

MASTER'S THESIS

Legitimized by History? A Biographical Approach to Leadership - The Life-Story of Angela Merkel -

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Abstract

Several studies have proposed a biographic approach to leadership. This research relates to previous research of this topic to investigate the potential and importance of the leader's life-story. Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, and her life-story serve as the example for this thesis. For the analysis two interviews with Angela Merkel in 2005 and 2013 are used which are conducted by the well known German women's magazine *Brigitte*. In the analysis several questions were posed which related to a) life-stories as a means to justify and legitimize leadership and develop a self-concept, b) the creation of an overall leadership development theme and c) the question to which extent the narration of a life-story is influenced by the setting and context. The methods used are thematic content analysis to explore themes as well as narrative analysis to take a closer look at the text itself. The content of the interviews is not analyzed in chronological order, but grouped into different sections for a better overview. There is the issue of validity and reliability due to the qualitative and interpretative character of this research. There are however certain findings that resulted from the analysis. First, that life-stories make it possible for the leader to convey meaning which could not be communicated directly with the same desired effect. Through the life-story facts can turn to memorable experience and enable the leader to establish a direct leader-follower relationship. In addition the follower's life-story can play an equally important role since a direct connection can be drawn between leader and follower when similarities in life-stories occur. Second, through the way the life-story is told a leadership development theme is defined: The development theme of an outsider and a late bloomer. Merkel emphasizes the fact that she is an outsider and does not perceive it as a disadvantage. Even more so, her understatement gives her an advantage due to the fact that others and especially her opponents underestimate her. Third, through the comparison of the two interviews at different times and with different settings it can be assumed that the life-story can be altered, adjusted and adapted to the respective environment and context. It is further concluded that this does not need to weaken the authenticity of a leader and his or her story. But rather highlights the opportunity for leaders to take an active part in creating their life-story. The findings support the assumption that the life-story has an enormous potential for leaders to make use of. Further research is recommended, especially since the importance of a leader's life-story might not have been realized yet.

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1. Introduction

The most important story we will ever tell is the story of who we are. Our life can be seen as a long version of that story. Our ability to influence people is directly related to what people know about us and who they believe us to be. The ability to influence people's opinion is a crucial point especially for political leaders since it decides about their success in form of votes and their party's members approval. The life-story seems to have an enormous potential for leaders. And thus could be a very useful source of information for researchers for an investigation in the field of leadership.

Out of this reason the thesis uses a biographic approach to leadership, looking into the life-story of the German chancellor Angela Merkel. The biographic approach is not new. Previous studies in leadership have taken the life-story into account, for example Shamir, Dayan-Horesh & Adler (2005) in their study of *Leading By Biography* or the study by Shamir & Eilam (2005) introducing the term of *Authentic Leadership* in relation to a life-story approach to leadership development.

This thesis is supposed to highlight the potential and the importance of the life-story for leaders, their leadership, their leadership style and behavior. The life-story, narrated in a certain way, could be an important means for leaders to justify their representation of a certain group, to legitimize their leadership and/or to gain their follower's trust and thereby their approval which in the end means votes and public support.

The life-story of Angela Merkel is especially interesting. This is the reason why she is the chosen example. In the election for German chancellor in 2005 she seems to come out of nowhere for many people. Her political rise however begins already in 1989, immediately in the aftermath of the German reunification. Before 1989 Merkel works as a physician, conducting research about quantum physics with no visible political ambitions. She manages somehow to use the last 30 years to become one of the most powerful women in the world. She surprises not only her fellow colleagues from the past with her exceptional career, but also other politicians who do not take her seriously in the beginning and end up being defeated by her.

As a woman from the former East Germany, on top of that divorced without children, she does not seem to have a chance to become the most powerful politician, even being the head of Germany's most conservative party. On top of that she is regarded as one of the most authentic politicians in Germany. This authenticity can be seen as one of her greatest strengths. She has a

high percentage of approval for herself as well as her actions from the German public. She does however not meet the typical criteria that are expected from a politician of her format. For example being very charismatic like her predecessor Gerhard Schröder. In fact she seems to be the opposite of a charismatic leader at first glance. This being sad it can be assumed that there is another source Merkel is using. And that others are either not able to comprehend or simply do not consider this source. Due to this unclarity this thesis suggests that her life-story could be a source of information that helps to answer exactly these questions regarding her leadership. Especially her ability to create such a great and public approval for her that is unique. Analyzing solely her behavior or style would not be enough, therefore narrative analysis of text is used to grasp the full extent of her story.

1.1 Research Question

Based on this, the thesis investigates further into the importance that her life-story had for the establishment of her leadership. In the first part of the analysis the research question looks more closely at her values and beliefs, as well as the way she portrays herself. This is done to find possible suggestions for the question:

"How can a life-story provide a self-concept and identity for a leader? How can a life-story contribute to legitimize leadership?"

The second part of the analysis looks more for a theme. If Merkel's life-story would be a book, which title could it possibly have? How can her development be described, how did she develop into what she is now and which theme could represent this development to become a leader. This is looked upon to answer the question of:

"Based on the established self-concept, which life-story theme emerges from the leader's narrative?"

The third part of the analysis then focuses more on the content of her narration of the life-story. By comparing two interviews from the same women's magazine but conducted in different years, and in different settings, the question deals with the form of her story. Is it static and always retold the same way or is it dynamic, being able to adapt to change? The question for this part is:

"Is the narration of the life-story fixed or does it change according to purpose and/or setting?"

Through these research questions the analysis can be structured in a way that uses the life-story to understand and find out about Angela Merkel as a person and about her leadership. Most importantly it could lead to realize the potential the life-story has for leaders as well as being able to understand aspects and characteristics of Merkel's leadership that can only be found through the investigation of her life-story and the way she narrates it.

1.2 Limitations

As mentioned above, two interviews of Angela Merkel were used with the Brigitte magazine from the years 2005 and 2013. Background information is provided through biographies, newspaper- and magazine articles. An interesting part of the research would be the verification of her narration of the story by other people (family, friends, colleagues). It is however not possible to take this into account due to her popularity.. Since it is only one researcher who interprets the results, the bias could have been reduced through a peer review, which was not available for this research either.

In addition the research is limited in the way that already the German background of the researcher could be a possible bias in understanding and interpreting certain parts of the results. Cultural differences in general also need to be taken into account. Every culture has its own values and not in all cultures followers expect their leaders to be transparent or self-expressive like it is in Germany. Even in cultures that are relatively "close" to each other in regards to values and beliefs, there are differences. The effect of a life-story may also differ among various countries depending on the respective values, beliefs and traditions. A successful leader in Germany could face extreme difficulties with his/her leadership style, life-story and so on, if exposed in a different country, for example through the violation of norms in regards to privacy or intimacy.

Another limitation is the narrative character of the life-story itself. A thorough narrative analysis could have also taken into account word patterns and other stylistic advices. This was however out of the scope of this paper and could be investigated in future research.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis starts out with an introductory chapter in which the key points of why the study was undertaken and why the paper was written are presented.

The literature review gives an overview of the research that has been done in the respective field relevant for this thesis. In the literature review several studies using the biographical approach to leadership are mentioned. In addition the life-story topic is supported by presenting research on narratives, storytelling and life-stories to establish the base for the analysis.

In the method section Angela Merkel is described in a very short biography to give the reader a quick overview of her story. In this way it will be easier to follow up in the analysis when her different life events are looked at. Further, the method section describes in detail which sources are used and deals with the question of validity and reliability of the qualitative research. Several limitations to validity and reliability are mentioned as well as views by other researchers, for example Barbara Czarniawska, who proposed ways in which qualitative and interpretative research can contribute to the general research field despite the limitations they bring with them.

After the method section the results section follows in three parts, each addressing one of the three research questions. In the result section a short discussion of the respective findings is included right after the quotes from the interview to avoid an enormous amount of text without any interpretation.

A short discussion is then added after the result section to discuss aspects from the literature review that were not explicitly mentioned in the result section.

The conclusion after the findings chapter summarizes the results and in the recommendation part possible future research topics are described.

The thesis ends with a bibliography and appendix which consists of the two Brigitte interviews with Angela Merkel. To save space only the English translation is displayed here and not the original German document.

1.4 Explanation of Key Concepts

Story performance describes a process in which people interact to incorporate new tales continuously into culture while rewriting history by revising the old stories that anchor the present to the past.(David Boje, 1991)

Stories can be seen as narratives with plots and characters, generating emotion in narrator and audience through a poetic elaboration of symbolic material. This material can be a product of fantasy or experience, including an experience of earlier narratives.(Gabriel, 2000)

Legitimacy circumscribes the appearance of consensual support for the leader in a group that allows the leader to mobilize the resources necessary to ensure compliance with directives. (Ridgeway, 2003)

German reunification is the process in the years from 1998 when the wall broke down between East and West Germany, as well as the process resulting in GDR of East Germany merging back with the Federal Republic of Germany (West) in 1990 to form the reunited Germany. Germany had been apart then for over 28 years.(Roll, 2009)

SED stands for the Socialist Unity Party of Germany which was the governing Marxist-Leninist political party of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) from 1946-1989.(Roll, 2009)

CDU stands for the Christian Democratic Union of Germany which is politically located in the center-right and known for their conservative values.(Roll, 2009)

SPD stands for the Social Democratic Party of Germany and represents social-democratic values. (Roll, 2009)

Grüne stands for the Green Party and is the green political party with environmentalist values. (Roll, 2009)

FDP stands for the Free Democratic Party is a classical liberal party in Germany.(Roll, 2009)

Merkel-rhombus describes the way Merkel holds her hands together, the fingertips of both hands touching each other forming a rhombus. Merkel uses this gesture often when while she is in a standing position.(Roll, 2009)

2. Literature Review

2.1. Leadership

Leaders have always been of interest for historians. Throughout history there were kings, generals, prophets, presidents or philosophers that were pointed out and investigated. Bass (2007) states that "*From its infancy, the study of history has been the study of leaders - what they did and why they did it*"(Bass, 2007).

Leadership theories developed over time. From being focused on the individual assessing traits and behavior as the main components that make an effective leader. Up to theories taking into account other factors such as the situation or the relationship between leaders and followers.

While theories in the beginning such as the *Great Man Theory* assumed that leadership qualities are inborn, the theories developed and grew from a very static point of view to a more dynamic one. Now giving credit to more than one influencing variable. The leadership theories based on traits assume that certain elements of a person are responsible for their leadership success. *Situational leadership* theories on the other hand believe that a certain context can be analyzed and that the leader can tailor and adjust his leadership response accordingly. *Contingency theories* combine both approaches and assume that leadership characteristics of the leader and the situation can be analyzed and both can be adapted to foster successful leadership.(Billsberry, 2009) Other theories like the *leadership behavior theory* has its focus on the question of which leadership behavior could increase the performance of employees. One example are the different leadership styles formulated by Kurt Lewin (autocratic, democratic or laissez-faire).(Storey, 2010)

A theory from the 1970's is *charismatic leadership theory*. It describes a leader with superior abilities leading because of/and through his personality and charm, without an external power or authority supporting him. Charismatic leaders use several methods to manage their image. They generate trust of followers through a visible self-sacrifice and take personal risks. They show confidence in their followers, are persuasive and make effective use of their body and verbal language. A milder approach to charismatic leadership is introduced by Conger & Kanungo (1998) using a more transformational view. Here vision and articulation, sensitivity to the environment and needs of others, personal risk taking or the performance of unconventional behavior are characteristics of this leadership. An interesting aspect and a narcissistic one of charismatic leaders is that they can be intolerant of challengers and their irreplaceability can mean that there are no successors when they leave.

A theory already mentioned above with similar characteristics is *transformational leadership theory*. It assumes that people will follow a person who inspires them, this person needs a vision and passion and can achieve great things. The leader conveys enthusiasm and energy to get things done. This leadership begins with a vision, a certain view of the future that will convince, excite and convert potential followers. Transformational leaders can be charismatic without the narcissistic characteristic like pure charismatic leaders. One trap is that passion and confidence could be mistaken for truth and reality. Only because somebody believes it is right, it does not mean it is right.(Storey, 2010)

Servant leadership theory goes into another direction and assumes that the leader feels that he or she has a responsibility for his followers as well as for society. This leadership philosophy by Robert Greenleaf can be seen as a more moral position, regarding the well-being of followers as a priority. Instead of only exercising power from the top the servant-leader shares the power. It can for example be associated with the participative leadership style. The priority of the servant-leader is support, encourage and enable followers to develop their full potential. Another aspect of servant leadership is humility. Anselm Grün for example said that the term humility is not present in today's economy since it has become a negative connotation when it is named in relation to management. He suggests however that especially humility is one of the virtues that managers need the most. According to him: "*Leading means serving*".(Grün, 2013) In regards to servant leadership, an individual follower might have to make a personal sacrifice for the good of the whole, as well as the servant leader does. A challenge lies in the assumption of the leader that the followers want to change, as well as the question of what is better and who decides this. This leadership aligns with religious morals. What is not considered in this approach by Robert Greenleaf is the situational context.

Transactional leadership works with the system of reward and punishment. It is based in contingency, in that reward or punishment is contingent upon performance.(Storey, 2010)

Various definitions of leadership exist due to the fact that researchers define leadership according to their own perspective. Or focus on certain areas and aspects that seem interesting to them to explore. As a consequence different leadership researchers select different definitions of leadership and it becomes more difficult to interpret results across studies relating it to the broader topic of leadership. Laguerre (2010) points out that leadership might never be defined in a way that all researchers agree on.

The focus of this thesis is the leadership of an individual, leaving out the leadership as an organization function. In regards to leadership of individuals, Messick and Kramer (2004) state that the degree to which an individual exercises leadership does not only depend on its characteristics and abilities, but also on the situation and environment surrounding the individual. (Messick & Kramer, 2004)

Taking into account the environment and situation gives a certain power to followers, to context as well as to the leader's ability to have a direct effect by influencing for example the environment. In a textbook of leadership, Yukl (2010) defined leadership as "*the process of*

influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it" (Yukl, 2010). This definition states the effort of leaders to influence and facilitate.

When influencing the environment or directing followers onto a wanted path, leaders have to be able to convey the meaning of their message. They have to do this in a way so that others (in this case the followers) can make sense of the message. Smircich & Morgan (1982) explain in their article *Leadership: The Management of Meaning* how leaders have the ability to shape a situation and influence its meaning to affect the process of sensemaking and as a consequence the actions of followers. They say that leadership is realized in the process where one or more individuals succeed in framing and defining the reality of others. (Smircich & Morgan, 1982)

This view proposes that the leader is able to take an active role. Leaders can shape the meaning of a situation by guiding those involved through their own actions. They can do this through words, images, actions and gestures which give them control over the situation and enable them to manage it. A leader's words or actions may generate a variety of interpretations, different members may make sense of things in different ways. And the challenge for the leader is to manage meaning in a way that helps the individual to be guided by the leader towards a desired path. (Smircich & Morgan, 1982)

Based on the view of Smircich & Morgan who say that leaders are able to shape situations and influence them, leadership could be seen as a relationship involving the leader, follower and the context. The way leaders can mobilize followers within a certain context could be done through language and discourse, in the case of this thesis with the focus on life-stories. To understand how life-stories can be used as information to assess and explore leadership behavior, it is worth to look at one approach using life-stories as a source of information more closely. The following approach was published in 2005 by Shamir, Dayan-Horesh & Adler.

2.2 A life-story approach to leadership

Shamir et al. published a study called *Leading by Biography: Towards a Life-story Approach to the Study of Leadership*. The study focuses on life-stories to find out if and how they account for and justify leadership. Different types of life-stories are used: Autobiographies as well as interviews with leaders of different areas and organizational leaders. To analyze the life-stories, Shamir et al. use the narrative method and read the stories from the perspective of asking about the meaning of the life-story for the development of the leader. (Shamir et al., 2005)

Shamir et al. propose that “*It has been argued that a major way by which leaders manage meaning and exert their influence on followers is by telling stories*” (Shamir et al., 2005). They suggest that the leader's life-story serves as a source of information, which provides the leader with a self-concept from which it is possible to lead. Further, the telling of a life-story is seen as a leadership behavior itself. Their approach views biography as an important potential source of the leader's influence. The term *biography* refers here to various forms of life-stories, not only written or published work.(Shamir et al., 2005)

Their approach is based on four arguments:

First, the leader conveys their influence through the followers' perception and belief. So even though followers might not be aware of the traits and behavior influencing them, they have to perceive it in some way in order to be influenced.

Second, they argue that impressions of leaders are likely to be influenced by previous expectations and attitudes towards that person, which might also come from non-observed behavior or traits.

Third, they suggest that biography itself can be defined as leadership behavior.

Fourth, they say that in order to lead, people must perceive themselves as leaders and have the ability to lead others. With these arguments, four major development stories are identified: Leadership development as: 1) a natural process, 2) finding a cause, 3) a story of coping with difficulties and 4) a learning process.(Shamir et al., 2005)

Leadership development as a natural process

This story was a story of a *born leader* where leadership is evident from a very early age or as a story of a *late bloomer* with talents and tendencies discovered when the opportunity presented itself. Stories of leadership development as a natural development provide a proof that the leader has the ability and the right to lead.

"It is a sort of a tendency that was inherent in me. At certain stages of life, I wasn't aware of that, but with time you become aware of it and even try to reinforce it...It is something that is built in...I can't explain why, I just know it is built-in, as if it was obvious" (Shamir et al., 2005).

Leadership development out of struggle

This story is a contrast to the previous story of a natural development. In this case the motivation to lead is often connected to the need to overcome injustice (e.g. coming from a disadvantageous background). These are often stories about victory or denying unmoral and easier ways of dealing with the situation. These stories attribute qualities to the leader that are necessary for leadership. For example strong will, the ability to deal with difficulties and being able to take on challenges, having self-confidence and being independent.

"There was a continuous struggle that I had to fight all over the years with the environment...the struggle that...formed me...and it was clear that in order to develop...it had to be a hundred percent me" (Shamir et al., 2005).

Leadership development as finding a cause

The stories often combine a personal story with a collective story of movement. The leader develops an identification with a movement and a cause and finding a sense of direction by the development of a political or ideological viewpoint. Nelson Mandela serves as an example and explains how he developed gradually to form the identity of a freedom fighter. Which as he defined himself like this, became his main identity and purpose in life.(Shamir et al., 2005)

Leadership development as learning from experience

In these stories leaders relate their life-story to learning or training experience. For example learning from mistakes or from role models. Leaders base their knowledge directly on the lessons they learned from their experience. They give the example of a deputy company commander during war who tried to persuade the company commander to take a different path but failed. The consequence was that they entered an ambush and most men were murdered.

"This is the kind of story that has to influence a person, to mould him..I learned some of my behaviors from this story...this is how I worked, how I work, I teach my son: check everything thoroughly. Even an order. Check every order, don't do anything blindly" (Shamir et al., 2005).

Shamir et al. state that the importance of a life-story for leaders is emphasized by the cases of managers who did not have a coherent story to tell. These managers held a leadership position and were seen as performing a leadership role by other members of the organization. But the positions stayed external to their own self-concepts. They expressed for example self-doubts regarding their ability to be a leader and found it difficult to lead.(Shamir et al., 2005)

Two examples:

"I don't know if I am considered a leader...They sent me to this course...Some people say I was more lucky than anything...I am not sure I have enough of it (leadership)."

"I have another characteristic, something that I feel inside me, some kind of insecurity in my abilities or in who I am...I live with this dilemma, how people perceive me and my lack of confidence that says, why do they look at me so highly, when I am...less than that..I live with this...gap." (Shamir et al., 2005)

The life-stories of these managers were less organized than the stories of other leaders and emphasized an external causality. It seemed as if these leaders were being pushed or pulled into their leadership role.

From this point of view, the life-story is regarded an important source of information for leadership, for example to organize a self-concept. This view suggests that the life-story can also be used to organize and give information about an identity.

2.3 Life-stories

According to Bruner the answers to the question "Who am I?" can be organized in the form of life-stories.(Bruner, 1986) The stories express the identity of the storyteller which is created through the relationship between life experiences and the told stories of these experiences *"to be a person is to have a story to tell"* (Simmons, 2002). Bruner says that personal narratives are people's identities since the life-story represents "who I was", "who I am" and "who I might be in the future".(Bruner, 1991) According to Pallus, Nasby, & Easton (1991) identity is a created story which is told, revised and then retold through the whole life. Other scholars add, that we reveal ourselves to others by the stories that we tell about ourselves.(Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998)

According to Gergen & Gergen (1986) an individual creates coherent connections in between life events by developing a self-narrative. The events are understood to be related in a systematic way, not simply beaded in chronological order. They emphasize that our current identity is the result of such a life-story.

Life-stories provide leaders with a self-concept that can be expressed through the leadership role, they provide leaders with knowledge and clarity about their values. As Pearce says (2003):

"Your passion about what you want to change grows from the foundation of values that have been formed by your life experience. These values are vital to you personally,...And every idea you hold passionately has a background in your personal experience".(Pearce, 2003).

Through life experiences and the way these are integrated into life-stories, people are able to create a self-concept of a leader which justifies their leadership role. Thus, life-stories are not only stories about the identity "*Who am I*" but also stories about "*why am I here*".(Simmons, 2002) In other words: Leaders can construct their life-stories in order to explain and justify their self by answering the questions of "*Why have I become a leader?*" and "*How have I become a leader?*".(Illouz, 2003)

With the connection between life events and a person itself, life-stories can be seen as an unfolding process. Charlotte Linde (1993) wrote a book about creating coherence in life-stories called *The Creation of Coherence*. She emphasizes that an individual needs a coherent, acceptable and constantly revised life-story in order to exist in a social world with "*... a comfortable sense of being a good, socially proper and stable person.*"(Linde, 1993)

According to Linde, the life-story is a social and oral unit exchanged between people. It is discontinuous in the way that it is often told in separate pieces over a long period of time. Linde points out that this long-term attribute makes it subject to revision and change as the speaker exchanges old meanings with new ones or adds meanings parts of his life-story. Life-stories are told over many occasions and include certain landmark events (e.g. choice of profession, marriage). Linde describes the life-story as an important means used to communicate the self to others. The life-story can also be used to claim a membership to a certain group and demonstrate the worthiness of belonging to this group. This involves social understanding and knowledge grounded in history or practice and it means that these stories are based on pre-assumptions on what is expected. They are also based on the knowledge of norms and beliefs. For this, coherence in life-stories is needed.

Linde defines *coherence* as a property of texts deriving from the relations that parts of one text have to another one as well as the text as a whole. And to the relation this whole text has with other texts of its type. She explains that a text can for example be seen as coherent if it fulfills two conditions: First, that its parts (word, phrase, sentence or larger discourse units level) can be seen as something that is in proper relation to one another and to the text as a whole. Second, that the text as a whole is recognizable as a text of its type.(Linde, 1993)

Coherence can be seen as a social and an internal demand. Although the life-story is involved in social interaction, it also relates to the internal sense of having a private life-story that organizes the speaker's understanding of his own life, the past, present and future. It would be very difficult to study this inner story. But studying the ways in which life-stories are told, these stories reveal something about the way people establish their own "*private universe of meaning*".(Linde, 1993)

The narrative that form part of a *life-story coherence* is usually provided in form of a string of causality. Sometimes the speaker or addressee perceives the causality or the ordering of events to be problematic or not accurate. Situations of problematic causality can be divided into two parts: First accidental where the speaker explains that he/she became for example a scholar by accident. Second, discontinuities between careers which are handled in more varied ways. Linde emphasizes that members of a culture recognize discontinuous sequences for example of professions when a banker says he dropped out with 34 to become a potter. This form of discontinuity must be managed in some way, an explanation of the discontinuity must be given. In another example Linde explained how she tried to give a friend an account on how she got involved in Buddhist meditation. Her story was that she had met somebody over the summer, had no other plans and therefore joined that person for a Buddhist summer camp. Her friend on the other hand refused to accept the way she told it and reminded her that she had always been interested in books on mysticism. Her failure to include this detail made her story not coherent and thus not authentic and believable since not only Linde but also her friend knew about this other detail. Thus, the detail was subject to correction.(Linde, 1993)

Linde suggests that coherence in a life story is also a personal demand people have on themselves. The coherence in a life story can be related to the personal desire to understand his/her life as coherent, as making sense, and as a history of a proper person. When a new event does not fit the current life story, confusion and uneasiness can be observed until it is possible to form the event into a narrative that fits the ongoing story. Or until the story has been changed to "*accommodate the new event*".(Linde, 1993)

2.4 Storytelling

The previous mentioned studies of the life-story show how coherence involves a social practice which requires work at the linguistic level.(Linde, 1993)

Yannis Gabriel (2000) points out that storytelling has been a part of human societies, groups and organizations for a long time. Some stories are pure fiction while others are inspired by actual events. Accuracy is often sacrificed for the effect.

Gabriel suggests that stories are not only recounted events. Instead they interpret, enrich, enhance and infuse the events with meaning. This happens with the purpose to educate, persuade, warn, reassure, justify, explain or console. *Distortions* of events created by mechanisms such as exaggerations, omissions, or metaphors can be thought of as attempts to construct reality in a poetic way. He points out that a story teller is not concerned with "*facts-as-information*", but with "*facts-as-experience*". The latter is about engaging with the meaning of facts. He also says that stories do have factual base but should not only be reduced to only the elaboration of facts. (Gabriel, 2000) More generally Gabriel points to the fact that learning to work with stories, listen to them, tell them, question them or translate them can be a powerful way of enhancing the practices of leaders, researchers or communicators.(Gabriel, 2000)

Narratives as such can be seen as a point in human societies where knowledge, beliefs and cultural learning come together.(Bamberg & Moissinac, 2003) Going back to the sensemaking part of narratives, storytelling and life-stories, David Boje (1991) points out that people perform stories to make sense of events, introduce change or gain political advantage during their conversations. They engage in dynamic processes of refining their stories of new events as well as on-going interpretations of stories. Different versions of stories are told to different audiences, so each performance will never be the complete story. It is an unraveling process of confirming new data and new interpretations as these become part of an unfolding story line. Boje also draws attention to the fact that most storytelling is done in conversation which involves the listener. The listener himself becomes a co-producer of the story filling in the blanks and gaps between the lines with own experience, giving the teller cues like head nods or change in posture that direct the inquiry and influence the way the story is told.(Boje, 1991)

In general it can be said that stories can work for leaders as a communication and engagement technique. They convey emotion in an effective way and an emotion connected to a strong idea is persuasive. People remember what they feel and their emotions inspire them to take action. Stories are memorable because the idea or event is replayed in one's mind which is easier to remember than for example reading facts. Stories also engage the listener to participate in the conversation, rather to tell them what to think exactly.(Simmons, 2002)

Or with the words of Howard Gardner, Harvard Professor and author of *Changing Minds*: "*The principle vehicle of leadership is the story: The leader affects individual behavior, thought, and feelings through the stories that he and she tells*"(Gardner, 2006).

According to Gardner changing people's minds and actions take more than just a persuasive argument. It involves empathy, listening, questioning and in particular, stories. Leaders can tell stories to paint a strategic vision, convey values, share a lesson learned or depict desired behaviors. Gargiulo states that "*The shortest distance between two people is a story*"(Gargiulo, 2007).

There is an emphasis on narration and the importance a leader's life-story because it is the main element that will be investigated in the thesis. One leadership theory that takes into account the importance of the life-story and the resulting effect of authenticity is the theory of authentic leadership by Shamir & Eilam (2005).

2.5 Life-stories in authentic leadership

By respecting the importance that life-stories can play in the process of developing a leadership concept, a study by Shamir & Eilam (2005) introduces the term *authentic leaders* with the attributes of self-knowledge and self-concept clarity. They propose the achievement of this knowledge and clarity through the development of a life-story which organizes the life into a meaningful and coherent string of events. The life story shows the leader's strengths and weaknesses, explains the leader's values and justifies his or her claim for leadership. It provides "*the meaning system from which the leader acts and thus makes his or her actions self-expressive*"(Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

When constructing a coherent life-story certain participants and parts are ignored or hidden while others are highlighted. It does not necessarily mean that a leader lies, rather that he or she constructs the truth by selecting and emphasizing certain parts in the service of this purpose. Mahatma Gandhi (1949) wrote in the introduction of his autobiography *The story of my experiments with truth*:

"I understand more clearly today what I read long ago about the inadequacy of all autobiography as history. I know that I do not set down in this story all that I remember. Who can say how much I must give and how much omit in the interest of truth?"(Gandhi, 1949)

Previous approaches to leadership development used leader's life-stories as a means to discover events and experiences that contributed to the leader's development. The focus was on events such as the early life, the loss of a parent, the successful overcoming of a life crisis or role models. The events were connected to the development of relevant leadership traits and skills for example self-confidence or independence.

In contrast Shamir & Eilam (2005) suggest that the events and experiences an authentic leader chooses to tell, reflect the leader's self-concept and allow them to act in their leadership role. Bennis (2003) states that authentic leaders *"create their own legends and become authors of their lives...creating new and improved versions of themselves"*(Bennis, 2003).

In their study of authentic leaders, Shamir & Eilam also state that most authentic leaders did not point to one specific role model. They rather explained that they had different role models, using them like a collage by drawing learning experiences from teachers, parents or other colleagues together to form their own self-concept. One quote as an example: *"I don't think I ever preferred a single role model, but a little from here and a little from there...what seemed appropriate in a certain area...not the 100%, only those parts that seemed to me important, that appealed to me"* (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

Another important point is that according to many authors one of the prerequisites of leadership is the follower's trust.(Shamir & Lapidot, 2003) Followers' trust again is based on judgments of authenticity. This is based on the leader's life-story and on how consistent it is with the leader's message and actions. Followers decide if a leader is authentic by evaluating the life-story and its coherence and believability.(Shamir & Eilam, 2005)

This point of view of authentic leadership is an important part of the analysis of Merkel's life-story. Usually leader having a similar powerful position are charismatic in one way or the other or have the inborn qualities for example because they come from a family of politicians. Merkel does not possess any of them. Even more, she creates the impression that she avoids to seem charismatic.

Many of her biographers or people that were part of her circle say that she remains a mystery to them. Analyzing her life-story could be an opportunity to understand why she acts like she does and how she created the picture we have of her.

3. Methodology

3.1 Case Selection

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the potential and importance of a leader's life-story. This is done by using a biographical approach to leadership. The German chancellor Angela Merkel and her life-story serve as the example for this thesis. More precisely, her life-story as it is told in two interviews in the Brigitte Magazine in 2005 and 2013. Merkel was chosen due to her interesting background. She does not have the typical career path of a politician and started her political career at a relatively *late* age when she was 30 years old. Especially interesting is her upbringing in former East Germany which is a part of her story she relates to often in the interviews. The following part gives an insight into Merkel's background:

Merkel was born in Hamburg (at that time West Germany) in 1954. Her mother Herlinde Kasner was an English teacher, her father Horst Kasner a pastor in the Protestant Church. A few weeks after Merkel was born, her father moved the family to East Germany. That same year about two hundred thousand East Germans fled the other direction to West Germany. This was due to the increasing Communist influence in the East.(Roll, 2009)

Merkel is the oldest of three children. She grew up in Templin, a rural area north of Berlin in the state Brandenburg. Her family lived in the seminary at *Waldhof*, a complex of buildings from the Lutheran Church at the outskirts of the city.

As the daughter of a Protestant minister from the West, Merkel and her siblings were taught by her mother to "*always be a bit better than everyone else*"(Roll, 2009). Her mother was of the opinion that this was necessary in order to being able to go to the Gymnasium (highest school diploma) and to later study. Herline Kasner was maybe the one who suffered most from the fact that her husband decided to move to East Germany. In West Germany she would have been able to be a teacher. In the East she was condemned to stay home and be a housewife since the government rejected her the permission to work. She applied every year but always with a negative answer. Apart from this, Horst Kasner's position led to several privileges such as having two cars and being able to receive clothes, food and money from relatives in Hamburg. Merkel's former Russian teacher Erika Benn called the family *élite*.(Roll, 2009)

In eight grade Merkel took part in a Russian's language Olympiad and won on every level, school- as well as countrywide. She was intelligent, had a strong will and was hardworking. After high school Merkel studied physics at Leipzig University and achieved a doctorate in quantum

chemistry in Berlin. During that time only people who complied to the rules of the SED party were able to get these possibilities. She is often questioned for her closeness to the party and missing opposition.(Roll, 2009)

In November 1989 the wall which had separated East and West Germany for 28 years was opened. A month later Merkel joined a new political group called the *Democratic Awakening*. In the beginning she only helped with office management. Her time came when the leader of the party, Wolfgang Schnur, was exposed as a former Stasi informer. She was then chosen to speak to the journalists in an emergency press conference. Due to her very sovereign performance she was suggested as spokesperson for the elected Prime Minister, Lothar de Maizière. The party *Demokratischer Aufbruch* (DA (Democratic Awakening)) merged with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) before the 1990 elections.(Roll, 2009)

In 1990 she won a seat in the parliament and was named Minister for Women and Youth. Merkel was always well prepared but most of the time Chancellor Helmut Kohl dominated the meetings. Inside the ministry Merkel was respected for her efficiency as well as feared for her directness and temper.

In November 1999, the CDU was involved into a scandal. Chancellor Helmut Kohl as well as Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schäuble were connected to undisclosed cash donations and secret bank accounts. Nobody in the party dared to criticize Kohl due to his dominance except for Merkel. She published an opinion piece in the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, in which she called the CDU to break with its longtime leader. It was a gamble and a high risk but she succeeded and was elected Party chairman a few months later. This is the moment Germans first started to notice Angela Merkel.

In 2002 it was the first time that Merkel ran for the post of being the CDU's candidate for chancellor. But she realized in time that her opponent Edmund Stoiber would most likely be preferred over her. Merkel then changed her strategy and arranged a breakfast with Stoiber and withdrew *in his favor*. In the elections Stoiber lost to the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and its candidate Gerhard Schröder. Merkel ended up in an even stronger position within her party and in the following election 2005 Merkel finally succeeded to become CDU's candidate for Chancellor. Her opponents for the position of Chancellor were the reigning chancellor Gerhard Schröder and Joschka Fischer from the Green Party. Packer described those two men as "*working class street fighters who loved political argument and expensive wine, with*

seven ex-wives between them".(Packer, 2014) Merkel, back then called *the quiet one*, won the elections in 2005, as well as 2009, 2013 and remains Germany's chancellor until today.(Roll, 2009) There is a chance that she will run for chancellor in 2017 again, and at the present time there is not really anybody in the CDU that could replace her.

3.2 Research Method

Two approaches were combined for the analysis: First, thematic content analysis for identifying themes in the data. Second, narrative analysis to focus on word usage, meanings and situations of the context.

With the help of thematic content analysis the interviews were analyzed and divided into themes and categories. They were then compared with each other and prepared according to the topics of the different parts for the results section. The narrative analysis was used to gather specific information about values, opinions or behavior. It was used to answer the questions of "*how*", "*why*" and "*in what way*".

The narrative method was used to analyze Merkel's life-story in a way that leads to answers in regards to several questions that her leadership poses upon researchers. Through the narrative approach stories that are not apparent at first can be discovered.(Boje, 1991) This approach also enables the researcher to look at the text as a means to convey meaning. The study of the life-story itself also makes it possible to find out more about Merkel that is not mentioned explicitly by her and that could not be acquired by observing only her behavior and leadership style.

For this purpose, two interviews were chosen which were both carried out by a known women's magazine called *Brigitte*. During the analysis there was a focus on how the life-story is told and how these events fit into Merkel's overall story.

3.3 Data sources and data collection

There is no primary data used in this thesis. The secondary data mainly consists of the two above mentioned interviews with Angela Merkel, published in the women's magazine *Brigitte* in 2005 and 2013.

In 2005 the interview was carried out by editor in chief Brigitte Huber and reporter in chief Andreas Lebert. It was printed later in the magazine on May 18th, 2005. The interview took place shortly before the general election in autumn 2005, where Merkel and her party of the CDU won

against the party of former head of government, Gerhard Schröder. Angela Merkel was then elected Germany's first female chancellor.

In 2013 Angela Merkel was invited by *Brigitte Magazine* for a public talk in relation to their series of interviews with women in politics under the theme *Women vote*. The interview took place in the Maxim-Gorki Theatre in Berlin on May 2nd, 2013. The audience consisted of 400 people, mainly women. The interviewers were *Brigitte* editor in chief Brigitte Huber and reporter in chief Meike Dinklage. Just as in 2005, the interview took place in May before the general elections in autumn. At this point Angela Merkel served her second four-year term of being Germany's chancellor.

Both interviews follow the structure that the interviewer gives Merkel the choice in between two topics and Merkel can decide on which topic she wants to receive a question. Sometimes if the interviewer finds her answer interesting, he asks a subsequent question. Sometimes Merkel answers both topics. In the following *Brigitte* stands for the respective Brigitte interviewer. The English translation of the interviews can be found in the appendix. From the interview in 2005 the complete interview is translated. From the interview 2013 only parts of it are taken into the appendix since the interview itself lasted for over one hour and the amount of text would have been too massive for the scope of the thesis. But all passages that are used in the analysis are included. Since the interviews were translated by the researcher and not by a professional, there could be wording that does not display the text one hundred percent correctly.

Additional secondary sources are two biographies, one from Evelyn Roll in 2009 and another one from Ferdinand Kornelius in 2013. Interviews and articles from the magazine *Spiegel* in 2013 and a newspaper article by the *Frankfurter Rundschau* in 2013 provide additional information.

The (secondary) data in form of the two interviews in the magazine as well as the biographies or articles in the newspapers are presented as the respective author's understanding and his interpretation. It must be acknowledged that the information could thus be not accurate or outdated. Authors of the secondary sources have different backgrounds, life-experience, knowledge or beliefs. They can arrive at different interpretations which is not an obstacle as long as it is kept in mind and acknowledged.

However, an interpretation can also give a good insight into the way an author makes sense of the story and might reveal aspects that were not present before. As well as revealing aspects not only of the past but also of the present. For example a general public opinion at a certain time period.

Through this secondary data can help to understand a certain problem or question. Another argument for secondary data is the economical aspect. It saves time and expenses.(Denscombe, 2010)

Primary data would have been very interesting to include. Primary and secondary data together could have given a more valid and reliable support of the research questions. In addition possible differences between existing and new data might have emerged. It was however not possible to get access to primary data for this thesis.

The main reasons for choosing use secondary data only were: First, the limited financial and time resources. Second, the impossibility to interview Germany's chancellor or reach out to parts of her circle of friends or family and other people that know her. And third, the assumption that a study of narratives (such as the life-story) which this thesis focuses on, can be compared to the work of historians. Historians do not have access to all or sometimes even any of their primary sources and therefore rely on secondary sources written by other historians.

3.4 Validity and reliability

Traditionally text in social science was expected to demonstrate validity (correspondence to the world) and reliability (same method will bring same result). The analysis of text poses the question of how the reader can tell the difference between social science and fiction. There is no structural difference between fictional and factual narratives. Czarniawska argues that the narrative approach is not just about believing stories. Using narratives means to acknowledge that facts are fabricated and the aim is to find out how they were made.(Czarniawska, 2004)

Czarniawska points out that the worry of not being able to tell factual from fictional narratives stems from the time when social science imitated natural science. She also says that the narrative approach does not offer a method or a set of procedures to check the correctness of its results, instead it gives access to a bag of tricks leading to a more inspired and inspiring way of writing and reading. Questions such as "*Is it valid*", "*Is it reliable*" or "*Is it science*" could be replaced by "*Is it interesting*", "*Is it relevant*" or "*Is it beautiful*".(Czarniawska, 2004)

This research has an interpretative character and therefore contains limitations to validity and reliability. Regarding secondary data, it is only possible to control the data quality to a certain extent. An attempt to increase validity and reliability was made by using two interviews carried out by the same magazine in different years but at the same time of the year. Both interviews were given in spring before the elections in autumn. The editor in chief interviewer Brigitte

Huber was present in both interviews, her second interviewer, reporter in chief changed from 2005 to 2013.

Some questions in the interviews were similar, there were however differences. In 2005 the interview took place only with Angela Merkel and the two interviewers only. In 2013 the interview took place in the Maxim-Gorki-Theatre in Berlin with 400 people in the audience. Differences in the two interviews can also relate to the fact that the first interview only included Merkel and the interviewers where she had more time to think about her answers and also more time to elaborate on certain aspects. The second interview demanded more entertaining qualities of Merkel and in front of a big audience it might have been more difficult to disclose personal information in the right way that it is not misunderstood or misused.

The information for this thesis was gathered in interviews, biographies and articles. It is however the researcher who makes sense of the data by interpreting it. It is a subjective process and different researchers may interpret the same data in a different way. This leads to the issue of verifiability when analyzing the qualitative data.

The bias could be reduced by having a third party who analyzes the data. One possibility would be to ask the participants of the data to validate the analysis. A letter was written to the department of Merkel in Berlin but no answer was received. Therefore, it was not possible to reduce the bias this way. As mentioned above it was also not possible to interview other people that could verify or falsify Merkel's narration. In addition this process is time consuming and participants may have also changed their perception and views due to temporal effects or changes in their situation.

Another option to reduce the bias could be the use of a peer review, where another qualitative researcher analyses the data independently. This option was also not feasible for this thesis since there was no researcher found who was available for this task. For the future, it could be considered to write the thesis with a partner and independently analyze the same qualitative data. This could help to avoid the lone researcher bias and help to provide additional insights. Some researchers however question this approach because they say that if the researchers interpret the data differently it will be difficult to decide which interpretation is stronger or more valid than the other.

To ensure at least a certain validity in this qualitative analysis the collected data was read through several times to search for and identify themes and issues in the text. Where it was possible findings from previous research were used to draw a relation to existing theory.

The attempt to verify and confirm the data happened by searching through the data and repeating the process to identify further themes and categories. The interviews were read and notes were taken to mark what was said in the text. After the categories were distinguished, they were grouped together for the later analysis. One category for example was *values and beliefs* where parts of the interview with relevant information were grouped together. In the end this made it possible to analyze the interviews not chronologically but rather structure the analysis by categories.

The narrative method to the study of lives views the individual description or explanation of events as a means of the person to convey meaning. This method is very interpretative. The story itself represents an interpretation of the narrator's experience. The researcher is biased in the way that his or her reasoning consists of a very own personal interpretation. Due to this interpretative nature of the analysis it has to be admitted that the story could have been read with a different perspective, a different point of view or a different focus which would have most likely led to different results.

Further, sections of the life-story are included that tell something about the person that is not stated explicitly by the leader. A thorough analysis of all possible connections between the biography, the interviews and leadership is beyond the scope of this paper. This paper therefore focuses on the story that Angela Merkel tells in her two interviews for the *Brigitte* magazine using background information from her biographers to fill in missing gaps of information.

As Linde states the internal life-story raises methodological problems since the introspection is an unacceptable practice in science and hardly possible. The internal story and the identity can thus not be studied in a reliable manner.(Linde, 1993)

The study of a leader's life story and its construction offers many insights. However, leaders can be aware of the fact that their life-story is constructed and has an effect on followers. Therefore, leaders could "create" and "fabricate" life-stories to project an image of authenticity which is not real. Thus, methods have to be revisited or developed to distinguish authentic stories from inauthentic stories. For example, by testing the relationship between a leader's life story and their self-concept: Do leaders with a more coherent life-story have a clearer sense of direction or a

greater self-clarity? This has to be investigated not only with self-reports of the leader but also with assessments from colleagues and followers. As well as testing material in different time periods to see if the leader has changed his views or portrayal of himself radically without a *real* reason behind it, except maybe for the purpose of a better leader-follower relationship and an increase in follower's trust.

A possibility to find out to which extent the life-story is constructed by the leader, the told stories could be tested against stories that others such as family members or colleagues tell about the same event or situation in life. This was not possible in this thesis but could maybe be done with a leader who is not as popular as Angela Merkel.

Despite the doubted accuracy, validity and reliability the narrative approach offers new possibilities to 1) Use texts in an extended way as field material connected to techniques of text analysis. 2) Not only seeing the content but the form too.(Czarniawska, 2004)

A helpful point Riessman makes is how one can miss important points in a set of data if only thematic analysis was used and context was given minimal attention. She highlights how attention to structure can both generate knowledge and complicate analysis and the importance of having knowledge of linguistics when using this analytic approach.(Riessman, 2008)

The challenge for this thesis' methodology is to balance the scientific requirements of objectivism and neutralism with a research method that is biased. There is the researcher's own subjectivity regarding the interpretation of the text as well as the general subjectivity when it comes to the question of which sources were chosen and why.

3.5 Research Design

The results are presented by reporting the key findings of the two interviews. This is not done according to the chronological order of the interviews. Rather categories were grouped together for a better understanding. The discussion is partly incorporated in the results section regarding the direct interpretation of findings. There are however some aspects of the theory that were not explicitly mentioned in the results chapter. These are discussed in the discussion section following the results. The conclusion chapter summarizes the findings and is followed by a recommendation chapter that deals with possible questions of future research.

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to these outcomes by using a practical example to show and emphasize the enormous potential the leader's life-story has for the field of leadership.

4. Results

In the following section the two interviews with Angela Merkel from the Brigitte magazine are analyzed using the text, as well as taking into account the situation and context. Passages from the interviews are quoted and followed by a short discussion. The results are divided into three parts, each dealing with one research question.

The first part focuses on:

"How can a life-story provide a self-concept and identity for a leader? How can a life-story contribute to legitimize leadership?"

The second part focuses on:

"Based on the established self-concept, which life-story theme emerges from the leader's narrative?"

The third part focuses on:

"Is the narration of the life-story fixed or does it change according to time and setting?"

4.1 Part I - Self-concept, Identity, Legitimization

In the following analysis followers, listeners and audience are put on one level. This is done because it is assumed that her audience consists of mostly her followers. And that her followers are at the same time often listeners or audience of her speeches or interviews. It is further assumed that most followers who listen to one of the interviews or read it in the magazine have not informed themselves much about Merkel's identity or history before. Taking this fact into account, the narration of her life-story becomes an important means to present and introduce herself (identity). As well as to support her claim to lead.

In previous work Shamir et al. proposed the life-story as a means for leaders to convey a message about their identity, values or beliefs.(Shamir et al., 2005) There is evidence in the text (interviews) that Merkel is using her life-story to do this. And that she further uses parts of her story to justify her leadership and establish her right to present a certain group. The life-story Merkel creates in the interviews is for all followers, however she seems to be aware of the fact that she is speaking to a women's magazine. She is using questions about family, relationships and friends in a way that it fits to the picture that she wants her followers (in this case women) to

have of her by creating stories other women can relate to. For example the story about her best girlfriends at school or her opinion on love and friendship.

One of the probably most difficult challenge was to deal with the fact that she is speaking to many women who have children and for who family is the most important aspect of their life. Although Germany is improving the compatibility of being a mother as well as a working person, women who are successful at work and have children are still the minority. To address this issue, as well as explain her *right* to represent all women (the ones with family, career or both), Merkel says the following:

Brigitte: "Do you regret today that you do not have children?"

Merkel: "It simply did not happen. I do not quarrel with this fate, but it was not a fundamental decision."

Brigitte: "Can you imagine to be as successful as a politician and so far in your career if you had children?"

Merkel: "I talked about this to Mrs. Brundtland, the former Norwegian Prime Minister: Women, who raise children are most likely to have a later political career. I could have had a child when I was 20, that would have been 15 years old when I started with politics in 1990. Just the way I started politics at a later state in my life, women with children, who are already a bit grown up, can do that. However, during the times of the reunifications everything was a bit more dramatic."
(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

Merkel leaves the question open if there was a point in life where she wanted to have children and answers in a very neutral way. Through this answer she does not seem cold-hearted or egoistic as some could call her choosing a career over children. In addition she refers to a Norwegian Prime Minister, knowing that in Scandinavia the acceptance of women having both, a career and children is much more developed than in Germany. She compares the possibility of having a family first and then starting a political career with herself who also started at a relatively late age (30 years old) to start in politics. She gives her followers which in this case are mostly women the chance to identify with her, maybe even feel compassionate that it just did not work out to establish a family with children.

In another quote Merkel conveys her values such as being caring and interested in people when she talks about her friends and friendship in general:

Brigitte: "Are you a good friend?"

Merkel: "I used to be a good friend I think. Though nowadays I am not a very attentive friend anymore since I have little time. Friendships need a certain amount of time. But I hope that once, when I am not in politics anymore, I have enough old friendships I can revive. But otherwise I am a good friend."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

and:

Brigitte: "Do you talk about politics with your friends?"

Angela Merkel: "The danger exists, that the whole evening passes with just talking about politics and I do not get to know everything that I am interested in about the others. Regarding the friendships that my husband and I have together we often talk a whole evening without starting with politics. If you start with politics, chances are high that you do not get out of it anymore." (Huber & Lebert, 2005)

and:

Brigitte: "Are you mainly friends with women or men?"

Merkel: "Male friends certainly exist. But when I think about my youth: In my circle of friends were boys - but I talked more with girls. During "Erweiterte Oberschule", what is now called Gymnasium (N.B. high school), I had two girlfriends. And that worked very well - although it is said that: Three are one too many"(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

To share this personal story about her childhood can have the effect that followers can relate to her. Who also experienced this kind of friendship in their school years might feel connected to Merkel due to this similarity. It can provide the follower with the feeling to know something personal about Merkel herself and being able to identify with her. Friendship is an important topic that is often talked about in the Brigitte magazine. Another frequent topic is love. Merkel probably knew that she will be asked about those topics and chose a very wise approach. She lets the followers have a glimpse into her personal life that she has not talked about before in any interview. She talks about love as well as her husband who is a balance in her life:

Merkel: "I am glad to have my husband...in my private life, my husband is a good corrective."

and:

Brigitte: "Then the next word pair fits: Love or marriage?"

Merkel: (Merkel laughs) "It is getting even crazier. I take marriage, although I have to protest against that this is an alternative."

Brigitte: "You neither have to live without breakfast nor without love."

Merkel: "Marriage without love I find quite more tough than dinner without breakfast."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

Even though Merkel often appears to be closed up not wanting to talk about her personal life, now she emphasizes that she married her husband out of love.

Merkel's party, the CDU, has long been known for its conservative and Christian values. There are questions in the interview relating exactly to them and Merkel uses the second question in the interview to portray herself worthy to represent those values. Not as something she acquired or learned, rather something that is natural to her since she grew up with it:

Merkel: "When I was a child, I was often angry that I had to be at the dinner table at 6pm. At this time the church bells were ringing, my father was a pastor, and then we ate. When I started studying in Leipzig, nobody was there to make me have dinner at 6pm. Sometimes I was sad that this habit did not exist anymore. I ate at one time or another, sometimes I did not eat at all. Then I woke up in the middle of the night and was hungry, everything was confused. So I realized eventually that I have to make rules for myself now."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

This answer emphasizes her upbringing with certain standards and values: Having dinner as a family every day at 6pm. Growing up with a father who is a protestant pastor and a mother who took care of the household and children. Through the description of this traditional family model, Merkel emphasizes the conservative and Christian values she represents as the leader of the CDU. She also conveys the information that these values were present from the beginning of her being and are still a part of her everyday life:

Brigitte: "Would you say that you are a religious person?"

Merkel: "Yes. "

Brigitte: "Do you pray regularly? Or is it more an ethic guideline?"

Merkel: "As well as. I am a religious Christian. That also shaped my basic attitude. I think that we people have the task to go towards other people and create something with them. At the same time we are humans that make mistakes. We should not strive for perfection, it is not meant for

us. The Christian belief is also an important support at work. It tells me to not be too full of myself."

Brigitte: "Is there a place for religious values in politics?"

Merkel: "Of course. Belief is not reserved for only a little corner in life or a day during the week."

Brigitte: "You can really live that in your everyday life?"

Merkel: "I try to. My faith is always with me, not only when I am in church."(Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

Merkel mentions values to give the followers information about her identity and personality. She also creates a memory when she lets her followers participate in her first travel out of Germany. She mentions how beautiful the Californian landscape was and shared a personal story of how she had to react to the unfamiliar American custom of being very cheerful on the surface:

Brigitte: "Which was the first country that you visited after the Reunification?"

Merkel: "Very early I went to San Diego because my husband worked there. At that point I was almost unhappy that I could not go to London, Paris or Rome but to go to California first."

Brigitte: "What was your impression back then?"

Merkel: "Wonderful. The landscape and the well very different social interaction. I was delighted. One morning I went to a store and was asked: "How are you?" and I said: "Well..." And then they asked again: "How are you?" and I had to get out of my "Uckermärkische" (region where she comes from) obduracy and press out a cheerful "Great". I was very excited. As chancellor I cannot go on vacation to California, for that reason alone that the time difference is so high. Insofar, this is a very, very beautiful memory."(Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

Simmons states that stories can convey emotion in an effective way. People remember what they feel and stories are memorable because the idea or event is replayed in one's mind which is easier to remember than facts. Stories also engage the listener to participate in the conversation, rather to tell them what to think exactly.(Simmons, 2002) By using these stories from her past, Merkel can create a lasting impression of herself and her values. She engages her followers by providing information from her past that other people can identify with and remember their own stories. By

connecting their own stories to Merkel's stories it could be said that a relationship between Merkel and her followers is established..

One of an often debated issue in politics is the role of men and women. Due to its conservative background, the CDU has always supported the traditional family role model with a married couple where the man works and the woman takes care of the children. Merkel shows that her belief is not static and that she is able to adapt to new challenges when she expresses her opinion that she believes in gender equality:

Brigitte: "We stay in politics for a while: Would you rather talk about women or men?"

Merkel: "About men. I think the people here want to talk about men" (people laugh)

Brigitte: "Do you think it is still easier for men these days?"

Merkel: "Not necessarily. Today we talk more openly about the relation between the two genders. It is not only asked that women change, but also men - and I think that is right. Of course there are men who want to take parental leave and who are asked: "Is your career not important to you?" So also men have to deal with stereotypes. Being a pioneer of something new is not easy for them. Equality will only be achieved if both genders change their role behavior."(Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

She admits that it is difficult for the parents that are affected now due to their pioneer status, but at the same time says that both men and women have to change. At that point only few people in the audience applauded. It could be due to the fact that only few men were present.

In addition to a display of values and opinions, Merkel already creates the impression to be a person down-to-earth, despite her powerful position and popularity. In another quote Merkel uses understatement and seems to mitigate the importance she has for the overall development of equality for women by becoming the first female chancellor of Germany:

Brigitte: "...Mrs. Dr. Merkel, you are the first female candidate for chancellor in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany. That has a high symbolic meaning, especially for women. Is that not sometimes scary?"

Merkel: "For me as a woman it is of course difficult to estimate if the pressure is higher than it is for a man. How can I know if it is an especially high pressure? Certainly there is a special expectation in connection to the fact that I am a woman, but I tend to not always expose myself to this expectation."

Brigitte: "But you are observed more closely as a woman. Do you feel obliged to women?"

Merkel: "Because of the fact that I am observed more closely, I would like to - apart from the political conviction - do it right."

Brigitte: "Do it right for the women?"

Merkel: "Also for men. People should not be able to say: Because she was a woman, she did not do it right. Nevertheless I do not constantly think about how different the situation is now. I would like to be for most part just as I am. There is no super elevation of this period of life."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

By describing her current position as something not extraordinary, Merkel seems to be the complete opposite of the at that time reigning chancellor Gerhard Schröder who was known as a boaster. The humbleness Merkel displays is not common among political leaders in Germany. But it supports Merkel's leadership in a way that it could lead her followers to being able to relate to her more and possibly admiring her for that humbleness, not elevating herself above them.

Merkel uses images that help her followers to picture her not only as a politician but also as a human being. This reduces the gap in between them and can lead to her followers producing more sympathies for her:

Brigitte: "Can you unwind/get away from it all on weekends?"

Merkel: "Very well - if there is nothing depressing in the background."

Brigitte: "Is there a ritual that helps you?"

Merkel: "When I change my clothes into jeans and casual clothes."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

Merkel emphasizes the picture of her being a normal person just like her followers by mentioning ordinary tasks such as grocery shopping:

Merkel: "When I have time and think about it, I realize the expectation, no doubt about it. But when I then do ordinary things such as grocery shopping, I realize that everything is as it was before. The rolls are not bought faster than before."

Brigitte: "Does this normality calm you down?"

Merkel: "Yes, I even look for it. So I stay on the ground."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

Some followers might even be surprised that Merkel is still grocery shopping herself, although she could have people doing those tasks for her. Again Merkel puts herself on the same level as her followers, making it easy for them to develop sympathies for her. The word *normal* in the following passage again conveys the picture of being ordinary and nobody special:

Brigitte: "Do you talk about politics with your family?"

Merkel: "Yes like other normal people do. The biggest challenge is actually that it does not turn into a small hearing: How was this and how was that person etc. And all of a sudden the whole afternoon is over and I was the entertainer which was not my purpose. I also like to hear something about my siblings, my mother, my friends or acquaintances."(Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

People could think that with such an interesting life like Merkel, she would have enough information for talking the entire day. Instead Merkel emphasizes that this is exactly what she does not want, that she prefers more to hear about others than talking about herself. In another quote it becomes obvious that she does not take herself too seriously by using wit and turning her answer into a humorous response:

Brigitte: "Do you sometimes forget that you are chancellor?"

Merkel: "Of course, I mean I am not cooking and thinking: Now the chancellor is cooking. (laughs)"(Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

and:

Brigitte: "Do you sometimes ask your husband Joachim Sauer for advice?"

Merkel: "Yes sometimes I ask him. But sometimes he also says something by himself."(Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

The information above is not surprising or extraordinary. It is however used to give her followers the feeling to *know* her personally. The followers get an insight into her personal emotions and thoughts. Imagining Merkel changing from business dress to Jeans, talking to her family or going grocery shopping, followers will remember these images. Through this Merkel creates lasting pictures in the heads of her audience which the audience connects to certain values. This is much more effective than only telling facts since the stories and pictures will stay. This could make it easier for Merkel to win sympathies as well as giving her followers a chance to identify with her.

Another passage for supporting Merkel's humbleness is the part where she admits to be self-critical:

Brigitte: "Your biographers describe you as somebody who always verifies herself. Do you trust your own critic?"

Merkel: "Not completely. It would be overconfident to only trust yourself, because it also means in reverse to have little trust in others. It is important for the personal development to confront yourself with the other's opinion of you. However, I think I have a good judgment. When others said: "That was good", I often knew myself it was okay, but that it could have been better."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

Instead of simply affirming Brigitte that she is self-critical, Merkel proves this assumption by explaining that she does not trust her own critic one hundred percent. She further states that it would at the same time mean she has little trust in others and highlights the importance to constantly reflect herself. This answer again conveys the values of not only being self-critical but also self-aware and being able to reflect upon herself.

Those values again make her seem a very likeable person as well as justifying her ambition to become chancellor: A politician who is able to self-reflect and who is not full of him/herself, instead also taking the point of view of other people surrounding them into account can be trusted and makes Merkel seem a good choice.

Another quote relating to self-reflection is the answer to a question in regards to her *earlier selves*:

Brigitte: "A thought experiment: Imagine you come into a room where ten Angela Merckels meet, the pupil, the student, the environment minister, and so on. What kind of meeting would that be?"

Angela Merkel: "In any case a very harmonic one."

Brigitte: "What would you talk about with your earlier selves?"

Merkel: "I would verify my memory to see if they comply with the reality from the past. One tends to only remember the good things. Or not, depending on your temper. I myself tend to elevate certain things of my memory and to put others in the background."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

The fact that Merkel would verify if her memory fits the past reality again supports her ability of self-criticism and self-reflection. She admits that sometimes events are elevated in her memory

which might be something other people know from themselves and perceive this as a similarity. In addition it suggests that she does not think of herself that she is always right and knows that what she thinks could also be wrong. Since almost no German politician would ever admit that he or she could be wrong, it is a memorable statement that can make her followers think more highly of her than before.

A theme that runs like a thread through the interviews with Angela Merkel is *authenticity*. Shamir & Eilam (2005) introduce the term *authentic leaders* with the attributes of self-knowledge and self-concept clarity. Follower's trust is based on authenticity, it is therefore one of the prerequisites of leadership. (Shamir & Lapidot, 2003) Merkel is seen as a person who is rather quiet than loud, rather thoughtful than proactive and has a rather sincere than extrovert appearance. Merkel mentions a few times in the interview that silence, thoughtfulness and stillness are part of her and her life:

Brigitte: "Are you good at dealing with silence situations? If it becomes silent at the table, are you the first one that stops the silence?"

Merkel: "When I am satisfied, I deal with it well. However, sometimes I am the one that starts talking and then I get mad about myself later on. Because it is better to sometimes endure the silence. Anyway silence is becoming a curiosity in our society. Because thinking while talking is not so easy, one needs the previous silence to talk wisely." (Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

Knowing that people might mistake her being thoughtful with her hesitating and thinking too long before acting, Merkel explains that it is her way of dealing with life issues and situations. To think before talking and acting so that a wise decision can be made in the end. Here all three concepts, her own self, her identity and the legitimization for leadership are combined.

With another quote Merkel gives insight into her personal self:

Brigitte: "Are you scared of loneliness?"

Merkel: (Merkel smiles.) "No. After the German reunification I had to think about this quote from Václav Havel from time to time: "For a nation that had lived in oppression it is difficult to fully make use of freedom." The whole force of freedom, where you can decide everything self-responsibly, has also the little component of loneliness, that we have talked about before. We associate something sad with loneliness. But it can also have beautiful components, just as

depressing ones. People who cannot be alone, who always need music or somebody around, I rather feel sorry for them."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

The fact that she does not see loneliness as something negative and even enjoys it, could imply that she is at peace with herself, being able to stand herself in moments of loneliness. This fits to the values she has conveyed before. That she does not quarrel with the fact she does not have children, that she uses the small things in live to keep her grounded and that she is authentic and wants to stay this way no matter how powerful or important she will become. The way she presents herself is a soft and quiet, making her seem a thoughtful and authentic person.

Shamir & Eilam (2005) suggest that the events and experiences an authentic leader chooses to tell, reflect the leader's self-concept and allow them to act in their leadership role. With showing that she is able to self-reflect and self-criticize, Merkel proves to have a sound self-concept and possesses self-knowledge.

Another part of Merkel's personality is her trust in others. She does however emphasize that her job required her to change this trusting attitude to be protected from confidential information reaching the public. Through expressing her personal disappointment that her blind confidence was used against her Merkel could also justify her sometimes critiqued manner of evading questions and talking without giving much information:

Brigitte: "Do you become more mistrustful with the time?"

Merkel: "There is the danger of course to constantly check if people are nice to you because you are popular and they hope for advantages - or because they like you as the person you are. You definitely become more attentive to who you tell what. People talk a lot. Earlier I was always very trusting, then I had to experience that certain parts of it were written in the newspaper. That is very unfortunate then. But you learn how to deal with it."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

The choice of a husband or a wife can also reveal the values somebody finds important. When Merkel is asked about the attractiveness of a man, she emphasizes authenticity and silence again. This could also indicate that she is not a shallow and superficial person, rather somebody who finds it more important to have a few deep or wise conversations instead of wasting time talking about profane issues:

Brigitte: "What makes a man attractive for you?"

Merkel: "Mainly I find people attractive who I perceive as authentic. In addition I value people who are also able to be silent."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

It can be assumed that through these quotes Merkel conveys the message that she does not only try to stay authentic and down-to-earth herself, but that she also values this quality in others.

Two other values that Merkel finds important are honesty and straightforwardness. She expresses her disapproval of talking behind other people's back, not complying with those values:

Brigitte: "What disappointed you in the West?"

Merkel: "In the West you can freely author your opinion without going to jail. However, there are many mechanisms that prevent people from saying what they really think. That disappointed me. There is a lot of talk behind your back and many people have a hard time telling others directly what they did not like."

Brigitte: "Your consequence?"

Merkel: "In my work as a politician I try to reward those who bring bad news, who speak their mind. They have to make the experience that this will benefit them."

Brigitte: "Before you talked about the right of allegiance."

Merkel: "Yes in some situations it is not easy to balance those two. But I still try to strengthen those who have the courage to speak their mind without having a certain objective in mind. If this trait would be spread out more, it would foster the whole debate culture in this country. In the face of all these problems in Germany we cannot afford an instrumentalization of debates. Predetermined opinions should not exist. We have to use our brain to solve the problems."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

Merkel proves that this is really what she thinks and who she is by adding the information that in her own job she rewards the people who are sincere and tell her honestly what they think. This again supports her presentation of being an authentic and sincere person. In addition she gives insight into how she is solving problems, in a rational and logical way by using her brain. This is also in line with her quiet and sincere personality which she has portrayed so far. In addition it brings in her qualities of working as a scientist for ten years and justifying her way of decision making as well as matching her personality.

There are certain parts of Angela Merkel that without any further background information could be interpreted as a disadvantage or weakness. She does however possess the ability to turn these aspects into the positive, using parts of her life-story to do so. The following passage gives an example of how Merkel establishes a connection between a feature of her that she knows she is criticized for and her story so her followers can understand why she acts the way she does:

Brigitte: "You once said: While you drew attention to yourself in the East with every tiny little thing, it is the complete opposite in the West - you have to do a lot to attract attention. Did this insight change you?"

Merkel: "I observed that: When I thought I said something explicitly, nobody noticed. In the West the ability to read in between the lines is not as strongly developed as it is in the East. As a result, for a long time people accused me of not knowing what I want. Of course that changed me. I cannot rely on small hints but have to say more distinct where the difference is."

Brigitte: " But as a child you tried more to not draw any attention to you?"

Merkel: "That is not the case, I always attracted attention. That mousy you could not be. In the Uckermark it was enough if you - like me- collected art postcards. Insofar: I could deal with the fact to stand out. It was more that in the beginning I was not noticed at all in the West."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

Merkel explains why she sometimes acts in that critiqued hesitating manner. Although the interviewer did not ask directly, Merkel addresses the critique she was confronted with during the weeks before the interview in 2005 of being indecisive and not knowing what she wants. She does not mention the Communist dictatorship in the East or says drastically that she could never say what she really thinks. However, she makes it clear that she stood out. The GDR is still present in the heads of Germans today. Its history is repeated in several stages of school and it can be assumed that many followers are familiar with what it meant to live in the GDR. Many ordinary people were recruited to spy on their closest relatives. Mistrust and never revealing real information was essential for surviving in this system. By using this argument not in a direct way - Merkel only talks about the fact she stood out, without mentioning her difficult position as the daughter of a pastor or the fear of spies - Merkel can justify her decision making process with the Eastern Culture she grew up in. She turns a weakness into an ability that she acquired to *survive* the system.

Directly saying: *I am not indecisive, I learned this ability to live with the system of the GDR* would not have the same effect. Newspapers could use it in their headlines *Merkel makes GDR responsible for her indecisiveness* and so on. By using a story, Merkel can convey her message and create the desired picture of herself in the minds of her audience/followers.

Another example is the part where she justifies her *weekend relationship* for 17 years with the professor Joachim Sauer without getting married.(Roll, 2009) This was the opposite from the traditional family model of her party, the CDU. Merkel uses the interview to present herself in a way that removes doubts that she is the right one to represent the CDU. She anticipates her critics that could use this fact against her and emphasizes that she did this as a kind sacrifice in order to stay authentic and independent:

Brigitte: "Are we allowed to ask then why it took so long to marry with your second husband, eight years.?"

Merkel: "Under no circumstances, I wanted to make it too easy for me. I did not want others to say: She marries because she is in the CDU and cannot become the women's minister otherwise. If I would have not gone into politics, I would have married a couple years earlier. When we then got into the opposition nobody was able to say that I married for my career."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

Merkel does not only mention the Christian values, she proves that they are a part of her. The *not-so-Christian* time when she was not married, she justifies by saying that she did it to stay authentic and not do certain things just because people expect it from her.

Shamir et al. state that traits or behavior that cannot be observed directly, can be authored through an example of *sacrifice* in the life-story.(Shamir et al., 2005) There are several sacrifices Merkel mentions.

First the sacrifice of family:

Brigitte: "Is there enough time for your family despite all your duties?"

Merkel: "I can take my time, also for my mother or my siblings. But it is difficult to plan. That is why I never say very much time ahead that I will come by for a visit, because I know my mum is looking forward to it."

Brigitte: "If you are on a family celebration on Sunday, do you answer your phone?"

Merkel: "Yes. Some things I can postpone, but if it is something important of course I have to be available. Sometimes not much happens two or three days but then exactly the minute I go through my mother's door, it starts."(Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

Second, the sacrifice of friendship:

Brigitte: "Are you a good friend?"

Merkel: "I used to be a good friend I think. Though nowadays I am not a very attentive friend anymore since I have little time. Friendships need a certain amount of time. But I hope that once, when I am not in politics anymore, I have enough old friendships I can revive. But otherwise I am a good friend.(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

Third, the sacrifice of her relationship:

Brigitte: "When do you eat with your husband?"

Merkel: "During the week almost never, only during vacation. On Saturdays we almost always eat together. Sundays, sometimes."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

Fourth, the sacrifice of regular nutrition (health):

Brigitte: "What was your best dinner in the past?"

Angela Merkel: "Nowadays I usually very late. For me dinner become more of an evening closure - or work closure."

Brigitte: "That means when?"

Merkel: "Right now during election campaigns: not before ten. Very unhealthy, I know, it would probably be better I would eat a little snack at six o'clock. Or a pretzel like I did at the legendary breakfast with Mister Stoiber."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

Fifth, the sacrifice of sleep (health):

Brigitte: "The next pair - daily routine or emergency situation - what would you like to talk about?"

Merkel: "Daily routine, sometimes it is identical."

Brigitte: "Because your daily routine is a constant emergency situation?"

Merkel: "In my position you have to always expect the unforeseen, sometimes even terrible, that soldiers die or people are kidnapped."

Brigitte: "Is it true that 4-5 hours sleep are enough for you?"

Merkel: "No. Sometimes I can do with just a few hours of sleep. I have camel qualities. Meaning I can fill up and save. But on average I need more than 4-5 hours of sleep."(Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

At the time of the above quotation, Merkel has been in politics for over 30 years, six of them being Germany's first female chancellor. Mentioning that she gives away valuable time that is missing then for her family, for her friendships, her own health (eating late and irregular or sleeping few hours) justifies that she holds her powerful position. At the same time confirming and legitimizing her leadership for the past, present and the future.

After explaining how stressful her life can be, she mentions the fact that she had a quiet and calm time in her childhood:

Brigitte: "Were people able to manage silence better in the past"

Merkel: "I think yes. It used to be more quiet. However, I am from the countryside and I am very convinced that I can draw a lot of power from this, that I was able to sleep well as a child and that it was quiet. Nowadays I sometimes miss the silence." (Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

She gives her audience the possibility to understand where she can take all the power that she needs to meet the challenges of her job. Being able to handle those daily emergency situations, dealing with restrictions when it comes to recover times, healthy eating habits and time for her family and friends, supports her leadership. The overall impression that she is in control and has the capabilities and abilities needed to lead Germany, especially in times of crisis. Merkel gives the impression that even if everything around her is chaotic and breaking into pieces, she has the ability to stay calm and manage the situation in a wise, thoughtful and effective manner. Especially in the time after the Euro Crisis, the new problems with other financially weak states of the European Union (EU), and the acute situation regarding the refugee issue, Germans wish for a chancellor whom they can trust and who has enough power and strength to face the future.

In order for Merkel to establish a self-concept from which she can lead, the *coherence* of her life-story plays an important role.

According to Line individuals need a coherent, acceptable and constantly revised life-story in order to exist in a social world with "*a comfortable sense of being a good, socially proper and stable person*"(Linde, 1993).

In the interview 2005 Merkel creates a *coherent* story by placing certain events in an order that supports the current version she depicts of herself. Merkel describes her childhood. She mentions certain rituals such as having dinner every day at 6pm and being the daughter of a protestant pastor in the GDR.(Huber & Lebert, 2005) She describes herself as a young girl growing up in Communist East Germany in the countryside. With parents who raised her in the traditional family roles according to Christian values. Her mother taking care of household and children and her father, the protestant pastor, working to provide for the family. She went to high school having a group of friends with two best girlfriends. Merkel points out that for her the phase when puberty ended, growing from a girl to a woman was a key moment in life. She also mentions her difficulties in the beginning of twenties when she moved away from home to a new city for her studies.

Merkel: "When I started studying in Leipzig, nobody was there to make me have dinner at 6pm. Sometimes I was sad that this habit did not exist anymore. I ate at one time or another, sometimes I did not eat at all. Then I woke up in the middle of the night and was hungry, everything was confused. So I realized eventually that I have to make rules for myself now."

Brigitte: "Away from the family was therefore a big change?"

Merkel: "I think that we change the most until we are twenty years old. The clash between the physician and the politician for example was only related to my work, not to me as a person. The biggest clash happens in the phase between childhood and the end of puberty, where one becomes a woman."

Brigitte: "You gain freedom."

Merkel: "Yes, but you are also on your own and you have to acknowledge that you now have the freedom but the frame of routine is gone. You have to newly find out what you want. As a child for example I always had the feeling that I do not get enough apple juice - apple- and cherry juice was scarce. As a student I had little money but enough to buy a lot of apple juice, but suddenly that need was not so urgent anymore."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

This part of Merkel's story provides several hints and information for the followers. Merkel describes her own struggle from being a child to becoming a woman. It can be assumed that her followers, most likely women due to the magazine can relate to this issue. She hints back to her childhood with scarce resources due to the living conditions in the GDR and controlled economy.

Followers who have also lived in the GDR can relate to this scarcity and again feel as if there is something connecting them with Merkel.

In addition Merkel mentions her change of profession. In the past people have questioned why this sudden change happened since Merkel was not involved in politics before. As Linde (1993) indicates, the narratives that form a life-story are usually provided in a chain of causality. When the speaker or addressee perceives the causality or ordering of events as problematic, this form of discontinuity must be managed. An explanation has to be given. (Linde, 1993) To create coherence Merkel uses humor and portrays her shift from being a physician to a politician being just a small change, not of her but of profession:

Brigitte: "Do you like silence better?"

Merkel: "That is not what I said. You asked me what I want to talk about and I said silence. I mean I could not be a politician if I principally liked silence better than speech (laughs). In my former position as a physician I had a lot of room for silence. When the German reunification took place, I decided then that I would like to talk a bit more." (Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

When Merkel is asked to participate in a thought experiment, she makes clear that her life-story is coherent in the way that all her earlier selves seem to be in line with her who she is now:

Brigitte: "A thought experiment: Imagine you come into a room where ten Angela Merckels' meet, the pupil, the student, the environment minister and so on. What kind of meeting would that be?"

Merkel: "In any case a very harmonic one." (Huber & Lebert, 2005)

With this statement Merkel emphasizes the fact that all the pieces and parts of her life-story with the different selves that she was at that time, fit together to one coherent story. Her selves differ according to certain stages of her life but in the end, they all lead to her present self. To admit that she tends to remember the good things and puts other situations in the background contributes to her image as being optimistic. At the same time this statement can excuse the fact that Merkel did not struggle as much in the GDR as others did and that her memories she talks about are neutral or even positive. The last question of the 2005 interview is:

Brigitte: "Then we pretend you are still a politician in five years. Which of your qualities do you not want to lose?"

Merkel: "The optimistic view on this world, this I do not want to lose in any case." (Huber & Lebert, 2005)

This undermines her optimism and the fact that Merkel has kept this trait over all the years, even though she had to face difficult situations in life and struggles, giving her story a positive ending. This could also lead her followers to leave the reading of the interview with a positive feeling that stays like a positive memory of Merkel and the interview.

During the interviews Merkel brings together her qualities and traits with events that form her life-story. In the end she was able to draw a sound picture. Merkel also took phases in her life which did not seem to fit in such as her sudden shift from physician to politician or her seventeen year long relationship with her present husband without being married. She explains it to her followers in a way that it seemed a natural and not disruption of the leadership development. Her questioned way of making decisions she supports with her analytical mind of the physician, tackling problems in a rational way, thinking everything through to find the best solution to the problem. To create a coherent life-story can be seen as a base and requirement for the establishment of follower's trust which in turn is needed to get the *permission* to lead, the legitimization of her leadership.

4.2 Part II - Life story themes

Shamir et al. suggest that people must perceive themselves as leaders in order to have the ability to lead others. They developed four stories that describe the development of a leader: As a natural process, out of struggle, as finding a cause or as learning from experience. In their study they discovered that the leaders with an established self-concept had a coherent life-story to tell, which could then be described like the four developments mentioned above. What supports their view is the observation that the leaders who could not tell a coherent life-story (and identify with one of the above mentioned concepts) stayed external to their self-concept, meaning that even though they held a leadership position, they did not feel legitimized and capable to lead.

From the findings in the previous section (4.1) it can be assumed that Merkel is able to use her life-story to establish a sound self-concept from which she can lead. Finding a theme for her life-story can be seen as to create a heading for it under which her background, her ambitions, values and beliefs as well as her self-concept fit under.

Based on the proposition by Shamir et al., the following section deals with the question:

"Based on the established self-concept, which life-story theme emerges from the leader's narrative?"

From the above mentioned development stories, there is not one that fits completely to Merkel. The motivation to lead did not happen out of struggle or as a learning from experience. One story that could be connected to Merkel is the leadership as finding a cause where Merkel could have developed an identification with the democratic movement since she also joined the first democratic party of the GDR called the *Democratic Awakening (DA)* which later merged with the CDU from the West.(Roll, 2009)

Another development that seems to have a stronger relevance to her is the leadership development as a natural process. When she explains her life-story now, it seems as if her leadership and her current position are not extraordinary but happened along the way. The values her party presents were present to her from early childhood through her upbringing in a protestant household, with a traditional family model. She could be seen as a *late bloomer* who is described by Shamir et al. as a person who discovers his/her talents and tendencies when the opportunity presents itself. When Merkel joined the DA after the reunification, her biographers describe this decision saying that Merkel went to the office of the DA to offer her help with the computers. Due to her structured and efficient way of working she was soon chosen to receive more important positions.(Roll, 2009) By coincidence she then had the chance to step in for the speaker at a press conference when some members of the DA were exposed as spies.(Roll, 2009) In this emergency situation she was able to stay calm and perform a good crisis management and this is where her career starts. This part of her story already reveals her capability to deal with emergency situations and stay calm in times of crisis.

But Merkel's past in Eastern Germany involves a danger. Her biography reveals leadership starting at an early age. For example being the district board representative of a youth movement in East Germany.(Roll, 2009) But Merkel distances herself from it and describes herself more as a late bloomer. She explains that she has set foot into politics at a relatively late stage in life (when she was 30 years old). She does not mention her earlier ambitions to take leadership in the East. This avoidance could be due to the fact that it would be risky to mention her connection to any part of the communist regime. Even if she only took part in the youth movement to stay undetected and not draw attention to her (how she explains it once) this could potentially harm her reputation. People could then accuse her of having collaborated with the party of the East called SED which would be political suicide.

There is one aspect that seems to run like a thread through Angela Merkel's life-story not mentioned in either of the development stories by Shamir et al. With background knowledge it becomes clear that the chance somebody like Merkel becomes chancellor is extremely slight. Why? Because in German politics the only powerful politicians who are from the former East are members of the extreme left wing party *Die Linke*. It seems almost as a mocking that Merkel with her background is now the most powerful person in the CDU, which used to stand for the conservative class in Germany. Other successful politicians in the CDU can usually show a family connection to this party for decades. Merkel is not only different from the usual type of chancellor being charismatic or ruling the party almost like a dictator as her predecessor Helmut Kohl did. She also does not have a background that would support this kind of career. George Packer once called Merkel a *triple anomaly*: a woman (divorced, no children), a scientist (quantum chemistry) and an *Ossi* (as people from East Germany are called). Those before mentioned characteristics make Merkel an outsider in German politics, some even say that "*a woman from East Germany, who doesn't have the typical qualities...shouldn't be in this position*" (Packer, 2014).

Among other politicians Merkel was often smiled upon by older and more powerful politicians (all men) since they saw in her a social climber, not granting her the right to lead. She was not one of them and they did not take her seriously. Many of the politicians who did not believe that she would get far lost their position and power in the end because they underestimated her. When these men are asked about her today, they still seem to struggle with their defeat.(Packer, 2014) First, it could be the fact that they lost a battle to a women and second, that this woman is regarded by them as a social climber, who in their opinion does not have a place in German politics at that level.

Analyzing Merkel's life-story and looking more closely at a theme of her leadership development also reveals a contradiction. As mentioned above her development to become a leader could seem as a natural process. Her time being a physician could be explained as the *waiting time* and a safe place to await the end of the SED regime. Once the regime is gone, she could have described her ambitions to have a career in politics.

Instead, she does the opposite. She refuses until today to talk about her past openly except for very rare occasions. She reacts upset when journalists try to get information from her about this

particular topic. She presents herself as an outsider, uses understatement and tries to mitigate the parts of her life that seem problematic to her. For example her youth when she describes it as something not really extraordinary, not mentioning the influence the SED regime had on her and her family. The huge break from being a physician to start a career in politics she neutralizes by displaying that choice as something that just happened:

Brigitte: Mrs. Merkel, you have the choice - Speech or Silence?

Merkel: Then I choose silence.

Brigitte: Do you like silence better?

Merkel: That is not what I said. You asked me what I want to talk about and I said silence. I mean I could not be a politician if I principally liked silence better than speech (laughs). In my former position as a physician I had a lot of room for silence. When the German reunification took place, I decided then that I would like to talk a bit more. (Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

Her goal seems to stay unreachable for her critics by carefully creating a story that supports her current position and does not endanger it. The theme of her leadership development of an outsider supports this story more than the development of a natural born leader would do.

Although there are two themes that could be applied to her development, depending on the way her life-story is looked at, there is no doubt that Merkel found a way to establish a self-concept for herself and make her story and her overall theme to be aligned with her purpose. Even though she has been critiqued from time to time for her leadership style or her past that does not fit to her current position, she managed to weaken all these accusations to a point where her critics lost support and stood alone in the end.

Portraying herself as an outsider has thus given her the possibility to connect to her followers on a level that former politicians could not. This leadership development theme could thus be seen as one of her greatest advantages.

4.3 Part III - Narration setting

The two interviews take place in different locations. The interview in 2005 is a meeting with her and the two interviewers from Brigitte. The other interview 2013 takes place with the Brigitte interviewers on a stage with 400 people sitting in the audience. After the interviews journalists

expressed surprise and wrote articles such as *Merkel auf Kuschelkurs* (Götsch, 2005) or *Merkel menschelt* (Vates, 2013). *Kuschelkurs* can be translated with *soft line approach* or literally *cuddle course*. *Menschelt* means to *show ones human side*. These reactions are due to the fact that Merkel usually evades personal questions and does not answer them. In another interview with the "Spiegel" magazine in 2013 for example, she does not release one personal detail about herself, instead only talks about politics and evades personal questions by not answering the question directly. She was for example asked if she or the Chinese Prime Minister has a bigger say at home. She answers that they talk about topics relevant for the countries such as the Euro or the situation in the Southern Chinese Sea. (Spiegel, 2013) This is a typical answer by Merkel. She answers the question but at the same time she does not. Neutralizing seems to be her specialty. It can be assumed that Merkel decides when she says what according to her needs and to the purpose. The two interviews in 2005 and 2013 were both conducted during the spring before elections in the following autumn. To display parts of her personality, her beliefs and values could be a means to win over her followers and to establish a connection to them. This can be seen as Merkel's decision to narrate part of her life-story in an interview for the purpose of follower's acceptance and increasing her chances to be elected.

Since the two interview in the women's magazine *Brigitte* have a similar structure as well as similar questions, an analysis could give an answer to the question:

"Is the narration of the life-story fixed or does it change according to purpose and/or setting?"

The milestones in Angela Merkel's life such as her childhood, her moving away from the family to study or her change from being a physician to a politician are mentioned and explained again in a similar way. There are however differences. The first interview in 2005 was carried out by two interviewers and later printed in the magazine. The second interview in 2013 took place in a theatre in Berlin with a big audience.

In 2013 Merkel uses humor in almost every question to sympathize with the audience. After the first couple minutes she has already gotten the audience to laugh. The interview in 2005 she answered more seriously. This can be due to the fact that in a live interview Merkel has to be much more reactive to the situation than in a normal interview where there is more time to think about an answer. In addition her humor makes her seem a very open minded and friendly person in the live interview, without having to display too much information.. If she would have used her

humorous behavior in the later printed interview, she could have come across as not taking it seriously. Further, Merkel uses her humor to evade questions she does not want to answer:

Brigitte: "Do you like silence better?"

Merkel: " That is not what I said. You asked me what I want to talk about and I said silence. I mean I could not be a politician if I principally liked silence better than speech (laughs). In my former position as a physician I had a lot of room for silence. When the German reunification took place, I decided then that I would like to talk a bit more."(Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

Merkel uses this question about silence to turn her often questioned change from physician to politician into ridicule. Taking away the target for the following questions:

Brigitte: "The next pair - daily routine or emergency situation - what would you like to talk about?"

Merkel: "Daily routine, sometimes it is identical."(Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

With this witty comment Merkel provides insight into her stressful life as a politician without seeming to brag about it or obviously mentioning it. The same she does with her next comment of having *camel qualities* in regards to sleep:

Brigitte: "Is it true that 4-5 hours sleep are enough for you?"

Merkel: "No. Sometimes I can do with just a few hours of sleep. I have camel qualities. Meaning I can fill up and save. But on average I need more than 4-5 hours of sleep."(Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

A question where Merkel's answer differs from 2005 to 2013 relates to the attractiveness of a man. In 2005 she answered seriously and talked about authenticity:

Brigitte: "What makes a man attractive for you?"

Merkel: "I value people who are also able to be silent. Besides it is probably the case that opposites attract. I think it is an enrichment when the same topic is evaluated completely different from your partner."(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

In 2013 she answers the same question in a way that is witty and at the same time gives Merkel the opportunity to not having to answer this question directly:

Brigitte: "What makes a man attractive for you?"

Merkel: (pauses) "Beautiful eyes.."

Brigitte: "And?"

Merkel: "That was a lot already. " (people laugh)

In the 2005 interview, Merkel describes her husband as a good corrective in her private life and elaborated on how they make decisions together. In 2013 she again uses a witty answer to win over the audience:

Brigitte: "Do you sometimes ask your husband Joachim Sauer for advice?"

Merkel: "Yes sometimes I ask him. But sometimes he also says something by himself."(Huber & Dinklage, 2013)

In the interview 2005 there was a point in the interview where Merkel tries to lead the interviewers to ask her a specific question about something she probably wanted to elaborate on. This behavior could suggest that she actively tries to influence the information she can author. She does so in a way that seems subtle. Namely answering the question and adding a short anecdote. It can be assumed that she expected the interviewers to ask her for elaboration on this comment:

Brigitte: "That (dinner) is when?"

Merkel: "Right now during election campaigns: not before ten. Very unhealthy, I know, it would probably be better I would eat a little snack at six o'clock. Or a Pretzel like I did at the legendary breakfast with Mr. Stoiber".(Huber & Lebert, 2005)

To mention the minister Edmund Stoiber is a hint related to a situation 4 years ago. Back then she wants to run for the CDU candidacy but after a couple of weeks realizes she might lose to Stoiber. She then decides over night that she would take back her candidacy in favor for Stoiber. In order for him to have a higher chance to win with a greater support within the party. Stoiber eventually lost in the election 2001 and now 4 years later she is the unquestioned candidate. Brigitte does not react to this proposal and goes on with the next question.

By looking at the two interviews it can be assumed that Merkel attempts to play an active role in the interaction between leader and follower. And to add a certain part of her life-story that could possibly give her the opportunity to provide information to the followers which she was not able to present yet.

As mentioned above Merkel is known for not revealing much of her private life in normal interviews.(Roll, 2009) In the *Brigitte* interviews however, she talks very openly about her private life, her husband, family or friends. The storytelling of Merkel can be seen as adaptive to the respective environment. This supports the assumption that a leader can take an active role in presenting and narrating the life-story. By choosing certain parts of the life-story and leaving out others and by adjusting the narrative to the context and the setting.

As described by Linde (1993) the life-story is discontinuous in the way that it is told in separate pieces over a long period of time. This long-term attribute makes it subject to revision and changes when the speaker exchanges old meanings with new ones or adds events and parts to the life-story.

Watching Merkel narrate her life-story to the same magazine about similar topics in such different ways could support the hypothesis that the narration of a life-story is not fixed but subject to change according to the environment, purpose or change of meanings. However, the difference in responding to the questions does not necessarily mean Merkel's story is not correct or authentic. Rather, it shows the leader's ability revise the life-story by either leaving things out or adding them or giving them a different tone respective to the desired effect. It hands an active role to the leader in regards to the establishment of a life-story that can support the leadership.

5. Discussion

The analysis above underlined the importance of the life-story for a leader, in this case Merkel. In the case of Merkel many people ask themselves how she managed to get this far. Others, when thinking about it, do not really know much about her or who she really is. Even more confusing is the fact that she is one of the most powerful women in this world (Topping, 2013), yet so unspectacular in a way. While her predecessor Helmut Kohl was a dictator and at times charming, and her opponent in 2005 Gerhard Schröder was very charismatic, Merkel is called *The Quiet One*.(Packer, 2014)

In contrast to charismatic leaders, Merkel neither conveys the image of having superior abilities, nor does she seem to be very persuasive. There is one example where she was directly facing a charismatic leader. In the debate 2005 with her opponent Gerhard Schröder (chancellor at that time). While Schröder argued with big gestures, trying to win over the audience with his charm, insulting Merkel and making fun of her, Merkel did not do much. Except for mentioning a few

facts in a neutral voice and being silent the rest of the time. In the beginning she looked insecure but the more Schröder insulted her and argued with his big gestures, showing how full he was of himself, the more her facial expression relaxed. It was as if she realized that moment that Schröder is manoeuvring himself out of the game. In the end of the elections Merkel defeated by far and became chancellor.

Merkel is different than charismatic leaders, rather convincing through facts than by effective use of body or verbal language. While charismatic leaders try to create follower's trust by taking personal risks and showing the sacrifices they make, Merkel uses a different approach. She uses authenticity to generate follower's trust, giving her followers the feeling that they know her and therefore decide to vote for her, instead of persuading them. There is however one characteristic of charismatic leadership, even a very narcissistic one, that could be connected to Merkel: The intolerance of challengers, thus creating an irreplaceability, with no serious successor when she leaves the political scene. In Merkel's case it seems as if the members of her party have already resigned. As the polls show, 57% of Germans would directly elect Angela Merkel. The opponent in her party who could challenge her running for candidate in 2017, Sigmar Gabriel, would get 14% of the votes. Angela Merkel's party would receive 42% of the votes.(dpa, 2015) These numbers show that her popularity reaches further than just to the followers of her own party. Right now there is not one person in her party that has a chance to win against her if she decides to run for chancellor one more time.

Merkel also does not fit into the characteristics of transformational leadership, where people follow a leader who inspires them with their vision and passion. In addition transformational leaders convey the enthusiasm and energy to achieve certain goals. Vision, passion, enthusiasm and energy are all attributes that are not associated with Merkel. She has rather been critiqued in the past to lack exactly those characteristics.

Merkel's image of being a social climber does not affect in her a negative way. Instead she seems to use it for her own advantage and surprises her opponents with an unconventional way of presenting herself. Her strength lies in the ability to take up the positions of different groups and politicians, even the opposition. In the analysis above her ability to self-criticize was mentioned, as well as her being able to self-reflect. These characteristics make it possible for her to reign according to her political belief, not bound by her party's limits. One example is the rejection of nuclear energy after the nuclear accident in Fukushima. Merkel decided from one day to the other

that nuclear energy has to be put to an end in Germany, although her position before that accident was the opposite. When critics said that she is not consistent as a politician she responded that she did not want her personal belief being of harm for the people in Germany, making it clear that it is not about her, her party or her beliefs but about Germany itself.(Kornelius, 2013)

This is one example that leads to the consideration of connecting Merkel's leadership to the theory of servant leadership. A servant leader has the capability to transform an organization. In Merkel's case the organization could for example stand for her own party, which she has transformed in a way that some old leaders of the CDU say that they do not recognize it anymore.(Kornelius, 2013) Indeed Merkel took away topics from her opponent parties like environment protection and the departure from nuclear energy from *The Green Party*. She took the minimum wage and other programs increasing social justice from the *SPD* (the former powerful opponent). The list goes on and the reason why she does it is obvious. It secures her the votes she needs. Just like a servant leader, she displays herself as a person that has the desire to serve others, to do what is best for the country and its people. She leads in a pragmatic and democratic way, often using discussion and consensus to reach agreements and decisions. People who work with her say that she does not behave like a typical leader, telling them what to do. She rather manages to give people the impression to have participated in the decision. There is another attribute of servant leaders that could be connected to her. The fact that they act on what they believe which is exactly what Merkel is doing. When it comes to the characteristic of thinking about the next generation, it seems as if Merkel is doing the best she can to enable the coming generations to live the same comfortable life as Germans do today.

6. Conclusion

Through the analysis of Angela Merkel's life-story it can be suggested that the importance the narrative of the life-story possesses is underestimated. This story can be the solution to many problems leaders face today. The fast-paced world, increasing use of social media as well as increasing interest in the person behind the politician. They can all be encountered by the leader creating a life-story that serves his or her purpose. Leaders can take an active role in creating a memorable image of themselves in the heads of their followers. They can exchange the meaning of their stories as well as the display of certain events in order to align them to towards their purpose.

In stories, emotions are remembered by far better than facts. This does imply that the narration of the story has to be done in a way that is authentic in order to work for the leader and not against him/her.

In the first part of the analysis it is found out that Merkel uses her life-story in a very wise and thoughtful way. She conveys her values by creating images and a connection to her follower's. The stories she creates justify her position of being the leader of the CDU, proving that she has held those values from the beginning of her life by giving insight into her childhood. Other stories regarding her free time as well as stories from her childhood emphasize values such as being caring and family orientated. The life-story describes her as a woman with the capability of solving problems in a rational and logical way using her scientist past to underline this strength. She presents herself further as caring for her friends and family.

Throughout the interviews Merkel uses understatement to present herself as an ordinary woman that every normal person can relate to. She uses stories of her daily life to create a memorable experience in the head of her followers, for example going grocery shopping, changing into casual clothes after work or cooking. These stories prove rather than tell her values such as humbleness, rational thinking, being down-to-earth or self-reflective. In addition Merkel gives an insight into very private emotions, for example that she enjoys silence and is not afraid of loneliness. The life-story gives Merkel the chance to convey characteristics of her personality such as trusting, authentic, quiet and thoughtful, straightforward or self-critical through the narrative, which is more effective and believable than saying *"I am this or that"*.

Moreover, Merkel indirectly describes sacrifices that she makes for her position. These are for example not enough sleep, not enough time for her family, a stressful daily life, not enough time for friendships, her health or even events in her personal life such as waiting eight years to marry her husband so nobody could say she did it for her career. Because those sacrifices are not mentioned directly, rather conveyed through stories, Merkel is able to justify herself as the right person for this job.

One of Merkel's biggest advantage is the trust followers have in her. As the trust is based on the authenticity of her leadership and herself, Merkel creates stories to establish her self-concept, to justify her decisions and to present herself as somebody with the right to present this group. The entire time she uses the story to prove that she is authentic, that her decisions are in line with her beliefs. At the same time she mentions certain aspects that she has been critiqued for

and gives her followers an opportunity to make their own decision if the critics were right or if Merkel acted the way she did because she simply did not want to play a role that she is not. For example changing her opinion on nuclear energy from one day to the other.

Merkel tells her life-story in a way so that it seems coherent. Events that seem to not fit into her story she manages to explain in a way that they seem plausible and support the overall coherence. An example is her sudden shift from being a physician to becoming a politician which she is able to depict as something completely normal. Or the fact that she used to work for the communist party in East Germany and switched to the CDU in the transition phase of the German Reunification. Merkel picks up on aspects that she has been criticized for in the past and fits them into her life-story so they can support her leadership. The coherence she does not create by explicitly convincing the audience to believe something, she *shows* the people listening to her by creating pictures and stories in their mind which convey her message.

Another example in regards to creating coherence is the question what kind of meeting she would have with all her earlier selves, the pupil, the student, the physician etc. and Merkel answers that it would be a very harmonic meeting. This statement fits to the overall impression that one could get from this interview, namely that she possesses all the values and strengths needed to become Germany's chancellor. The fact that Merkel tries to establish a connection to her followers could also imply to remember the fact that every follower has a life-story. And that creating connections to the life-stories of others can be an important means to influence the followers, convey memorable information and create follower's trust.

Coherence is used by Merkel to align all life-events together to form the one story that can support her leadership.

To sum up: Merkel uses the fact that people remember what they feel and that people remember stories easier than facts. Through her disclosure of private information she gives her followers the opportunity to relate to her and to establish a connection and a relationship due to similar experiences or thoughts. At the time of the Brigitte interview in 2005 people, that were not connected to politics in a way that they kept themselves up to date on a regular basis, did simply not know who Angela Merkel was. The Brigitte interview in 2005 is the first time that Merkel reveals personal aspects of herself. It can be assumed that this could have been a means to reduce the distance in between her and the people who might vote for her. Since Merkel is generally known for not being a friend of exposing information about her personal life, this

emphasizes the importance the storytelling had for her at that point. The Brigitte magazine was her platform and her life-story the means that she used to get in contact with her followers.

The second part of the analysis describes the theme of Merkel's leadership development. A study by Shamir et al. from 2005 shows the importance of the life-story for the leader by comparing leaders with coherent stories who felt comfortable being leaders and leaders without a coherent stories who doubted their own leadership.

From Shamir et al.'s suggestion of development themes, the natural process or finding a cause can be connected to Merkel. While finding a cause seems to fit to her youth when she had certain leadership positions in SED youth groups in school or university, Merkel avoids to mention her early ambitions and from her narration of the life-story there is no connection to this development at all. It can be assumed that Merkel fears a connection to the SED regime. Although her life-story and her past seem to be a strength of her to justifying her position. Her past could also become the opposite and lead to her downfall if there is ever a connection to the old regime that can be proven. It seems understandable that Merkel depicts her development more as the one of a *late bloomer* who discovered the political ambition when the opportunity represented itself. In her case this was the the German reunification in 1989.

The natural process of the *late bloomer* does however miss an important aspect in regards to Merkel. She is an outsider, some people even regard her a social climber. She is a divorced woman without children, a female scientist in quantum chemistry and a woman from the East and described as a *triple anomaly* by Packer in an article for the Spiegel magazine. The leadership development of an outsider seems to be a possible heading for Merkel's life-story, taking into account the before mentioned *outsider characteristics*. The results of the analysis suggest that Merkel used and is still using this outsider position as an advantage in order for other people to underestimate her. Many opponents (all men) who laughed upon her in the beginning and did not take her seriously, are politically dead now.

Also with the help of her life-story Merkel turns a disadvantage into one of her strongest characteristics that enable her to fill out the powerful position she has. Through her constant understatement she seems to be authentic and humble, which differentiates her from the majority of politicians. Together with her authenticity, it explains why she is as well respected in Germany and world-wide as she is.

The third part of the analysis dealt with the question if the narration of the life-story is fixed or if it is changed according to purpose or setting. On the one hand there are certain milestone events such as her childhood, moving away from home, becoming a politician that are mentioned in both interviews. Coherence is also created in a similar way by explaining and adding information to the parts of life that seem to not really fit, again for example the shift from physician to politician.

There are however differences between the interviews that could be connected to the different setting. It seems as if the interview in 2005, that is carried out by only the two interviewers and Merkel, has a more serious tone to it. Merkel reveals private information and elaborates on private topics such as her husband, love or personal thoughts and hopes. As well as her relationship to friends and family.

In 2013 the tone of the interview is very humorous and lively. The interview takes place on a stage with around 400 people in the audience. Merkel uses her wit to decide which questions she wants to answer and which information she does not want to reveal. It seems plausible that Merkel used her humor to create a connection to the audience and win sympathies. Another reason for the change of tone and content could be that Merkel has to be much more careful and reactive on stage, since there is no time to smooth out mistakes. Tricky questions she therefore evades successfully by turning them into ridicule. In the printed interview this humorous attitude could have been misplaced since people could have accused her of not taking the interview seriously.

In another part Merkel adds a name of a politician she once defeated in a way that it would have been obvious for the interviewer to ask her to elaborate on this comment. This could be seen as an active behavior of Merkel to add information she wanted to reveal and did not have the chance to before. The fact that Merkel adjusted her way of answering and revealing information does not necessarily mean that only one of the two life-stories is correct or authentic. It rather shows that the leader has the ability to take an active role in the telling of his/her story.

To sum up: Angela Merkel is able to create lasting impressions of herself and her values by folding them into stories of her life. These stories engage her followers by providing information from the past that they can identify with and remember in relation to their own stories. Through this connection of stories a relationship between Merkel and her followers can be established. Since stories and the emotions they trigger are remembered by far better than pure facts, Merkel

uses her life-story to create a picture of herself that she wants her followers to have of her. Through the life-story she creates a lasting connection to her followers.

In addition, the stories give her a means to explain seeming obstacles or justify herself. Authenticity seems to be one of her greatest strength and Merkel is doing an excellent job because there are not many politicians who are viewed to be as authentic and widely accepted as her.

7. Recommendations

The analysis highlights the active role a leader can play by narrating his or her life-story. Additional research could investigate how the life-story can help leaders to face the challenges of today's fact paced world with its manifold communication channels. Creating memorable experiences through the narration of the life-story could be one of them. Leaders could then be seen not as static but as dynamic meaning creators, communicators, storytellers and managers of their own *brand*. This active role of the leader might also have the consequence of leaders *misusing* their power to create their stories for a certain purpose. It might be the case that the enormous potential the life-story can possess has not fully been realized. Further research into this topic could generate more knowledge in this field and contribute to a wider application.

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