute business cards, no one gave her theirs.[91] Another female attendee in 2012 stated *"There are just more women executives here than ever before and we are either already friends or really getting to know each other, it must have always felt that way for the men."*[92] This reinforces the notion that Davos has long been considered a male domain, and that females and femininities present stand out as a new addition. It also highlights how conscious female attendees are that they form a part of a minority, and the need to position them in relation to the

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[85] Fairchild, C. 2015 "What Davos is like for a female CEO" *Fortune.com* 20/01/15
[86] Acker, J. 2009; Connell, R. W. & Messerschmidt J. W. 2005; Dobson, H 2012
[87] Dobson, H 2012
[88] Bennhold, K. 2011
[89] Ibid.
[90] Connell, R. W. & Messerschmidt J. W. 2005
[91] Simmons, J. & Martinuzzi, E. 2012 "Davos Women minority as Sheryl Sandberg shares with Bossy Girls" *BloombergBusiness Online* 30/01/12
[92] Ibid.

dominant masculinity.[93] These experiences lend weight to theories that the 'Davos Man' ideal dominates interactions and experiences at the forum, and that complex obstacles to representation are present within the structural hierarchy, inhibiting substantive representation.

4.2.3   Panels and Topics

The official Davos program runs full time, offering sessions on various topics led by thought leaders in the respective areas. In 2014, gender-related discussions were featured on six of the 250 sessions, which included panels on the opening and closing days.[94] Rick Goings, CEO of Tupperware Brands Corp, highlighted how far Davos has come saying "It has taken years to have the subject of women and gender parity take place in the congress hall and not at the food-tent."[95] Whilst the WEF has been making a considered effort to address gender on its panels and increase the presence of female speakers (see section 4.1.3), it has not been a smooth process. In one panel the moderator referred to the participants as "five bankers and a lady."[96] On another panel titled "Women and Society" although chaired by a female, the male panellists outnumbered the females two to one.[97] One panel on diplomacy in the digital age was entirely male, while two prominent leaders in the digital arena, Tina Brown (editor, journalist and media personality) and Arianna Huffington (CEO HuffingtonPost) sat in the audience.[98] Another panel on natural resources in Africa was entirely male, while Oxfam UK CEO Dame Barbara Stocking (renowned for Oxfam's recent work in Africa) was in the audience.[99] This may be partly due to individuals declining to speak, or strategic partners paying for representatives on panels, however it appears that whilst the WEF is attempting to increase the amount of women present in discussions, significant female thought leaders are often overlooked in favour of Davos men. While the increased representation of women on Davos panels may be a descriptive challenge caused by a lack of prominent female voices in certain subject areas, the absence of prominent females within their specialties, and even the dominance of male speakers on gender equality panels suggests obstacles at the decision-making level within the WEF.

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[93] Dobson, H 2012
[94] Simmons, J. and Martinuzzi, E. 2014
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Schriffin, A. 2011 "Women on Top – more quotas, please" *Reuters Online* 30/01/11
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.

Sharan Burrow, general secretary of the International Trade Union, was the only woman on a panel on the question "Is 20th-century capitalism failing 21st-century society?" when one of the male participants asked if the topic was a 'gender issue'. Burrow commented afterwards; "I found it telling that it was only a woman and a trade unionist that was prepared to say that we have lost our moral compass and that business needs to sit down and think about the design of the future of capitalism if it's going to serve society."[100] By diminishing ethical or moral issues could be seen as economic pragmatism, however given its reference as a gender issue positions it as a normative effects of the 'Davos Man' ideal. The 'Davos Man' is ruthless, concerned with profit and connections, and therefore concerns for ethics are sidelined as 'secondary' or 'feminized' issues. There is also an implied understanding that 'gender' issues should be reserved for women, and don't belong on the Davos agenda. UN Women tried to address this directly in 2014, by using Davos to launch their 'HeforShe' campaign, which sought to make discussions around gender equality a matter for both men and women to participate in.[101] As women are descriptively underrepresented in the forum, the substantive challenges of overlooking prominent female thought leaders and diminishing the significance of 'feminized' subject areas or opinions reveals deeper structural inequalities which may be hindering full female participation.

4.2.4   High-level networking

Arguably the most significant aspect of the summit is the networking which runs alongside the official program, and with it the opportunity to cut deals and influence agendas. While some female Davos participants have meetings booked months in advance, gender has proved to be a significant barrier to networking and higher-level access within the forum. Beth Brooke, Ernst & Young's global vice chair for public policy, sustainability and stakeholder engagement, said "One of the biggest problems for women that holds them back [at Davos] is the lack of access to networks."[102] Partly this arises from preconceived notions about participants, with potential connections being overlooked in the hallways and at events through the assumption that they are spouses, and also comes back to who is attending Davos. Most of the top executives are not women, and while women are visible at the sessions, the more elite meetings (those open only to more senior executives) are almost exclusively male.[103] In one recollection of a high level meeting, there was only woman seated at the table, all others were sitting

[100] Simmons, J. and Martinuzzi, E. 2012
[101] UN Women 2014 'He for She' Campaign [Electronic]
[102] Thomasson, E. 2022 "Davos Quota fails to do much to boost Davos Women" *ReutersOnline* 26/1/2011

on the sidelines, listening in, because they were not the companies' top executives.[104]

This is also a product of the existing networks women have coming into the summit. A study conducted by Relationship Science and published in *The* Economist examined the 'relationship capitol' of Davos participants (looking at who participants were connected to within the forum) revealing that even amongst Davos power players, the women (such as Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg) are seriously underrepresented in terms of their connections, whereas the idealized Davos Man (Muhtar Kent of Coca-Cola, or Steve Schwartzman of Blackstone) is well connected, occupying the top places on the relationship capitol list.[105] This reflects the impacts of the glass ceiling phenomenon, where complex challenges, structures and obstacles prevent women from achieving the high-level roles that would grant access to such meetings, remembering that currently females make up only 4.8% Fortune 500 CEOs.[106] Sheryl Sandberg has repeatedly referred to the fact that "success and likeability are positively correlated for men and negatively correlated for women" as a means of highlighting that even when women are in the top job and have access to elite forums they are often overlooked.[107] In a setting such as Davos where social networks play a major role, this may affect the ability of women to network effectively and connect into elite circles. Also, given that elites reproduce themselves through their social networks, this creates a much deeper obstacle to changing the state of gender equality within the forum in the long term.[108]

Returning to my second research question*: What role does hegemonic masculinity play in maintaining gender disparity and inequality regimes at the Davos summit?* The substantive challenges within the Davos summit can be attributed in part to the fact that women do not occupy the most powerful positions within global circles, the impact of which has a flow-on effect within the summit as females have limited access to events, networking and visible roles. However, the hegemonic dominance of the 'Davos Man' ideal plays a significant role in maintaining gender disparity and sustaining the inequality regimes which privilege male participation. The analysis reveals that females are habitually overlooked within the summit, and those areas which conflict with the 'Davos Man' ideal are normatively feminised, sustaining the dominance of hegemonic masculinity in shaping the agenda. The assumption that Davos participants conform to this 'Davos Man' caricature limits the ability for females to substantially participate or achieve significant standing within the forum.

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[103] Rowley, E. 2013 "Davos 2013: 'Women' problem will only be solved by appealing to delegates wallets" *The Telegraph Online* 26/01/13

[104] Simmons, J. and Martinuzzi, E. 2012

[105] *The Economist* 2014 "Relationship Capital: Drilling down into Davos Man" 26/01/14

[106] Acker, J. 2009

[107] Sandberg, S. & Scovell, N. 2013

[108] Acker, J. 2009, Connell, R. W. & Messerschmidt J. W. 2005

5 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to analyse whether or not the WEF is limited in its ability to increase female representation within the organisation, and in what forms these limitations appear. By using a combination of qualitative content analysis and descriptive statistics, the findings reveal that the WEF's gender representation is not increasing in line with current global trends, which can be attributed to three main limiting factors; 1) the dominance of the Davos Man as an expression of hegemonic masculinity; 2) inequality regimes within the organisation; and 3) the sustained inequality of gender in global power and decision-making. The WEF has only acknowledged the latter, placing the problem external to its control, however acknowledgement of and building strategy around the former two, which the forum is able to influence directly, is essential in order to increase female representation.

An analysis of the first research question *"Is the paucity of women within the WEF a re-presentation of global trends or indicative of structural obstacles to female representation?"* reveals that while the WEF has overrepresented females in comparison to global levels, participation is not rising in line with global trends, and the continued disparity within internal leadership structures indicates deeper obstacles to representation. The WEF's success within their Global Shapers and Young Global Leaders communities provides hope that overall levels may increase, if the WEF focuses its efforts on doing so. However, the lack of success within attempts to increase female representation at Davos, even with the implementation of quotas suggests that the WEF's hands may be tied in some areas, due to the global state of female leadership. The inclusion of women on the WEF's foundation board is a positive sign, yet the sustained lack of parity within the organisation and complete absence of females from the managing board implies deeper structural obstacles to female representation.

In regard to the second research question: *What role does hegemonic masculinity play in maintaining gender disparity and inequality regimes at the Davos summit?* the analysis shows that substantive challenges within the Davos summit can be attributed in part to global paucity in female leadership and larger challenges in female representation, secondly to both social and structural obstacles – namely hegemonic masculinity and inequality regimes. As women do not occupy the majority of powerful positions within global governance, business and society, the women represented at

Davos, whilst high-ranking within, are for the most part do not hold the most powerful positions at the summit, and as a result females have limited access to events, networking and visible roles. Further to this, the analysis revealed that hegemonic dominance of the 'Davos Man' ideal plays a significant role in maintaining gender disparity and sustaining the inequality regimes which privilege male participation at Davos. This aligns with Dobson's observations of hegemonic masculinity at the G8/G20 summits, and Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity.[109] The female experiences and anecdotal evidence examined highlights the social ways in which women are limited at Davos, reinforcing the notion that presence does not necessitate influence, or a that 'seat at the table' does not confer a 'voice at the table.' Further to this, it would appear that females are habitually overlooked within the summit, possibly due to the historical dominance of male participants. Acker's 'inequality regimes' also play a structural role in maintaining masculine norms at Davos – as the highest positions at Davos are male dominated, as are networking events and panels, those deciding the agenda and discussing the agenda are reproducing the same perspectives and ideas, limiting the substantive female voice within the summit and creating a structural impediment to equal participation.[110] Furthermore, the dominance of Davos men in networking and social connections creates a structural obstacle to females moving into higher positions within the summit, as Acker and Dobson argue that elites reproduce themselves through social networks and connections.[111] This analysis highlights the overlapping social and structural factors that cement the existing gender dynamic and limit substantive gender representation within the summit.

Although this thesis has focused exclusively on the case of the WEF, I believe the findings have broader applications, as informal summits and forums are increasing in influence around the world. This thesis highlights the overlapping social and structural forces that act to sustain inequalities within these settings, and provide a precedent for questioning the internal dynamics of informal organisations, as well as their external influence. This paper is limited in its scope and ability to substantively dive into the WEF, and future research would ideally have the cooperation of the WEF, affording greater access to statistical data and internal documents, as well as interviewing which may highlight aspects of the representative challenges not covered in this paper. Further research into the WEF's inequality regimes, in particular taking an intersectional approach (incorporating gender, race, class, geography, sexuality etc.) would be rewarding and provide deeper insights into structural challenges of representation.

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[110] Acker, J. 2009
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