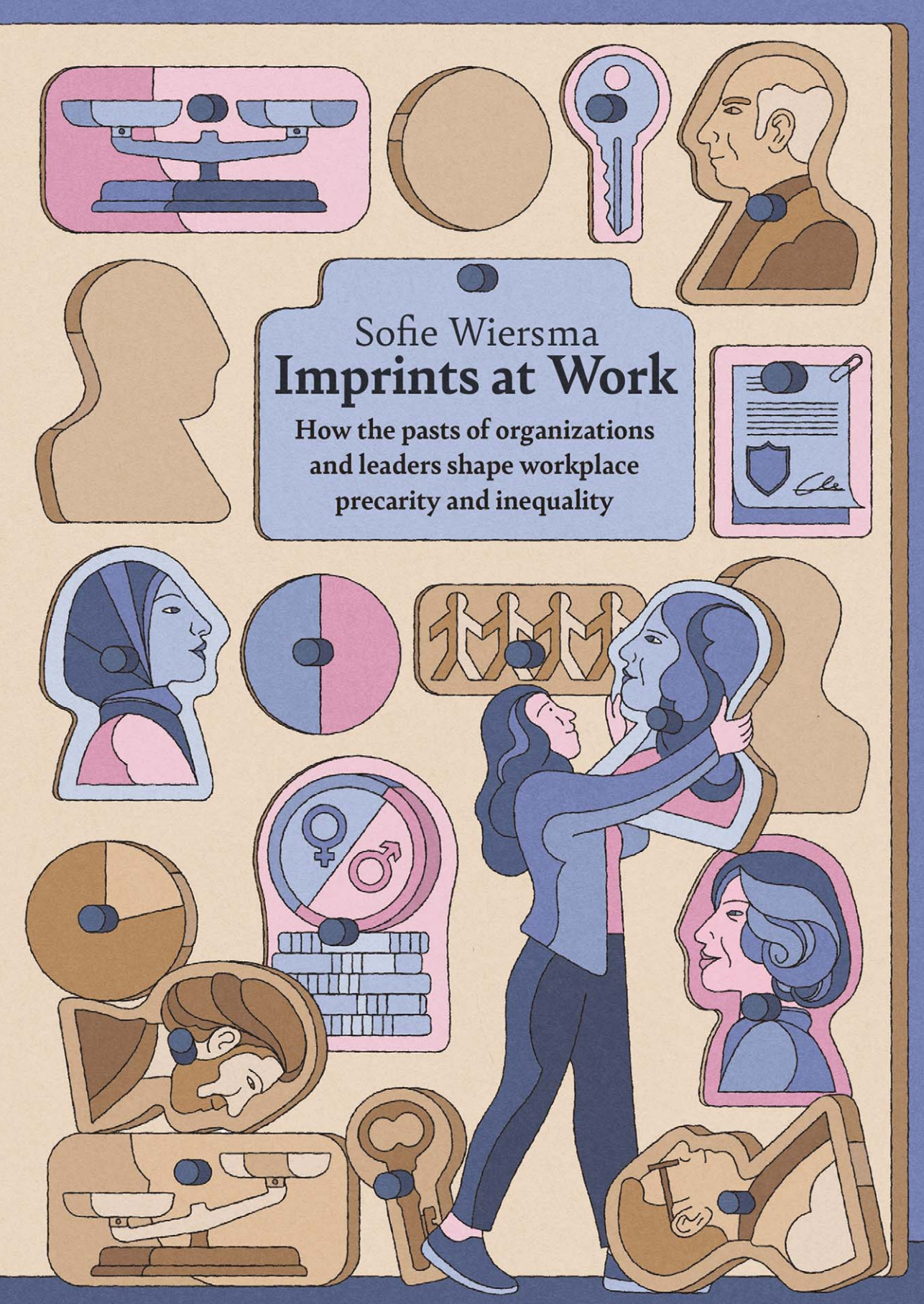
Sofie Wiersma
Imprints at Work
How the pasts of organizations and leaders shape workplace precarity and inequality

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Sofie Wiersma

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Imprints at Work

How the pasts of organizations and leaders shape workplace precarity and inequality

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on the authority of the
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Contents

Chapter 1:	**Introduction**	**9**
1.1	Introduction	10
1.2	The Dutch context	17
1.3	Data	18
1.4	Overview of the dissertation and terminology	19
Chapter 2:	**History and Persistence in Organizations**	**23**
2.1	Introduction	25
2.2	Theory	26
2.3	Theoretical comparison	33
2.4	Data considerations for empirical research on history and persistence in organizations	36
2.5	Conclusion and suggestions for future research	37
Chapter 3:	**Imprinting and Contested Practices. The Impact of Public Directors' Private Sector Experience on Temporary Employment in Dutch Public Organizations**	**41**
3.1	Introduction	43
3.2	Theory	45
3.3	Data and methods	51
3.4	Results	58
3.5	Conclusion and discussion	61
3.6	Appendix	65
Chapter 4:	**Change Agents with a Past: Female Executives' Early-Career Contexts and Gender Equality at Workplaces**	**71**
4.1	Introduction	73
4.2	Theory	75
4.3	Data and methods	80
4.4	Results	87
4.5	Conclusions and discussion	96
4.6	Appendix	99

Chapter 5: Setting the Stage: How Organizational Founding Context Impacts Female Leaders' Influence on Wage and Employment Equality **103**

5.1 Introduction 105

5.2 Theory 107

5.3 Data and methods 112

5.4 Results 128

5.5 Conclusion and discussion 136

Chapter 6: Conclusion **141**

6.1 Overarching findings 142

6.2 Summary of empirical findings 142

6.3 Limitations and future research 143

6.4 Policy implications 146

Appendices **149**

Summary in Dutch 150

References 158

Dankwoord (acknowledgments) 178

About the author 185

ICS Dissertation Series 186

Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter benefitted greatly from discussions with and feedback from Zoltán Lippényi, Rafael Wittek, and Marco van Leeuwen.

1.1 Introduction

In present-day Western economies, one of the prominent ways labor inequality manifests itself is through job precarity. Historically, the "standard employment relationship" was defined by stable, full-time, and permanent positions, where employees benefit from access to social protections (Bosch, 2004). This employment relationship offered employees opportunities for job advancement, job security, and stability in their organizational careers (Tomlinson et al., 2018). Nowadays, a large share of career trajectories are different. Western economies experienced an exceptional rise in new employment forms in work organizations that differ from this traditional standard full-time and life-long employment of workers (Cappelli, 1998, 2000; Hatton, 2011; Kalleberg, 2011). The academic literature refers to these employment arrangements as "non-standard" employment or "precarious work" (Kalleberg, 2009, 2011; Korpi & Levin, 2001), as a key feature of these work arrangements is the ability of employers to terminate the employment relationship more easily than in the case of permanent employment (Atkinson, 1984).

One of the most widespread forms of precarious employment is temporary employment through fixed-term contracts (OECD, 2023). Temporary employment has many advantages for employers (Atkinson, 1984; Delsen, 1995; Giesecke & Groß, 2003; Houseman, 2001) while the disadvantages fall on the shoulders of employees (Dekker, 2012): compared to permanent employees, temporary employees face higher job insecurity, more career interruptions, lower wages, and less training opportunities. It is therefore not surprising that the large majority of employees prefer permanent employment (Donker van Heel et al., 2013; Van Echtelt et al., 2016; Vlasblom & Josten, 2013). Temporary employment is especially undesirable in sectors that used to offer stable organizational careers and long-term employment, such as the public sector. Societal expectations of public sector organizations as "model employers" (Boyne et al., 1999; Kalleberg et al., 2006; Knies & Leisink, 2018) are at odds with the increasing adoption of temporary employment practices (Conley, 2006; Knies et al., 2022) and have triggered negative reactions from societal stakeholders concerned about the treatment of employees by public organizations (Leisink & Boxall, 2021; Shire & Van Jaarsveld, 2008).

Temporary employment contributes to existing labor market inequalities as workers with a weaker labor market position (e.g., non-native born, lower educated, and female workers) are more likely to end up in precarious working conditions (Janietz et al., 2024; Kösters & Smits, 2013; Skriabikova & Smits, 2019). The persisting overrepresentation of women in temporary employment (van der Vliet et al., 2023) is especially striking given great advances in education and labor market participation of women over the last century

that is referred to as the “gender revolution”, even though on a number of indicators, change towards gender equality has slowed or even stalled in the last decades (England, 2010; England et al., 2020). There is not only gender disparity in temporary contracting, research has shown that temporary employment often serves as a stepping-stone (Booth et al., 2002; Davis-Blake & Broschak, 2000) into permanent employment for men, but not for women (Bryson, 2004; Casey & Alach, 2004; Giesecke & Groß, 2004; Rubery et al., 1999). Gender disparities in access to permanent work contracts strongly resemble gender wage inequalities: much research has shown that women earn less than men, even when performing the same job for the same employer (Blau & Kahn, 2017; Penner et al., 2022). As explanations, scholars most frequently pointed to the gendered division of paid and unpaid work (e.g., Fernández-Kranz & Rodríguez-Planas, 2011; Fouarge & Luijkx, 2004; Garnero et al., 2014; Goldin, 2014; Ponthieux & Meurs, 2015), labor market regulations (e.g., Christofides et al., 2013; Schäfer & Gottschall, 2015), or normative societal expectations towards gender roles (e.g., Blair-Loy, 2005; Heilman, 2012; Kübler et al., 2018).

Explanations of organizations’ use of temporary employment point to a range of labor market and economic conditions, like employers’ consideration of dismissal costs of permanent employees, seasonal demands for labor, and entitlements to fringe benefits (e.g., Atkinson, 1984; Delsen, 1995; Filomena & Picchio, 2021; Gannon, 1974; Giesecke & Groß, 2004; Houseman, 2001; Kalleberg et al., 2000; Poulissen et al., 2023; Segal & Sullivan, 1997). Others stress institutional determinants and policies, focusing on how labor law and employment regulations protecting workers affect the prevalence of temporary employment contracting (e.g., Cahuc & Postel-Vinay, 2002; Centeno & Novo, 2012; Fagan & Ward, 2003; Houseman et al., 2003; Muffels & Luijkx, 2008; Polavieja, 2006).

However, in addition to serving as a contractual vehicle, temporary employment represents a key organizational practice. Its adoption and institutionalization in economies is driven by the legitimizing accounts of labor flexibility (Atkinson, 1984) and strategic human resource management (Lepak & Snell, 2002). As an organizational practice, temporary employment is institutionally contested (Sanders & Tuschke, 2007): critiques argue that it contributes to declining job quality and growing inequality in advanced economies (Kalleberg, 2012; Vallas, 2012) and unions, especially in Europe, often target lowering the number of flexible employment contracts in the interest of employees.

Furthermore, permanent employment is also a valuable resource in organizations as it provides access to other valued assets within work (e.g., such as fringe benefits and

promotion opportunities) and outside work (e.g., access to mortgage). Importantly, it is unequally distributed among workers, similarly as wages and other valuable job benefits. According to relational inequality theory (Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019), who receives resources, such as permanent jobs or wages, is determined in the process of claims-making in which social categorization (e.g., gender, skills, occupations, disability status) and value attributions about worthiness legitimates claims of groups of workers.

An organization-centric approach is needed to study permanent employment as a practice adopted by organizations and as a resource that is distributed via an organizational claims-making process. Up to now, however, such approaches are relatively scarce in research on precarity and inequality. In empirical work, until relatively recently, only few large-scale quantitative studies addressed workplace factors (Minardi, 2020; Zimmermann, 2022), with most work focusing on labor markets and broader institutions (e.g., Daruich et al., 2023; Keune & Pedaci, 2020; O'Brady, 2021; Passaretta & Wolbers, 2019; Rubery et al., 2018).

In this dissertation, I aim to further our understanding on how workplaces shape precarity and inequality through focusing on the role of organizational leaders. Organizational leaders are key actors in both the adoption of organizational practices and the relational process of distributing resources at the workplace. Organizational leaders hold positions which authorize them to adopt practices and policies that govern employment contracts, access to jobs, occupations, and incomes (Bills et al., 2017). With that, they are the primary gatekeepers to access to organizational resources. The status and visibility of organizational leaders at the highest levels, such as executive positions, also makes them influential in stirring organizational norms and culture. At (middle) management or supervisory positions, leaders decide on whom to hire, promote, and who to personally mentor in the organization (Bills, 2003; Rivera, 2020).

Organizational leaders are, however, not just incumbents of positions that confer formal authority to adopt practices. They are individuals that have identity attached to social groups they belong to (e.g., by sex), beliefs and value attributions, and cognitive limitations, such as limited knowledge and information (Hambrick, 2007; Simon, 1990) that affect their decision-making. Importantly, such cognitions, beliefs, and values largely derive from leaders' personal past. Many studies have shown that early career experiences affect leaders' agency and decision making throughout their careers (Dokko et al., 2009; Lee & Battilana, 2013; Phillips, 2005; Tilcsik, 2012). There is, however, very limited research on the impact of leaders' personal past on precarity and inequality in organizations they lead.

Organizational leaders are also human agents constrained by the organizational environment they operate in (Suddaby & Foster, 2017). The past plays a prominent role here as well: organizations show a great degree of rigidity and resistance to change (Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Selznick, 1948; Suddaby & Foster, 2017), and such inertia from the past limits individuals who want to change existing practices. Similar to personal past, our current knowledge on how organizational past shapes leaders' impact on inequality and precarity is limited.

The aim of my dissertation is to advance our knowledge on workplace inequality and precarity through focusing on organizational leaders' personal past and the past of the organization in which they operate. The overarching research question of this dissertation is:

How do the pasts of leaders and their organizations shape workplace precarity and inequality?

Leaders, their past, and organizational past

Leaders' personal characteristics (e.g. beliefs, values, cognition) are central to understanding organizational outcomes in the upper echelon theoretical tradition (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) and also feature in relational inequality theory (RIT) that focuses on explaining workplace inequality (Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014; Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019). Inequalities in the workplace arise through claims-making, such as when employees individually or collectively request a raise, and claims made by some categorical groups are seen more worthy than others. Generally, in contemporary organizations, women, racial-ethnic and sexual minorities are still often seen less worthy. Their claims - either implicitly or explicitly - are less likely to be honored than those of men and ethnic and sexual majority (Shams & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2019; Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014). Claims making is a relational process at the workplace in which it matters for local power dynamics who (which categorical group) is holding leadership positions at the workplace: leaders ratify the claims and decide to whom to direct resources or rewards (Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014). Who becomes a leader, e.g. whether men and women are seen equally worthy and capable of leadership position, is undoubtably a result of the claims making process.

Focusing on gender, the role of workplace leaders in shaping workplace inequality is addressed in the literature on female leaders as "agents of change" (e.g., Abendroth et al., 2017; Cook et al., 2019; Srivastava & Sherman, 2015; Van Hek & Van Der Lippe, 2019). As women increasingly occupy high organizational positions, researchers addressed whether they challenge gender inequality in the organizations they manage. Findings of the agents of change literature are, however, mixed regarding the impact of female leaders on gender

inequality (Dwivedi & Paolella, 2024; Srivastava & Sherman, 2015; van Hek & van der Lippe, 2019, 2023; Zimmermann, 2022). One potential explanation for the lack of clear empirical support is that female leaders are exposed to norms of masculinity on male-dominated managerial environments (Derks et al., 2016; Ellemers et al., 2012), which may make them identify less with female employees. However, this potential explanation has not been investigated in earlier research on workplace gender inequality.

For precarity, the role of leaders in the adoption of temporary employment practices in organizations remains, so far, unexplored. Leaders may play a role as change agents in organizational environments where the practice is incongruent with traditional employment models, such as public organizations that thrive on stable organizational careers and long-term employment (Conley, 2006; Knies et al., 2022). With the rise of New Public Management (NPM) (Drechsler, 2005; Farazmand, 2002; Filipovic, 2005), directors socialized in private sector managerial roles become more common in public organizations (Frederiksen & Hansen, 2017). While researchers started investigating the transformation of leader identities in the public sector (Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006), the focus was mainly on how leader's "publicness fit" impact organizational performance (Boyne, 2002; Boyne et al., 2011; James et al., 2021). Whether change in public leader's background impacted employment practices in the public sector remains unclear.

The foregoing suggests that past experiences in socialization and corporate settings could be important, explanations for leaders' "change agency". Socialization into organizational roles shapes actors' cognition, internalized norms, and future actions (DiMaggio, 1997). Especially leaders' experiences in early career contexts influence their later choices and decision-making (Dokko et al., 2009; Lee & Battilana, 2013; Phillips, 2005; Tilcsik, 2012). These experiences are referred to as "imprints" (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013).

Imprinting, as a process, describes that when individuals progress through their careers, they encounter "sensitive periods" during which they are highly susceptible to environmental influences. The start of one's career is an exceptionally sensitive period, but as individuals acquire new roles (i.e., receiving a promotion, or starting in a new position), they face another period of uncertainty and heightened sensitivity (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Dokko et al., 2009; Higgins, 2005). As individuals socialize into their new role, they undergo "cognitive unfreezing" (DiRenzo, 1977; Ibarra, 1999; Van Maanen & Schein, 1977). Experiences during this period leave lasting "stamps", the so-called "imprints", that develop into persistent cognitive schemas (DiMaggio, 1997), scripts, and normative assumptions about what is accepted and appropriate. The role of leaders' imprinted past imprinted experiences has not been addressed in literature on temporary employment, or organizational gender inequality literature.

In addition to individuals, organizations are also imprinted by their past. These imprints create inertial forces that drive organizational persistence, and constrain the agency of individuals who may attempt to orchestrate such change (Suddaby & Foster, 2017) – thus affecting the degree to which leaders can act as change agents. The most impactful imprint is acquired at time of founding as organizations are highly susceptible to environmental influences in this period (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Stinchcombe, 1965). The imprinting literature shows how characteristics present at time of founding "stamp" onto the organization and persist over time despite environmental changes (Johnson, 2007; Kimberly, 1975; Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006; Marquis & Qiao, 2020; Stinchcombe, 1965). How these organizational imprints then affect the change agency of leaders in the present has not yet been investigated in the literature.

The chapters of my dissertation thus build on imprinting theory to understand how the pasts of organizations and leaders shape precarity and inequality in the workplace. I follow a stream of organization literature that emphasizes the importance of studying the past in organizations for understanding their present (Ertman, 1997; Schreyögg & Sydow, 2011; Scott, 2013). In **chapter 2,** I outline and analytically compare three key theories in the literature on how the past persists in the present: path dependency, escalation of commitment, and imprinting. This chapter also serves as motivation for the further use of imprinting theory to study how personal and organizational pasts affect workplace precarity and inequality. Imprinting theory enables studying influences from the past - the imprints - at multiple levels and allows for theorizing on the cross-level impact: how *personal* imprints shape outcomes at the *organizational* level. Compared to the other theories, imprinting theory also adopts the broadest view of the external environment of organizations and actors within them, where not only economic forces (Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006) play a central role, but a broad set of personal and organizational imprints can be investigated to explore a variety of factors that drive organizational persistence. An altered version of this chapter, co-written with Zoltán Lippényi, will be published in the Research Handbook of Historical Sociology (edited by Marco van Leeuwen, published by Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd). As the first author, I took initiative in the conceptualization and writing of the chapter and drafted the chapter. As co-author, Zoltán Lippényi helped with the conceptualization and revisions of the chapter. The empirical **chapter 3** addresses the role of leaders' imprinted past experiences on precarity in the workplace with a case study on how the growing number of public leaders with past private-sector experience influences the adoption of temporary employment practices in public organizations. While previous studies established that public leaders with a private-sector background affects organizational performance (Boyne, 2002; Boyne et al., 2011; James et al., 2021), their role as change agents that

introduce new employment practices remains unknown. In this chapter I build specifically on “sector imprinting” literature (Boardman et al., 2010), that describes that sectors are strong imprinting environments that leave a long-lasting mark on the organizational values and norms that leaders identify with (Bozeman & Ponomariov, 2009; Su & Bozeman, 2009). Chapter 3 investigates whether these “private-sector imprints” of public directors lead to an increase of temporary employment practices in public organizations. Chapter 3 is based on an article that is published with me as the first author, and co-authored by Zoltán Lippényi and Rafael Wittek. As the first author, I took initiative in the conceptualization of the article, the analyses, and drafted the article. The co-authors helped with conceptualization and revision of the article. Zoltán Lippényi also helped and advised with the analysis of the data.

The literature studying gender disparities in access to permanent jobs and high wages posits that female leaders might be key actors in challenging workplace gender inequality (Abendroth et al., 2017; Dwivedi & Paolella, 2024; Srivastava & Sherman, 2015; Van Hek & Van Der Lippe, 2019; van Hek & van der Lippe, 2022). Mixed findings of this stream of literature could be related to diverse personal past experiences of female leaders. Career socialization may specifically be important, as social psychological work suggests that female leaders’ identification with female employees is shaped by exposure to norms of masculinity and misogyny while climbing the male-dominated managerial career ladders (Derks et al., 2016; Ellemers et al., 2012). Differences in female leaders’ career experiences thus might affect to what degree they act as “agents of change” and challenge workplace gender inequality. In **Chapter 4** I empirically examine this proposition, focusing on how two types of early managerial career experiences -exposure to female peers and a female CEO during their first managerial position- play a role in the degree to which female leaders improve gender equality (in access to permanent employment and wage progression). Chapter 4 is based on an article co-written with Zoltán Lippényi and Anja Abendroth, that is currently under review at an international journal. As the first author, I took initiative in the conceptualization of the article, the analyses, and drafted the article. The co-authors helped with conceptualization and revision of the article. Zoltán Lippényi also helped and advised with the analysis of the data.

Finally, I also consider the potential constraining impact of the organizational past on leaders’ agency to change inequality in organizations. Specifically, **chapter 5** investigates how characteristics of the foundation context – level of urbanization of the municipality and being founded during socialist feminist era – and the gender of the founder as specific organizational imprints affect whether female leaders become agents of change who challenge workplace inequality. Chapter 5 is based on an article co-written with Zoltán Lippényi, that is currently in preparation for submission at an international journal. As the

first author, I took initiative in the conceptualization of the article, the analyses, and drafted the article. As co-author, Zoltán Lippényi helped and advised with the analysis of the data, and helped with conceptualization and revision of the article.

1.2 The Dutch context

The empirical chapters in this dissertation focus on the context of the Netherlands. The Dutch context is of specific interest as temporary work arrangements have a pronounced presence, even in comparison to other Western economies (Bolhaar et al., 2018; Chkalova et al., 2015). As shown in figure 1.1, as of 2023 the share of temporary employment in the Netherlands (27.70%) is considerably higher than the EU average (11.30%). For the Dutch public sector specifically, 21.59% of employees hold a temporary contract (Wiersma et al., 2024). Surveys indicate that a majority (78%) of Dutch employees with a temporary contract would prefer to have a permanent contract (Donker van Heel et al., 2013). Of employees with a permanent contract, 97% indicate that a permanent contract is important when obtaining a new job position, underlying that permanent employment is a coveted organizational resource. At time of writing, organizations in the Netherlands are allowed to offer employees a maximum of three consecutive temporary contracts within a three-year period before being legally obliged to hire the worker on a permanent contract or discontinue the work relationship for at least six months.

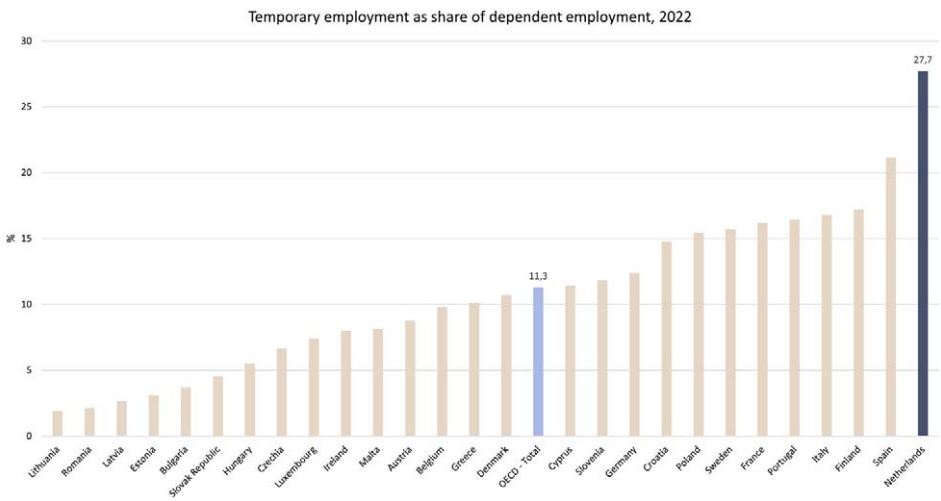


Figure 1.1: OECD indicator for temporary employment in EU countries, 2022. Source: Labour Market Statistics: Employment by permanency of the job: incidence (OECD, 2023)

With regards to gender equality in Dutch workplaces, Dutch women earn less than their male colleagues in the same type of job (Penner et al., 2022). Additionally, the share of female employees on a temporary job (23.55%) is higher than the share of male employees on a temporary job contract (16.95%)[1]. In general, female labor participation is below EU average as a large share of Dutch female employees work parttime (van Doorne-Huiskes & Schippers, 2010; Visser, 2002). In the Dutch context, strong historically persistent societal norms emphasize women as married mothers who devote their time to taking care of their family (Pott-Buter, 1993). This norm was reflected in laws active until 1957, where women were dismissed from work once they got married (Pott-Buter & Tijdens, 1998; van Doorne-Huiskes & Schippers, 2010). Despite the disappearance of this law long time ago, the "household" norm is still strong in Dutch society (Blom et al., 2020; van Ostaijen, 2021): men are responsible for earning the family income (the "bread winner") whereas women should hold responsibility for the household and childcare. The empirical chapters of my dissertation do not address these "household norms", as I focus on organization-level antecedents of workplace gender inequality. However, these norms present in Dutch society reflect themselves in many persisting gender stereotypes (den Dulk & van Doorne-Huiskes, 2008; Grunow et al., 2018), that also affect women's labor market participation and career trajectories (Stojmenovska & England, 2021). The share of women in leadership position started to rise in Dutch companies in recent decades (van der Vliet et al., 2022). However, women are still in the minority in leadership positions. As of 2021, men still hold 74% of management positions in the Netherlands (Eurostat, 2023).

1.3 Data

The empirical analyses require longitudinal information on individuals, organizations, and industries, as this allows to demonstrate the manifestations and consequences of leaders' and organizational imprints over time (Simsek et al., 2015). This dissertation uses linked employer employee register data from the Social Statistics Database (SSB) of the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), which uniquely contains longitudinal information on directors (in Dutch: "bestuurders") of the complete Dutch population of companies, alongside demographic and wage information on employees, and demographic information on the complete Dutch population of companies.

Register data provides several benefits compared to other sources of data. First, several chapters focus on imprinted career experiences of individuals. Register data provides the ability to reconstruct careers based on administrative data, reducing bias that occurs

[1] Percentages based on own calculations using non-public microdata from Statistics Netherlands

when using survey data that is dependent on respondents' (often inaccurate) recollection of past experiences (Lapuente et al., 2020). Second, data from company registers does not suffer from small sample sizes and low response which often hampers studies on organizational leaders (Card et al., 2010). Third, registration of companies and their functionaries to the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce is mandatory, which likely to limit systematic biases compared with surveys based on voluntary participation. Fourth, as register microdata contains *all* Dutch work organizations and employees, it allows me to better study organizational variation and compare groups within organizations than when using survey data. This allows me to also include small organizations in my empirical studies, where survey studies often face an insufficient sampled number of employees. Last, the information pertaining to the outcomes I study (type of contract, wages) has a high measurement precision, as its registration has to follow established rules (Belastingdienst, 2024).

1.4 Overview of the dissertation and terminology

In this dissertation I examine how the pasts of organizations and leaders shape workplace precarity and inequality. Figure 1.2 shows a schematic overview of the three empirical chapters of the dissertation, as well as the imprints and outcomes. The personal past of leaders is present in two of the three empirical chapters. In chapter 3, personal past is conceptualized as private-sector imprints, and I hypothesize that these imprints influence the share of temporary contracts used in Dutch public organizations. In chapter 4, personal past is conceptualized as female representation and empowerment experienced by female leaders during managerial role socialization and I address how it moderates the impact of women's presence in leadership on gender differences in outcomes at the employee level: the chance of obtaining a permanent contract and wage progression. Organizational past is addressed in chapter 5. I specifically focus on how the foundational context (urbanization and progressive feminist period) and the gender of the founder moderates the impact of female leaders on gender differences in outcomes at employee level.

There are some reoccurring terms in this dissertation. First, I address precarity in the workplace by focusing on temporary (i.e., fixed-term) employment. The temporary employment contracts I focus on refer to employees who are employed by the organization for which they work on a contract with a fixed end date. These temporary employment contracts can range from several months to one- or two- year contracts. Typically, labor law prescribes the amount of times a temporary contract can be renewed within a given time period, before organizations are obligated to hire the worker permanently, or let them

go. Temporary employment can thus either transition into permanent employment or into unemployment (Korpi & Levin, 2001) after the contracts ends. In this dissertation, I do not differentiate between the ones that transition into permanent contracts, or those that end up in unemployment or a different job. I only include direct-hire (or salaried) temporary employees. Externalized forms of temporary work arrangements, such as freelancing, temporary agency work, or outsourced labor, are excluded as they are not part of my empirical data: these contracted workers cannot be linked to the client organizations they work for in the available registers.

Second, I focus on actors at the highest organizational levels: depending on which theories the chapters build on, I refer to them as leaders, directors, or executives[2]. I refrain from the terminology of "managers", as this typically refers to workplace managers below executive level, who are in more direct contact with their employees. The data I use in my empirical chapters does not provide information to identify (middle) management or employees in supervisory positions. Therefore, I am unable to explicitly address the role of managers below the executive level. To overcome this limitation, I follow earlier studies that use linked employer-employee data and compares result from large firms, with small- and medium organizations where executive and managerial or supervisory roles typically coincide.

Lastly, I adopt Ridgeway's (2011) view on "gender" as a "primary frame for organizing social relations". It focusses on how gendered beliefs serve as a frame that determine our views on "who belongs in what position". Gender is a socially constructed difference between males and females, a dichotomous view of gender which is still dominant in most cultures (Acker, 1990, 2009). These categorizations in themselves are not meaningful, but they do impact how individuals behave and treat one another (Ellemers, 2018). In turn, these social relationships and interaction between organizational actors further produce and legitimize this categorization of people, which determines processes of claims-making for organizational resources (Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019). Thus, gender in this dissertation refers to the categories of men and women as cultural and symbolic concepts. Practical limitations do not allow me to address gender in different ways, such as existing gender identities beyond the traditional binary view, and expression of gender.

My dissertation contributes to several streams of literature. By studying the impact of *personal past* of leaders on workplace precarity and inequality, I contribute to organizational

[2] In the Netherlands, most organizations have a one-tier board, where there is one corporate management body. For larger organizations, two-tier board structures are more common where there is a board of executive directors, and a supervisory board consisting of non-executive supervisory directors. I only include the executive directors (in Dutch: "*uitvoerende bestuurders*") in my empirical studies.

literatures that address role of organizational leaders in organizational change. I further imprinting literature by uncovering specific mechanisms *how* imprints from managerial socialization contexts (e.g., sector environment and female representation) and organizational foundational contexts (e.g. social urbanization and social movements) matter for precarity and inequality. I apply the imprinting framework of personal and organizational imprints to explain leaders' capacity of becoming change agents, which is novel in the literature aiming to understand change agency of female leaders.

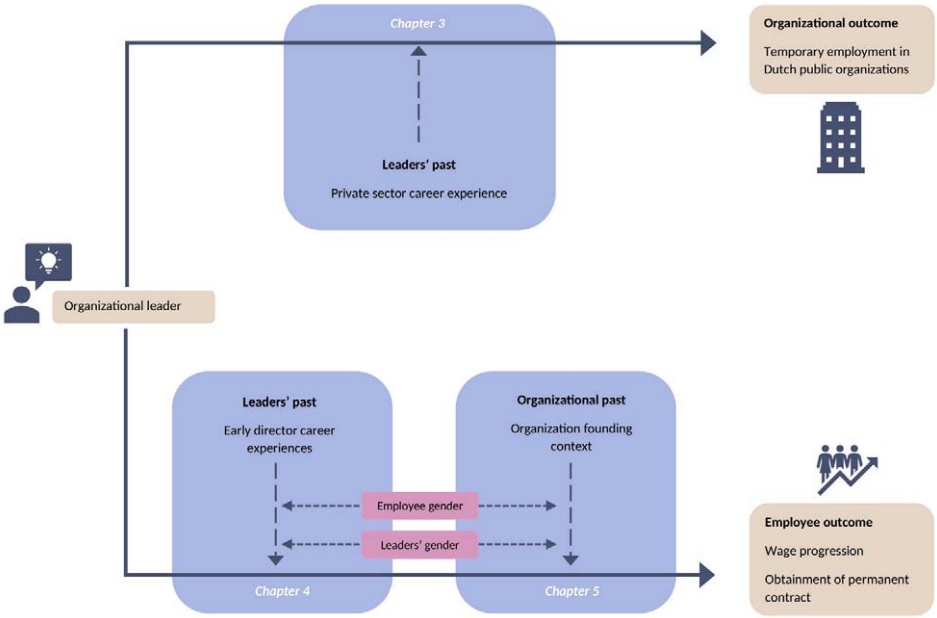
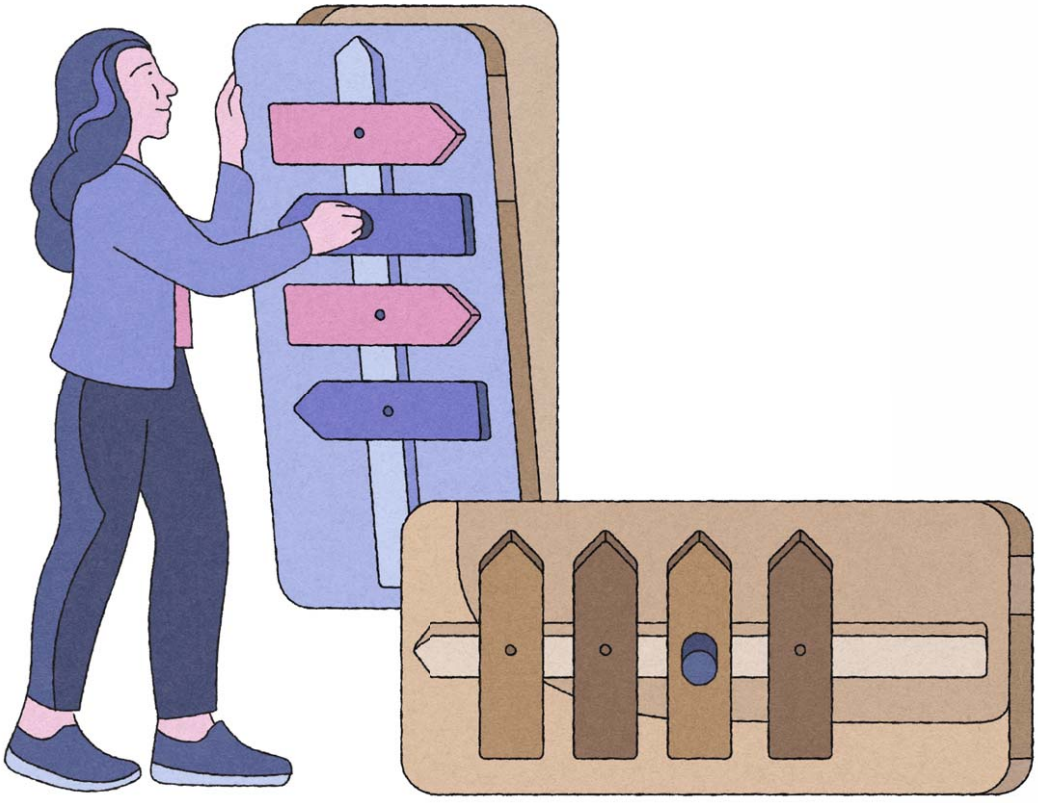


Figure 1.2: Schematic overview of the three empirical chapters in this dissertation (chapter 3, 4, and 5)

Chapter 2



History and Persistence in Organizations

An altered version of this chapter (co-authored with Zoltán Lippényi) will be published in the Research Handbook of Historical Sociology (edited by Marco van Leeuwen, published by Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd).

Abstract

In this chapter I discuss (historical) sociological and organizational literature on how historical events and conditions persist in organizations. I outline three prominent but distinct theories in the literature -path dependency, escalation of commitment, and imprinting- and provide highlights from the historical, sociological, and organizational empirical literature to illustrate how these theories explain persistence of the past in organizations. I analytically compare these theories to explicate their differing assumptions about historical periods, actors' agency, micro-foundations, and organizational environments. Different empirical approaches are discussed to study persistence of history in organizations and I finish the chapter by offering avenues for future research.

"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards" - Søren Kierkegaard

2.1 Introduction

Organizations carry the influence of past occurrences on present-day events and decisions (e.g., Ertman, 1997; Schreyögg & Sydow, 2011; Scott, 2013). History is not only preserved in formal documents that organizations produced and kept from the past, but also present in the logic of organizing, informal practices, and taken-for-granted assumptions, which organizations reproduce day by day. In this chapter I discuss organizational and sociological literature on how historical events and conditions persist in organizations. The theoretical mechanisms of how the past persists in the present often remain implicit in organizational scholarship (Suddaby & Foster, 2017). I focus on outlining and comparing prominent theories in the literature – path dependency, escalation of commitment, and imprinting – that set out to explain how the past persists in organizations and provide illustrative examples of the historical, sociological, and organizational empirical literature built upon these theories. I then analytically compares these theories to explicate their different assumptions about historical periods, actors' agency, micro-foundations, and organizational environments. Data considerations for empirical research on the persistence of history in organizations are discussed, and the chapter closes by offering avenues for future research.

This chapter defines organizations as collectives of individuals created to achieve a common goal and have an established and formalized stable structure and division of tasks (e.g., Tolbert & Hall, 2015). To discuss its persistence in organizations, the literature I engage with understands history as objective conditions that impact the agency of individuals and organizations (i.e., "history-as-fact" (Suddaby & Foster, 2017)). This positivist perspective depicts the historical past as a linear, objective, and observable conditions that affects present-day organizations. Researchers adopting a history-as-fact approach understand history as an accumulation of events that constrain choice over time, with organizations acquiring inertial properties as a result. There are alternative perspectives on how history persists in organizations. Critical and constructivist approaches to history (see Rowlinson & Hassard (2014) for an overview) focus on how history is (re)constructed in discourse and narratives, and is shaped by human interpretation (Suddaby & Foster, 2017). These perspectives are not discussed in this chapter, which solely focusses on a positivist perspective of the past.

2.2 Theory

Path dependence

Definition and origin

Path-dependent processes are models of change where early events determine later ones *and* eliminate alternative possibilities. Path dependency unfolds through three phases (Sydow et al., 2009, 2020). The first phase, *preformation,* is a choice by actors or an event that takes place and initiates the self-reinforcing processes that characterize path dependency. In the second phase, *formation*, the initial event acts as a constraint and narrows the range of options of organizational actors and consumers, and the course of action becomes difficult to reverse. A dominant course of action - referred to as a "path" – emerges. As "switching costs" increase, organizations and actors within them become dependent on this path. Alternative options decrease, eventually forcing those who followed different courses of action to switch as well (Aghion et al., 2019; Sydow et al., 2009). Formation leads to the final phase of *lock-in*, where alternatives that replace the locked-in scenario are complicated to adopt.

David's (1985) study on qwerty-layout on keyboard is widely considered the foundational work on path dependence. David (1985) illustrates how the decision for the qwerty-layout did not stem from ergonomic advantages or efficiency; it was instead the result of incorporating a gimmick into the layout that allowed users to write the word "typewriter" by only using the top row of keys. This decision is the *preformation* phase. The qwerty-layout's technological innovation prevented the jamming of keys, a known issue with older typewriters. Thanks to this innovation, qwerty-typewriters became desirable and quickly dominated the market – even though the layout itself proved no advantage to users.

As qwerty-keyboards dominated the market, users learned, mastered, and became accustomed to this layout, setting an unexpected self-reinforcing mechanism in motion. Users became dependent on using this specific layout, making alternative keyboards undesirable. This dependency on the qwerty layout depicts the phase of *formation*. Even when new keyboard layouts emerged on the market, like the Dvorak keyboard, which did offer a layout with ergonomic advantages, users were reluctant to switch. The learning and investment costs of switching to a different type of keyboard were already too high. Thus, qwerty-keyboards became *locked-in* (the final phase): eventually, people could only buy qwerty-typewriters (David, 1985; Page, 2006; Simeonov, 2020). The path towards qwerty-keyboards became almost completely deterministic. Despite being suboptimal, the qwerty-layout remains the universal standard until today (Buzing, 2003; Ciobanu et al., 2015) – which was not foreseen when the qwerty-layout as a more gimmicky marketing trick entered the market.

Overview of the literature

Following in the footsteps of David (1985), a significant share of path-dependency literature within economics focuses on technological lock-in scenarios (Sydow et al., 2009). Examples of path-dependency in technologies are the dominance of VHS videotapes (Arthur, 1989, 1994), nuclear power technologies (Cowan, 1990), pest control (Cowan & Gunby, 1996), and I.T. systems (Brown et al., 2005). Technological path-dependent processes could eventually lead to unfavorable user outcomes (Lieberman & Asaba, 2006), such as in the ergonomically inferior qwerty-keyboard. However, lock-in scenarios can also lead to competitive disadvantages for firms themselves. When path-dependent processes lead to the lock-in of specific innovations or products, it can delay the exploitation of novel technological innovations that are superior to the current locked-in decision (Valorinta et al., 2011).

Historical sociologists, primarily influenced by Pierson (2000a, 2000b), expanded the field of path dependency by looking at reinforcing mechanisms other than the switching costs featured in the economic literature (Mahoney, 2000). There are three[3] distinct theoretical perspectives on which processes drive path dependency in organizations and institutions (Beyer, 2010). The first type of reinforcing mechanism is *power*. This explanation applies to situations where actors in organizations reproduce arrangements that benefit themselves, even when others prefer alternatives. Actors who benefit from the arrangement do not orchestrate the early event; however, the arrangements confer power to reproduce and reinforce the existing arrangements. Roy (1999) applies this explanation to the rise of private organizations after the 1830s in the U.S. Coincidental events forced government organizations to cut back, paving the way for the development of private organizations. A new working class of entrepreneurs emerged and used their newly gained power to promote the continuation of private organizations – eventually locking in private businesses as they gained many advantages compared to government-owned organizations.

The second reinforcing mechanism is *legitimacy*. Reproduction occurs through moral decision-making of actors when they regard specific arrangements as a legitimate option. Actors will voluntarily reproduce it because they believe it is the right thing to do. Legitimacy features as a critical explanation in the work of Orren (1991) to explain how labor law from England adopted during the formation of the United States persisted

[3] Mahoney (2000) considers an additional perspective: *functional* reproduction, where the reproduction of institutions occurs through their efficiency within an existing system. As with functionalist explanations, this perspective uses system-level reasoning that focuses limitedly on underlying mechanisms and processes, the role of (organizational) actors, and their agency.

for over 150 years, even though the master-servant relationship incorporated in the law which did not fit with the liberal views of the United States. Orren (1991) documents that American courts saw the law as the most legitimate and legally effective method, which explains why it became locked in until the 1930s.

The third reinforcing mechanism is *cognitive.* This view assumes that actors are boundedly rational as they face cognitive constraints (Koch et al., 2008; Page, 2006), causing habitual behaviors and rigidity, eventually producing organizational inertia. Pierson notes that path dependency occurs most frequently in political systems, compared to economic systems, due to the more considerable complexity of power structures and unclear preferences in political decision-making. On the micro level, a study by Koch et al. (2008) demonstrates in an experimental setting how the degree of complexity affects path-dependent processes as actors are unable to handle the large information load characterizing complex situations.

Path-dependent processes start and unfold in many different ways. While historical sociologists incorporated a broader role of institutional forces that drive path dependency – namely power, legitimacy, and cognition, to complement transaction costs and market dynamics - the majority of path dependency literature remains in the economic field. Parallel to sociological and economic works, a share of literature centers on complex models of decision-making in organizations that can lead to lock-in scenarios. Specifically, this strand of literature focuses on instances where actors escalate their commitment to failing courses of action.

Escalation of commitment

Origins and definition

Escalation of commitment describes the phenomenon where organizations, or actors within them, choose to increase their commitment to a *failing* course of action, even when faced with negative feedback and increasing uncertainty of the outcome (Brockner, 1992; Staw & Ross, 1987). The ultimate failure of the chosen action could be due to external influences outside of the control of the initial decision-maker (i.e., a business strategy failing because of an economic crisis). However, escalation of commitment occurs when actors still opt to continue with the course of action, even when made aware that the likelihood of failing is high.

The origins of the escalation of commitment theory can be traced back to the work of psychologist Staw in 1976. Staw (1976) conducted a role-playing exercise where

business school students were held responsible for the financial decision-making of a fictional firm. Staw presented students with a scenario and manipulated their outcomes into two options. Some students saw successful results in their business decisions, while others saw a decline in profitability. Students who experienced an unsuccessful outcome of their decision decided to invest more resources in their course of action – contrary to the common-sense belief that individuals are rational decision-makers who will alter their course of action when faced with negative consequences.

Overview of the literature

Research focusing on micro-level explanations of escalation of commitment looks at cognitive distortions, such as optimism traps, a phenomenon where groups tend to be overly optimistic, leading to wrong choices (Cronin et al., 2009), and late realization that their projects were in trouble (e.g., Fotaki & Hyde, 2015; Van Oorschot et al., 2013). A different set of drivers was identified by Alvarez et al. (2011), in their study on the 1996 Mount Everest disaster, where a blizzard caught eight climbers who eventually did not survive the expedition. The authors identified several sources that drove expedition leaders' escalation of commitment to reaching the top: competition between expedition teams (who reaches the top first?), concerns for reputation, and immense expected publicity and payoffs when the expedition succeeds (e.g., the expedition leaders invited journalist Jon Krakauer to join the expedition). These drivers caused expedition leaders to ignore, or disregard, the warning signs that their summit attempt did not adhere to the strict time window needed to safely summit Mount Everest.

The study by Beamer & Lewis (2003) on the 1959 steelworker strike that reshaped country-wide labor politics shows the role of interdependency between actors when identifying escalating commitment behavior by steel industry executives. In the postwar period, steel industry executives kept unprofitable mills open as they hoped their competitors would close off their unprofitable mills, reducing competition and making their mills profitable again. However, as every executive made this calculation, the mills faced significant financial losses over several years, leading to large strikes in the steel industry.

Where early work on escalation of commitment predominantly focused on psychological explanations within laboratory settings on individuals (Brockner et al., 1986; Staw, 1976),the field has shifted attention to contextual influences of decisions (Brockner, 1992; Staw, 1997, 2016) and greater focus on collective decisions by groups (rather than individual decisions) to continue with failing courses of action (for an overview, see Sleesman et al., 2018). Within the aforementioned studies, steel executives were also

influenced by societal transitions (post-war new markets) in the study by Beamer & Lewis (2003), and Mount Everest expedition leaders also considered reputation and exposure to public society (Alvarez et al. 2011).

There are attempts to incorporate contextual influences that stimulate or constrain escalating behavior explicitly. These contexts range from cost-benefit calculations due to economic influences like market dynamics (DeTienne et al., 2008) to economic crises (Davidsson & Gordon, 2016). Others incorporate the role of political debates that justify escalating behavior (Cornelio et al., 2021) or highlight the role of culture that drives decision-making (Keil et al., 2000). An often-studied context that stirs decision-making towards escalating commitment is that of wars (Boettcher III & Cobb, 2009; Kuijpers & Schumacher, 2020; Rice, 2010).In their study on the Iraq war, Boettcher III and Cobb (2009) explain how the bias of "sunk costs" (U.S. casualties and material costs) pushed President Bush to try redeeming his prior decisions by further continuing the war, despite declining public support. Eventually, the newly elected Democrats pushed for troop withdrawal in 2006.

Nevertheless, the escalation of commitment literature is still in a relatively early phase of incorporating the broader role of historical-institutional context in explaining persistence in organizations. The most explicit role of historical context in understanding persistence and present-day organizations is found in imprinting literature.

Imprinting

Origins and definition

Marquis & Tilcsik (2013) define imprinting as *"a process whereby, during a brief period of susceptibility, a focal entity develops characteristics that reflect prominent features of the environment, and these characteristics continue to persist despite significant environmental changes in subsequent periods"* (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013, p. 199). Their definition outlines three critical elements of imprinting theory: (1) sensitive transition periods in which a focal entity (which can be an organization, a collective of organizations, or individuals) is highly susceptible to influences from the environment, (2) development of imprints that reflect elements from the environment during a sensitive period, and (3) persistence of imprints despite environmental changes.

The concept of "imprinting" can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century. Studying animal behavior, several biologists noticed behavioral patterns of animals that could be explained by experiences in early life (Heinroth, 1911; Spalding, 1873). Lorenz

(1935, 1937) referred to this process as imprinting (in German: *prägung*). Imprinting only occurred during a brief sensitive period when the animal was young, but the effects persist – despite the animal experiencing environmental changes. These two characteristics of imprinting - the existence of a period of heightened susceptibility and how the effects on behavior remain stable over time- distinguish imprinting from other learning processes (Immelmann, 1975). From biology, imprinting found its way into organizational research through Stinchcombe (1965) seminal contribution to organizational structures. Stinchcombe found that (social) structures of industries founded during the specific periods were similar, from which he inferred that environmental forces such as culture, technology, wealth, power, and legitimacy at the time of founding organizations determine aspects of the present structure of organizations.

Imprinting occurs at multiple levels. Next to organizations (e.g., Carroll & Hannan, 1989; Johnson, 2007; Kimberly, 1975; Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006; Marquis & Huang, 2010), organizational collectives like industries or sectors (e.g., Dobbin, 1994; Lounsbury, 2007; Marquis, 2003; Raynard et al., 2013), and organizational building blocks such as jobs, occupations and routines (e.g., Cohen, 2013; Miner, 1991), have been shown to bear imprints.

Overview of the literature

A rich body of literature investigates imprinted influences from the economic-institutional environment at the time of founding (for an extensive overview of imprinting literature, see Marquis & Tilcsik (2013) and Simsek et al. (2015)). Studies show that imprints reflect a combination of cultural, political, and institutional features of a historical context. In (Dobbin's (1994) analysis of parallel developments of railroad industries in France, the U.S., and Britain, the divergence between countries was a result of differences in cultural traditions and political situations of the respective countries present at the time of the founding. Railroad systems remained intact, even when environmental shocks like the Great Depression put traditional ways of operating into question. In a study on sheltered workshops, an organization type that provides rehabilitation for people with disabilities, Kimberly (1975) found sheltered workshops founded after 1946 to be more rehabilitation-oriented. Workshops founded before 1946 were predominantly production-oriented. The reason for this difference was the shift in social philosophy after the war – after World War II, the public emphasized social responsibility for people with disabilities. At the time of the founding, these sheltered workshops adopted the dominant philosophy of the time and incorporated this into their organizational structure.

The imprinting literature convincingly shows that changing macroeconomic conditions and political systems do not transform organizations as they remain imprinted with the past. Kriauciunas and Kale (2006) showed how imprints prevent organizations from adapting to changing economic environments: many Eastern European organizations failed to adapt to the new market-oriented economic system that emerged in the late 1980s. The authors argue that Eastern European organizations carried "socialist imprints" from their founding, reducing their ability to successfully change their operations to survive in this new, marked-oriented economic environment that did not align with their imprinted knowledge. Marquis & Qiao (2020) a similar phenomenon studying older firms in China that carried strong "communist imprints ". These communist imprints preserved the political ideology within the firm that foreign capitalism is evil, which negatively affected their ability to internationalize and expand globally, as they could not successfully adapt to the needs of their foreign investors.

Johnson's (2007) in-depth analysis of the founding conditions of the French opera in the 17th century is worth mentioning as one of the few studies that addresses the interests and agency of founders. Pierre Perrin, the founder of the French Opera, pushed for a new royal academy to ensure sponsorship by the French king. However, the French king (Louis XIV) preferred that the French opera would give public performances following the example of Italian opera – French royal academies were generally closed assemblies. The French opera became a unique hybrid organization for its time, as it both received royal subsidies and charged admissions from the public – a combination that did not exist yet. This unique organizational structure that fit the conditions at the time of founding persisted through a widely changing environment, including the French Revolution in 1789 and World War I and II (Marquis & Qiao, 2023).

Eventually, this imprint impacted the French arts and sciences for centuries to come. Johnson's (2007) work highlights the critical role of entrepreneurs, as they are the ones who select and incorporate specific elements from the environment during founding.

Inertia and cohorts

The following section discusses two common concepts associated with persistence: structural inertia and cohorts. They differ from the three theories as they are concerned with the *outcome* rather than the *process* (Suddaby & Foster, 2017).

S*tructural inertia*. Hannan & Freeman (1977, 1989) use the concept of structural inertia to describe how internal forces to the organizations (e.g., internal politics, sunk costs, bureaucracy), as well as external forces (e.g., public legitimation of organizational

activities, competitive pressures), generate pressures for inertia. As a result of these forces, organizations tend to reproduce established routines and structures from the past, which leads them to be unable to adapt to environmental changes (Suddaby & Foster, 2017; Sydow et al., 2009). Inertia has explicitly been linked to inequality and stratification in organizations through the reproduction of allocation of resources and rewards within organizations (Stainback et al., 2010), such as racial inequality in the workplace (Zhang, 2021, 2023) and gender composition of higher organizational positions (Skaggs et al., 2012).

C*ohorts*. Cohorts are groups of actors that share similarities and keep them over time because they originate from the same time (Joshi et al., 2010; Rosow, 1978; Ruef & Aldrich, 2006). For example, Joshi et al. (2010) describe individuals who join a firm in the same year as a cohort due to their highly similar experiences, creating intra-cohort homogeneity in work-related outcomes. At the organizational level, cohorts can be groups of organizations founded simultaneously (Marquis & Qiao, 2023). Imprinting and cohort effects are sometimes used interchangeably, e.g., by Wyrwich & Krause (2011), who use both concepts to explain differences in outcomes between organizations founded during the later period of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and firms who were present in the first years of GDR's existence. However, Marquis and Tilcsik (2013) argue that they are distinct because imprinting implies resistance to environmental pressures outside sensitive periods of focal entities, while cohorts change as their environment changes.

2.3 Theoretical comparison

In this section I provide a comparative analytical overview of the theories discussed based on their view on 1) historical periods, 2) actors' agency, 3) micro-foundations, and 4) the environment of the organization.

Historical periods. Marquis and Qiao (2023) analytically distinguish two stages of the historical past to describe how history matters in organizations. *Junctures* refer to brief periods during which organizations establish routines, practices, and traditions that persist over time. *Processual period*s refer to a longer timespan following a juncture during which past influences can either *strengthen*, *weaken*, or become *preserved* (stay stable). The theories discussed differ in what constitutes a juncture and what occurs with past influences during processual periods. In path dependence and escalation of commitment, the juncture refers to the first event or decision that sets processes into motion. In imprinting theory, the juncture is the brief moment of susceptibility during which the imprinting occurs. In path dependence and escalation of commitment, the processual

period *strengthens* the influence of the events or decisions made during the juncture. In both theoretical frameworks, alternative options or courses of action become more limited over time for organizational actions due to reinforcing mechanisms as described in path dependency (e.g., switching costs) or mechanisms as "sunk costs" that motivate organizational actors to heighten the commitment to a chosen decision. Path dependence and escalation of commitment can lead to lock-in scenarios, where breaking the path or de-escalating commitment is complex. In imprinting, a processual period *preserves* the imprint. There is no specific argument for reinforcing mechanisms that strengthen the imprint, only that they persist when focal actors are not sensitive to environmental changes.

Agency. The discussed theories differ in how they depict the decision-making capacity of actors within organizations. Path dependence and escalation of commitment theories describe actors as highly agentic, as their decisions during the juncture periods eventually set the path-dependent processes in motion. Even in processual periods, both theories predict actors to make decisions, although in ways that strengthen the path. When reaching the lock-in scenario, the actors' agency reduces drastically as alternative options are out of reach. The agency plays a minor role in the imprinting theory. Imprinting occurs regardless of whether organizational actors are aware that it does, e.g., through role socialization. However, as Johnson (2007) illustrates, founders' choices play a role during junctures by selecting elements from the environment to incorporate into organizations.

Microfoundations. Theoretical micro foundations describe the motivations that drive actors' behavior. Most path-dependence literature stems from the economic field, based on the microfoundational framework of rational choice theory. Path dependence is thus generally believed to result from rational costs-benefit calculation at the micro level by the actors involved (Alexander, 2001). Historical sociologists like Mahoney (2006) expend economic calculus with concerns for the legitimacy of actors. The escalation of commitment literature replaces the strict rationality assumption with that of *bounded rationality* (Simon, 1955), where decision-makers and actors are rational within certain limits and are susceptible to biases. Biases of decision-makers in the escalation of commitment framework include self-justification of past decisions (Bazerman et al., 1984) and "sunk costs" (Boettcher III & Cobb, 2009; Oliver, 1997) that prevent them from making the most optimal decisions—the most board assumptions on individual micro-foundations in imprinting studies that discuss processes at the individual level. Individual decisions are mainly driven by imprinted "cognitive models" and normative values (e.g., Dokko et al., 2009). Although imprinting theory allows for rational costs-benefit calculations, as imprinted practices may benefit organizational actors with vested interests in maintaining

these practices, the emphasis is on cognitive schemes and normative assumptions that tell them what organizations should look like and how to perform work.

The environment of the organization. The external environment of organizations constrains, sustains, or motivates organizational behavior, but theories differ through which elements of the environment history can exert influence. Path dependence research, in line with economic institutionalism, emphasizes the role of market dynamics and transaction costs that constrain individuals in their decision-making and drive path-dependent processes (as described in the high switching costs as one of the reinforcing mechanisms). Historical sociologists adopt a broader concept of the environment beyond economic conditions and institutions (Mahoney, 2000), involving reproducing mechanisms as power and legitimacy as drivers of path dependency.

The discussion on external environments needs to be more extensive in the escalation of commitment literature, which is unsurprising given the literature's roots in laboratory behavior experiments. Some studies that do engage with external conditions follow economic institutional theory and emphasize the role of market dynamics (DeTienne et al., 2008). A growing stream of studies adopts a broader view by including cultural influences on decision-making (Keil et al., 2000) and the role of legitimacy (Nite et al. 2019) in explaining the escalation of commitment.

Imprinting theory adopted a broad view of the external environment from its very beginning. Stinchcombe's (1965) study considers a diffuse set of environmental conditions that become imprinted in organizations at the time of their founding, including economic or technological conditions at the time of the founding, as well as power relations, societal norms, and culture. While studies emphasize economic forces more (Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006), the main thrust of the literature puts culture or norms at center stage (Dobbin, 1994; Johnson, 2007; Kimberly, 1975).

It is important to note that while the theories have their differences in their mechanisms and ways they manifest, they can overlap - one example being that escalation of commitment is a path dependent process. Another example, albeit not yet addressed in literature, is that the founding conditions of an organizations that produce long-lasting imprints can set a path-dependent process in motion.

2.4 Data considerations for empirical research on history and persistence in organizations

Capturing the complex processes described in the theories is a formidable empirical challenge. For path dependency and escalation of commitment, Vergne & Durand (2010) argue that the main challenge is to identify lock-in scenarios as they only become visible "in the long run". It is hard to predict when they will occur. Thus empirical studies that show the whole process can only be *ex post* case studies and detailed analyses of the sequences (Bennett & Elman, 2006). A drawback of case study methods is generalizability. Vergne & Durand (2010) suggest that developing more robust research designs, such as simulations (e.g., Vidovics-Dancs et al., 2014), experiments (e.g., Min et al., 2018), and causal modeling, can allow producing evidence of path-dependent processes outside of specific historical case studies (Vergne & Durand, 2010).

Long-term longitudinal datasets combining information on several units of analysis, such as individuals, organizations, and industries, are among the best options for studying organizational imprinting (Simsek et al., 2015). Digitized administrative registers are a promising source, as illustrated in a study by Wiersma et al. (2024), who used linked microdata linking companies, functionaries, and employees to reconstruct past careers of public directors and document the impact of their imprints and by Ashworth et al. (2023) who used governmental register data to study the effect of organizational conditions at the time of appointment on the career development of women in public service organizations. A significant challenge to empirically investigating imprinting is the direct observations of imprinting dynamics at the micro level. Longitudinal survey datasets containing information on organizational actors' ideology and strategic thinking complementing data on the context (industry, market dynamics) may provide researchers insights into the "black box" of imprinting (Simsek et al., 2015). An exemplary study by De Cuyper et al. (2020) of a social venture used several data collection techniques, including ethnographic observations, which allowed them to closely observe the organization and its actors and relate their insights to the organization's cultural framework.

Quantitative studies of organizational persistence can draw on a few long-term and large-scale data sources on historical populations of organizations. Most prominent is the Yearbook of International Organizations (Boli & Thomas, 1999; Smith & Wiest, 2012), which systematically collects data on international (non-profit and non-governmental) organizations and enables the study of organizational populations and phenomena from the 19th century onwards. Examples of recent historical sociological work using the Yearbook as a data source are works on wars and international organizations (Troost &

van Leeuwen, 2023) and temporal patterns of international conferences (Grandjean & Van Leeuwen, 2019). The Yearbook volumes' ongoing digitization holds much promise for studying environmental imprinting processes on individual organizations and collectives.

2.5 Conclusion and suggestions for future research

This chapter offered an overview and analytical comparison of prominent theories that explain the persistence of the past in organizations. There is ample room for future development and exploration in this field. In path dependence research, reinforcing mechanisms of legitimacy, power, and cognition are still largely understudied compared to economic reinforcing mechanisms. There is also a call for more knowledge on the "breaking of paths" or the creation of "on-path changes" (Sydow et al., 2020) to help explain how organizations escape lock-in scenarios.

The escalation of commitment literature mainly focuses on unsuccessful (in some cases, disastrous) outcomes. However, there are instances when a "bad decision" results in a successful outcome, despite negative feedback and loss of resources. It is an open question if decision-makers can push through because they possess crucial knowledge or expertise, enabling them to foresee a positive outcome. Nite et al. (2019) highlight clashes between actors and their stances toward escalating behavior as an essential new research avenue. Such clashes may occur because certain actors might view committing to a particular course of action as detrimental. However, others may still be optimistic or perceive it as legitimate. Studying these processes, however, requires a theoretical focus shift from individual to group-based, relational processes.

In imprinting literature, there are ample studies on the importance of an organization's founding phase, as that is an event that will *always* form an imprint that lasts. Only recently have scholars studied how these founding imprints develop over time (De Cuyper et al., 2020) through imprint reinforcement, reforming, coupling, and sedimented imprint formation. The five-year study of a joint venture by Cuyper et al. (2020) shows that the initial imprint persists, but its function can change over time. Understanding longer timespans of how imprints can stick but manifest themselves differently over time is worthy of further exploration. Research on imprint formation after the founding phase is also limited. Organizations may experience events or "shocks" such as a pandemic (George et al., 2023) that open them up for learning and reinventing themselves, which can lead to the formation of new imprints. How these new imprints interact with existing imprints is still unclear. Finally, we need to learn more about how imprints may transfer from one organization to another through the inter-organizational job mobility of top management

or mergers and takeovers. In a study on the adoption of temporary employment in Dutch public organizations, leaders that switch from the private to the public sector carry over their “private-sector imprints” that impact the adoption of contested private-sector practices in the Dutch public sector (Wiersma et al., 2024). This framework could extend to other organizational environments with opposing traditions and practices, where leadership change or takeovers might transfer practices from one environment to another. A proper theoretical lens to view these processes is the “negotiated order” perspective (Hallett, 2010), which argues that external environments impact organizations through interactional/relational processes between organizational participants. It is an interesting question: What happens when different imprints (e.g., carried by organizational leaders) collide? Do unique, negotiated adaptations form -such as in the case of Johnson’s (2007) study of the Paris opera - which incorporate imprints from multiple sources?

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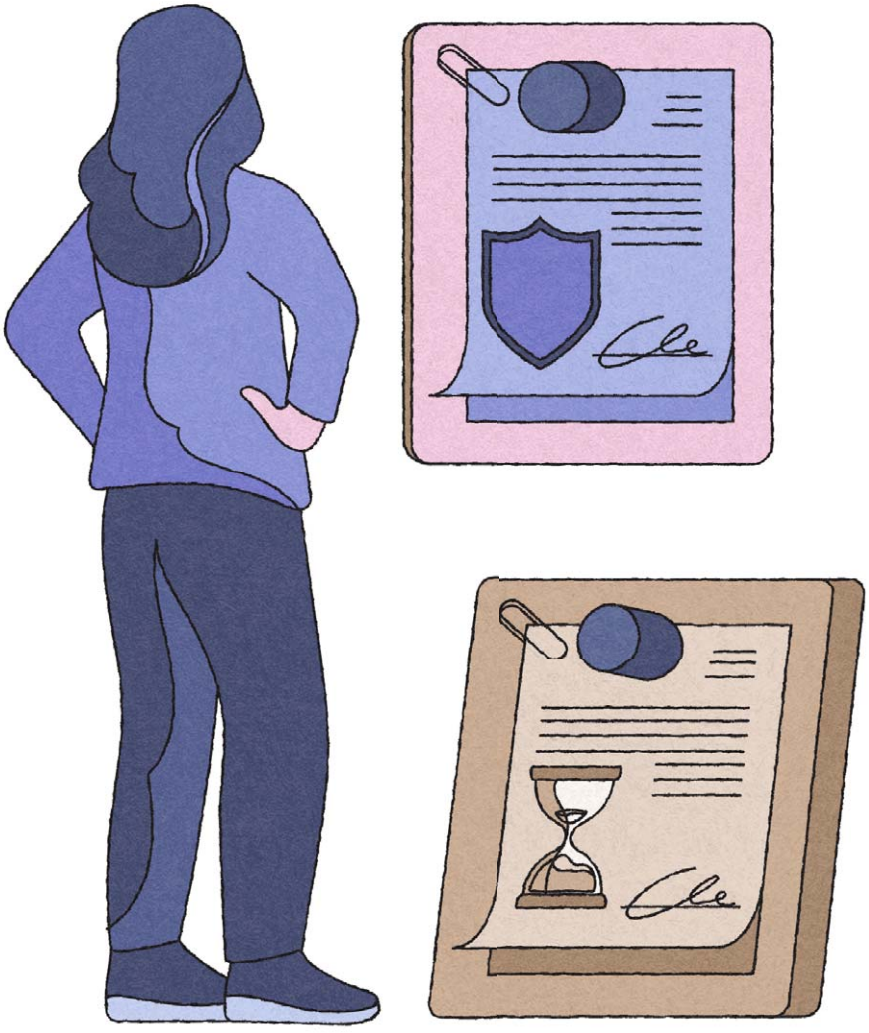
Chapter 3



Imprinting and Contested Practices. The Impact of Public Directors' Private Sector Experience on Temporary Employment in Dutch Public Organizations

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Abstract

This chapter studies how organizational leaders' early private-sector leadership experiences impact adoption of a contested organizational practice, temporary employment, in public organizations. We employed unique organization/year-level register panel data on the executive careers of the directors of Dutch public organizations and the prevalence of temporary employment in organizations they lead. Fixed-effect regression analyses of 29,031 organization/year observations between 2006 and 2019 show greater use of temporary employment in public organizations when directors have early private-sector executive experience. We found a similar impact of leaders' imprinted experiences in "fully" public and "hybrid" organizations that combine public and private sector elements. We discuss implications and suggestions for future studies on organizational leaders' role in contested practice adoption in the public sector.

"The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain, floating in mid-air, until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life." – Jane Addams (1860-1935), written in The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements (1892).

3.1 Introduction

In recent decades, public organizations in Western societies have increasingly adopted personnel practices originating from the private sector (Knies et al., 2022). Among the variety of new practices in public organizations, "soft" human resource management (HRM) practices are popular, as their focus on development and wellbeing fits with public organizations' traditional employment model emphasizing stable organizational careers and long-term employment. They align with societal expectations of public organizations as "model employers" (Boyne et al., 1999; Kalleberg et al., 2006; Knies & Leisink, 2018). However, it is puzzling how "hard" HRM practices (e.g., performance metrics, low wages) that are incongruent with public employment also took root in public organizations (Conley, 2006; Knies et al., 2022). Temporary employment is arguably among the most controversial practices, as it contradicts central tenets of job security and long-term career development (Leisink & Boxall, 2021; Mevissen et al., 2015). Temporary employment violates the image of public organizations as "exemplary" employers, triggering negative reactions from societal stakeholders concerned with public organizations' treatment of public employees, such as trade unions, citizens, and politicians on the political left (Leisink & Boxall, 2021; Shire & Van Jaarsveld, 2008).

Opposition to the use of temporary employment has manifested itself in several ways, such as in strikes (NOS, 2018), public labor unions writing appeals in which they urge politicians to revalue the principles of public-sector employment (SCO, 2021), and politicians developing plans to increase the attractiveness of permanent employment in the public sector (Hoofdlijnenbrief Arbeidsmarkt, 2022).

Earlier studies on the adoption of private-sector organizational practices in public organizations refer to institutional pressure from government austerity (e.g., due to increasing national debt) and New Public Management (NPM) (Drechsler, 2005; Farazmand, 2002; Filipovic, 2005) as important antecedents. These institutional processes suggest isomorphism between private and public organizations, and to a certain extent, such convergence in management practices of the two sectors could be observed (Knies et al., 2022; Leisink & Boxall, 2021; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2010). However, they cannot explain the adoption and use of contested practices in and of themselves. The incongruence of these practices with the traditional employment model and the strong

opposition from stakeholders both constitute strong countervailing institutional pressures favoring the rejection of controversial practices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

The literature on contested practices argues that characteristics of influential organizational actors (e.g., executives, CEOs) are key to understand how contested practices are adopted (Fiss & Zajac, 2004; Kraatz et al., 2002), as these actors have the power to generate change in organizational practices (Hwang & Colyvas, 2019), even when facing opposition (Kraatz & Moore, 2002). Focusing on corporate leaders' cognitive schemas and educational socialization (DiMaggio, 1997; Fiss & Zajac, 2004), Sanders and Tuschke (2007) show that CEO's participation in MBA programs positively impacts the local adoption of contested practices from the broader business environment, and Acemoglu et al. (2022) found that the business school background of CEOs affects wage-setting policies in the companies they lead.

Public management research, following the upper echelon tradition (Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1987), investigates the transformation of executive identities in the public sector (Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006). This stream of literature suggests that during the past two decades, the background of public leaders changed, with previous executive experiences in private organizations becoming more common (Frederiksen & Hansen, 2017). Emerging scholarship on leadership succession and "sector switching" investigates the effects of new leaders' "publicness fit" (Petrovsky et al., 2015), in particular on organizational performance (Boyne, 2002; Boyne et al., 2011; James et al., 2021).

The current literature has yet to address to what degree new public directors' previous leadership experience in private organizations affects contested practice adoption in public organizations. Building on career imprinting theory (Higgins, 2005), and specifically sector imprinting (Boardman et al., 2010), we propose several mechanisms.

First, we argue that leadership experiences during early phases of a leader's career have a stronger imprinting effect than experiences in later career phases. Early careers are highly formative periods that also have a lasting impact on decision-making behavior later in the career (Higgins 2005). They also make directors with such early imprints more weakly "embedded" (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006) in public organizations compared to leaders who spent their formative leadership periods in public organizations. This experience makes them more aware and supportive of temporary employment practices that are common and legitimate in private organizations. It also tempers their concerns for reputational damage from adopting contested practices.

Second, we argue that the number of board members with previous experience in the private sector affects public organizations' adoption of temporary employment. Such

boards will pay greater attention to private sector practices, which fosters adoption of contested practices in two ways (Cho & Hambrick, 2006): Such teams will have better access to information about private sector practices, and the attentional patterns of the team tend to be strongly influenced by new team members. Third, we argue that organizational hybridity (i.e., organizations not being "fully public") can either temper (buffer mechanism) or boost (reinforcement mechanism) the impact that newcomers from the private sector will have on the adoption of temporary employment practices.

We test our hypotheses with a large-scale linked employer–employee register dataset from the Social Statistics Database (SSB) of the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) 1, which links the complete population of employees and companies and identifies organizational leaders and their prior careers. It allows reconstruction of the career histories of the complete population of public directors, measuring early-career exposure to the private sector and investigating its impact on the use of temporary employment in public organizations in the period of 2006–2019.

Our study enriches current knowledge in three ways. First, previous public management research on career background found differences between public and private directors (Boyne, 2002) and detected effects on the performance of public organizations (e.g., Boyne et al., 2011; James et al., 2021; Petrovsky et al., 2015). We argue and find that career background also affects the adoption of HRM practices. Second, we add to the literature on changing personnel policies in public organizations (Boyne et al., 1999; Kalleberg et al., 2006; Knies et al., 2022; Knies & Leisink, 2018) by specifying an important condition under which a HRM practice, which breaks with traditional public employment values, is introduced despite wide and heavy contestation. Finally, we contribute to the literature on organizational imprinting by addressing the underexplored role of powerful actors' experience from a different environment. Whereas previous research on private sector imprinting has focused on individual-level outcomes (Boardman et al., 2010; Lapuente et al., 2020), our study shifts attention to the agency of these powerful organizational actors and the impact of their actions on organizational level outcomes.

3.2 Theory

Contested Practices: Temporary Employment in Public Organizations

Public organizations' personnel policies traditionally reflected Weberian principles of bureaucracy (Leisink & Boxall, 2021), including tenure-based promotion and high levels of employment security. Reform programs, such as New Public Management (NPM),

introduced a focus on efficiency and effectuated changes in personnel policies. Multiple studies (Boyne et al., 1999; Kalleberg et al., 2006; Knies et al., 2022; Knies & Leisink, 2018) document public-sector organizations sticking to “soft” HRM practices (Borst & Blom, 2021), emphasizing employee wellbeing, commitment, and long-term career development. Soft HRM also aligns with the public-sector tradition of being an exemplary “model employer” (Knies & Leisink, 2018; Leisink & Boxall, 2021; Morgan & Allington, 2002).

Nevertheless, public organizations have also adopted “hard” HRM practices, which are frequently used in private businesses (Borst & Blom, 2021; Brown, 2004; Knies et al., 2022). The use of temporary employment contracts exemplifies such a “hard” HRM strategy (Conley, 2006; Knies et al., 2022). The resulting numerical workforce flexibility allows firms to quickly adapt to changing economic circumstances. In public organizations, temporary employment contracts also increase flexibility (e.g., when administrations face budget cuts) but break with the traditional bureaucratic principle that rewards civil servants with stable and predictable careers (Leisink & Boxall, 2021; Mevissen et al., 2015).

The Netherlands is one of the leading European countries when it comes to temporary employment (Kösters & Smits, 2015), and its use in Dutch public organizations has increased in recent decades (Dekker, 2017). Based on our own calculations made with data from Statistics Netherlands, employment statistics show that in 2019 one in five Dutch public employees were employed on a temporary contract. The adoption of temporary employment practices has generated opposition, public debates, and open contestation from internal and external key stakeholders of public-sector organizations in the Netherlands. Dutch and international studies document the dissatisfaction of public employees with the “hard” HRM approach (Gorgievski et al., 2019; Lim & Pinto, 2009; Moloney et al., 2018). Similarly, surveys of Dutch employees indicate preferences for stable, permanent employment (Donker van Heel et al., 2013), and temporary employment contracts in the public sector are associated with high degrees of perceived job insecurity (Leisink & Boxall, 2021).

Dutch unions, as key stakeholders concerned about employee security and wellbeing (Sowa, 2021), therefore heavily criticize the practice of temporary employment (Shire & Van Jaarsveld, 2008) and advocate policies regulating the use of temporary contracts (SCO, 2021). Opposition from internal and external stakeholders fuels an ongoing social and political debate, documented in a series of advisory reports to the Dutch government regarding employment policy (Commissie Regulering van Werk, 2020; Euwals et al., 2016).

Finally, temporary employment is contested in academic and professional circles, as it potentially harms the sustainability of public services (Leisink & Boxall, 2021) and the creation of "public value" (Moore, 1995). Many fear that temporary employment undermines public employees' commitment, which is critical for maintaining high-quality public services, in particular given that citizens became more demanding than ever (Den Dulk et al., 2021).

Public Organizations: Imprinting and Contested Practice Adoption

Institutional theorists label practices that "face stiff opposition from key constituents in potential adopters' primary institutional environment" as "contested practices" (Sanders & Tuschke, 2007, p. 34). We opt to use the concept of "environment", as it incorporates both the more specific notions of "field" (used in the institutional literature on contested practices) and the notion of "sector" (employed in connotation with employment experiences of public-sector managers and decision makers). It is unclear why organizations adopt contested practices, given the risk of being sanctioned or stigmatized (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Sutton & Callahan, 1987). However, they are frequently used, as two studies illustrate. Fiss et al. (2012) demonstrate the spread of "golden parachute" contracts, which compensates top executives if their firms are taken over. This practice is widely diffused, despite fierce opposition from shareholders and policy makers. Sanders and Tuschke (2007) examined the diffusion of stock option pay in Germany. This practice runs counter to core values of Germany's stakeholder-oriented governance principles.

There is growing consensus in the literature that contested practices originate in environments where they are less or not contested and diffuse through organizational imitation (Sanders & Tuschke, 2007). This, however, does not automatically translate to the legitimation of these practices. Jung and Mun (2017) demonstrate that even when the majority of the organizations in an organizational field "mimic" each other's practices, this does not lead to a greater perceived legitimacy of these practices (cf. Colyvas & Jonsson, 2011). Their study shows that Japanese organizations' downsizing met initial opposition, as it contradicts widely shared norms of lifetime employment. Hardly any important stakeholder considered downsizing practices as legitimate, even once they were widely used. Similarly, despite becoming widely used, temporary employment is unlikely to become legitimate *within* the Dutch public sector and is therefore likely to meet contestation. Merely considering diffusion processes does not help us understand how practices subjected to contestation are adopted in organizations.

We suggest that weakly embedded yet powerful organizational actors such as public directors are key in adopting contested practices. Powerful actors have the capacity to transform institutions (Pacheco et al., 2010), but strong embeddedness in the field may be an obstacle for them to become initiators of practice change. Tight entanglement with a field and its conventions may reduce awareness of alternative practices, nourish skepticism and opposition to them, and come with feelings of obligations to stakeholders in the field whose interests do not align with contested practices. Advocacy for and implementation of contested practices is therefore likely to originate from actors who are powerful but "weakly embedded" in the field. They are more aware of and can draw on inspirations from *outside* (Kraatz & Moore, 2002) their current field of employment and have less vested interest in maintaining current practices.

Early career imprinting can be an important source of a director's weak embeddedness in the public sector, for several reasons. First, cognitive schemas (DiMaggio, 1997) acquired during a leader's formative years help them understand and evaluate developments in the broader business environment and translate and transfer contested practices to local use (Sanders & Tuschke, 2007). While there could be subsequent imprints during their later career trajectory and in other organizations, imprinting effects have been found to be strongest during the initial phase of a manager's career. Leaders' early exposure to organizational environments leaves a so-called career "imprint" (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013), impacting their future managing style and decisions (e.g., Higgins, 2005; Phillips, 2005; Schoar & Zuo, 2017). During these early phases, individuals are particularly susceptible to influences from their organizational environment (i.e., organizational culture and practices, mentors and peers). The socialization effect of these early formative experiences is strong enough to affect how an individual responds to and reflects on new job situations (Dokko et al., 2009; Higgins, 2005). They are likely to rely on these experiences when they must handle the uncertainties of a completely new role (Marquis & Tilcsik 2013). Early career experiences may thus persist even after leaders switch from one environment (e.g., private sector) to another (e.g., public sector).

Second, sectors are strong imprinting environments. Studies on sector-switching managers show that early career "sector imprinting" (Boardman et al., 2010) leaves a mark on the core organizational values and norms that directors identify with. This mark persists even after they switch sectors (Bozeman & Ponomariov, 2009; Su & Bozeman, 2009). For example, directors switching from the private to the public sector retain core private sector management values such as efficiency and results orientation (Lapuente et al., 2020).

Third, as cognitive schemes acquired during early private sector exposure also tend to persist later in their career, managers who switch from the private to the public sector show lower person–organization fit and a higher level of dissatisfaction with formalized rules and "red tape" than non-switchers (Chen, 2012).

Fourth, the choices and behaviors of co-workers and mentors (Azoulay et al., 2017) leave imprints during the early career phase. Directors with private-sector experience are more inclined to "mimic" managerial orientations and behaviors of the senior managers they worked with during their formative private sector executive periods.

Finally, early directorial career experiences in the private sector leave imprints on their personal networks. Social ties to former colleagues in the private sector may not only be a persisting source of information and support (McEvily et al., 2012) but also stimulate contested practice adoption through vicarious learning and encouragement. In contrast, directors whose professional networks mainly consist of public-sector actors opposing the practice may experience reputational threat when they advocate practices contested within the field (Davis, 1991).

In sum, compared to organizational leaders who started their careers in the public sector, public-sector directors who started their career in the private sector are weakly "embedded" (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006): They are more likely to develop familiarity with temporary employment, identify more strongly with core private-sector values based on efficiency that motivate the use of this practice, are less attached to public-sector employment's traditional commitment to permanent, life-time employment, and are likely to be influenced by private-sector contacts.

We therefore expect a higher proportion of organizational leaders with early-career experience in the private sector to increase the likelihood that private-sector imprinted experiences influence executive decisions (Cho & Hambrick, 2006):

H1: A higher proportion of directors in a public organization's board who had their early executive experience in the private sector leads to a higher proportion of temporary employment contracts.

Fully Public vs. Hybrid Organizations: Organizational Embeddedness and Degrees of Contestedness

The mechanism behind early-career imprinting effects reflects the strong and lasting impact that previous embeddedness in a specific social context may have on individual decisions and behavior at later career stages. Of course, current organizational context

conditions also matter (Dacin et al., 1999). We argue that the degree of an organization's publicness represents another important dimension of organizational embeddedness that is likely to affect adoption of context practices. Organizations are "fully public" if they are entirely owned and funded by the government and if their main stakeholders are political authorities (Rainey, 2014), such as NHS hospitals in the UK. Organizations combining private and public-sector elements are referred to as "hybrids" (e.g., Brandsen & Karré, 2011; Doherty et al., 2014; Kickert, 2001; Rainey, 2014). Public hospitals in the Netherlands are hybrid, as part of their funding must be acquired in competition with other hospitals (Leisink & Boxall 2021; Rainey, 2014). The difference between fully public and hybrid organizations may result in temporary employment practices facing different degrees of contestedness. We argue that the potential impact of private-sector imprinting on contested practice adoption is less straightforward in hybrid than in fully public organizations because in hybrid organizations, it may trigger two competing microfoundational mechanisms.

First, for hybrid organizations, independently of the presence of board members with private-sector experiences, temporary employment practices are likely to be more salient to boards, and leaders may already be familiar with their adoption. As a result, the relative impact of new members joining from the private sector is likely to be weaker when adopting temporary employment. We refer to this process as the buffer mechanism, as organizational hybridity weakens the effect of private sector imprinting on contested practice adoption.

Second, private-sector career imprints may have a stronger impact on contested practice adoption in hybrid than in fully public organizations, as temporary employment may be considered more legitimate. Leaders may thus expect less opposition to its adoption. New leaders with a private sector background joining the team may further strengthen the team's favorable stance toward the use of these practices. We refer to this process as a reinforcement mechanism.

Both mechanisms predict that organizational hybridity affects the impact of private-sector imprinting, but they lead to competing predictions, with the buffer mechanism leading to a negative moderation and the reinforcement mechanism resulting in a positive moderation. We therefore formulate the following undirected moderation hypothesis:

H2: Organizational hybridity moderates the relationship between the proportion of directors in a public organization's board who had their early executive experience in the private sector and the proportion of temporary employment contracts.

3.3 Data and methods

The results of this study are based on calculations by the authors using non-public microdata from Statistics Netherlands on the complete population of individuals and companies[1]. The micro datasets we used were composed of i) tax records, to obtain information on employment contracts of individual employees and the company they work for; ii) company registers of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce (KVK), to obtain information on organizations (e.g., sector, size) and their directors (start and end dates of appointments); and iii) population administration, to obtain demographic information on individuals (e.g., age, gender).

The Dutch Chamber of Commerce includes registrations of directors at the executive level (in Dutch: *bestuurders*), which is the level at which we expect decisions on employment strategies. To illustrate, the Dutch police has 10 regional units and a national unit. A chief of police, who is supported by four other directors (Politie.nl, n.d.), leads all these units. A Dutch ministry, such as the Ministry of Health, consists of several departments, all with their own director (e.g., Department of Sport, Department of Pandemic Preparedness). These directors are responsible for policy development and implementation and chair meetings on ministry-wide decisions on personnel policies (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2021).

We compiled a unique dataset, reconstructing the past career of each director of a public organization using information on the start and end dates of each of their directorial jobs. After linking information on the sector of the organizations that they had managed in the past, we were able to determine whether their earliest observed executive experience was in the private or public sector. We aggregated this information per year and organization to obtain the percentage of directors on the board with imprinted career experiences in private organizations. Finally, we linked aggregate data on employment contracts of employees (available from 2006 onwards) per year and organization to board composition of private career experience, which enabled assessment of how the presence of imprinted private-sector career experiences impacts organizations' use of temporary employment.

In 2019, the average number of directors per organization was 3.05. All variables pertaining to information on directors (age, work experience, gender, etc.) represent the mean across directors per public organization, per year.

The final dataset was an organization/year-level panel for the period 2006–2019. There were 2,854 public organizations with an observation period of at least one year, with an average of 2,113 organizations per year. The total number of observations was 29,031.

Research on sector-switching managers thus far has relied on survey data (Boardman et al., 2010; Chen, 2012; Lapuente et al., 2020). For our purpose, to study imprinted experiences and focus on top managers (i.e., directors) as a research population, register data has distinct benefits. First, a register data enabled us to reconstruct careers, and this approach reduces bias due to respondents' inaccurate recollections of experiences (Lapuente et al., 2020). Second, compared to surveys, company registers do not suffer from bias from low response, which hampers studies on top managers (Card et al., 2010). Submission of the registration of companies and the start and finish of tenure of organizational leaders to the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce is mandatory; therefore, we do not expect major biases due to omissions. Of course, register data is not free from error, e.g., miscategorizations due to administrative error could still induce bias. Nevertheless, Statistics Netherlands has a legal obligation to publish high-quality and reliable microdata; it continuously checks the quality and consistency of its data and corrects errors. One distinct problem with register data is that administrative concepts (e.g., categorization of organizations) may not correspond to the theoretical concepts that scholars want to measure. However, CBS publishes a highly detailed, 53-category sector code that combines organizational activity (e.g., government, financial institutions, education) and ownership of the firm (public, private, foreign) (see Statistics Netherlands definitions in Chi, 2016). This level of detail enabled us to distinguish between fully public, hybrid, and private organizations.

We consider organizations fully public if they correspond to Rainey's three criteria (2014): Fully government owned, fully government funded, and the government has full authority over their operations. In the Netherlands, organizations with "classic government" fulfill all these criteria (see Chi, 2016). Examples of Dutch "fully" public organizations are local governments, ministries, statutory social insurance funds, the police, and institutions involved in the administration of justice. We labelled all organizations that partially but not fully meet the criteria for "fully" public as hybrid organizations. These include public organizations such as pension funds, over which the government has authority but are not fully government owned and funded (e.g., debts of these public organizations are not included in government shortages). Other examples are schools, universities, and hospitals (not fully funded by the Dutch government), the Central Bureau of Statistics, and the Chamber of Commerce (carry out government tasks, but the government does not have full authority). Organizations that do not meet any of the three criteria for publicness were coded as private organizations. The Dutch government has no decisive control over, does not fund, and does not own these organizations (Chi, 2016).

Variables

Dependent Variables

Proportion of Employees with Temporary Contracts. The monthly tax registers document the type of employment contract (fixed-term or permanent) of all Dutch employees. We calculated the relative size of the temporary workforce per public organization at the end of the year (December). As the proportion of employees with a temporary contract can change throughout a year, possibly influencing our results, we operationalized the relative number of employees with a temporary contract in several ways. We calculated this for all jobs registered during a year, for all jobs in the organization on January 1 and December 31. We conducted our analyses for all alternative operationalizations of the proportion of temporary contracts but found no significant differences between these model specifications. We report the proportion of temporary employment at the end of the year, measured in December.

Hybrid Organization. To test the second hypothesis, we created a dummy (0 = fully public, 1 = hybrid) indicating a hybrid organization. We identified public and hybrid organizations through a detailed, 53-category sector code that combines organizational activity (e.g., government, financial institutions, education) and ownership of the firm (public, private, foreign) (see Statistics Netherlands definitions in Chi, 2016).

Independent Variable

Directors' First Management Experience in a Private/Public Organization[3]. For every public director, we created a dummy indicating whether the first managing job they had was in a private organization (0 = no, 1 = yes). Aggregating this information to the organizational level, we created a variable measuring the proportion of directors in the board who had their first managing job in the private sector each year.

Control Variables

We expected several other factors that could confound the impact of career imprints on temporary employment, which we controlled for in the analyses.

Directors' Previous Management Experience in a Private Organization. One objection to our proposed mechanism is that directors may be recruited for their private-sector experience to initiate or manage organizational change. As first private experience and recent private experience likely correlate, selection could have biased our estimates of early-career imprinting if not adjusted for. Under the likely assumption that recruitment to

senior leadership positions typically focuses on recent experience and it is uncommon to specifically select leaders based on first experience, a regression adjustment (control) for previous private-sector executive experience can "block" confounding causal pathways (Morgan & Winship, 2007, p. 67). Adjusting for previous private-sector experience in our models therefore remedied selection bias. However, if selection effects did not exist or were small, including later private-sector experiences as a control could have downward biased the coefficient of imprinting because later experiences partially mediate the impact of early imprinting. As it is highly plausible to expect selection effects when studying change in executive positions, we expected upward and downward biases to cancel out each other. We could not ascertain if selection biases were substantial or small and therefore opted for a conservative estimate by including later experiences as controls.

For every public director, we reconstructed their past executive career (e.g., starting and finishing dates of each directorial jobs) to determine whether the executive position they had *before* starting their present public-sector executive job was in the private sector. Directors without a previous executive job were coded as missing values. Aggregating this information to the organizational level, we obtained a variable indicating the proportion of public board members whose previous executive job was in the private sector.

Average Age of Board Members. We controlled for directors' average age per year per public organization, as older management teams may be less open to organizational change (for an overview, see Tarus & Aime, 2014).

Female Directors on the Board. We controlled for gender composition due to evidence of differences in the decision making of male and female organizational leaders (e.g., DiTomaso & Hooijberg, 1996; Millward & Freeman, 2002; Sonfield et al., 2001). We used a dummy indicating the director's gender (0 = male, 1 = female) and calculated the proportion of female directors per year per public organization.

Maximum Tenure on the Board. We calculated the number of years each public director worked at their current organization. The variable reflects the number of years of the board member with the longest organizational tenure on the board. Controlling for tenure addressed potential confounding due to the embeddedness of directors (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006): Longer-sitting board members could negatively influence the adoption of a contested practice and may also be less likely to hire directors with a different background.

Size of the Board. We controlled for the number of directors per public organization, as larger boards could constrain strategic change (Tarus & Aime, 2014).

Organization Size. We controlled for organization size, as many studies emphasize a link between organizational size, complexity, and the adoption of innovations (for an overview, see Damanpour, 1992). We defined organization size as the number of employees. We excluded organizations with fewer than 10 employees, as we believe personal relations may influence employment strategy in small-sized organizations.

Organizational Events. We controlled for organizational demographic events within a year that could influence board change and an organization's employment practices. We created dummies (0 = no, 1 = yes) for four organizational events: 1) birth of an organization, meaning that the organization first appeared that year; 2) death/collapse/combination birth and death of an organization, meaning that the observed year is the last time this organization appeared in the records (0 = no, 1 = yes); 3) the organization splits, merges with another organization, or is taken over by another organization; 4) the organization restructures.

We conducted additional analyses adding a dummy variable indicating the event of a new member joining the board team of a public organization to see whether personnel change in the board, rather than director background, influences the adoption of temporary employment. We included this variable as a control variable, but it did not alter the results of our analyses presented in this article. For the sake of model parsimony, we decided to omit this variable from the final analyses.

Table 3.1 shows the descriptive statistics of all variables in our dataset. We included values for skewness and kurtosis to check the need for adjustments if variables were highly skewed. Organization size shows a severe left-skewed distribution due to several organizations with many employees. In the analyses, we therefore used the log of organization size.

Table 3.1: descriptive statistics of the variables in our dataset*

	Observations	Mean	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Proportion of temporary workers	29,031	.206	.171	2.382	10.226
Directors' early private-sector experience (proportion)	29,031	.497	.396	.093	1.442
Directors' last private-sector experience (proportion)	18,498	.846	.310	-1.896	5.179
Average age of management team members	29,031	52.741	6.785	-.258	2.412
Female directors (proportion)	29,031	.230	.304	1.279	3.719
Maximal tenure in management team	29,031	7.778	5.699	1.833	8.284
Organization size	29,031	245.220	545.554	6.841	71.356
Organization size (log)	29,031	2.507	1.350	.371	2.615
Board size	29,031	3.560	2.95	1.182	4.042
Type of organization (0 = no, 1 = yes)					
Fully public	8,941 (30.8%)				
Hybrid	20,090 (69.2%)				
Organizational events (0 = did not happen, 1 = did happen)					
Birth	469 (1.6%)				
Death/collapse/combination birth and death	170 (0.5%)				
Split/merge/takeover	695 (2.3%)				
Varia/restructuring	226 (0.7%)				
Observations	29,031				
Average number of public organizations per year	2113				

*Minimum and maximum values cannot be included here due to identification risk

Figure 3.1 shows the proportion of temporary employment in all public organizations between 2006 and 2019. The figure shows that in 2006, the proportion of public employees with a temporary contract was already relatively high at 17.83%. This increased to 21.59% in 2019. We found no significant differences in the development of temporary employment rates between fully public and hybrid organizations.

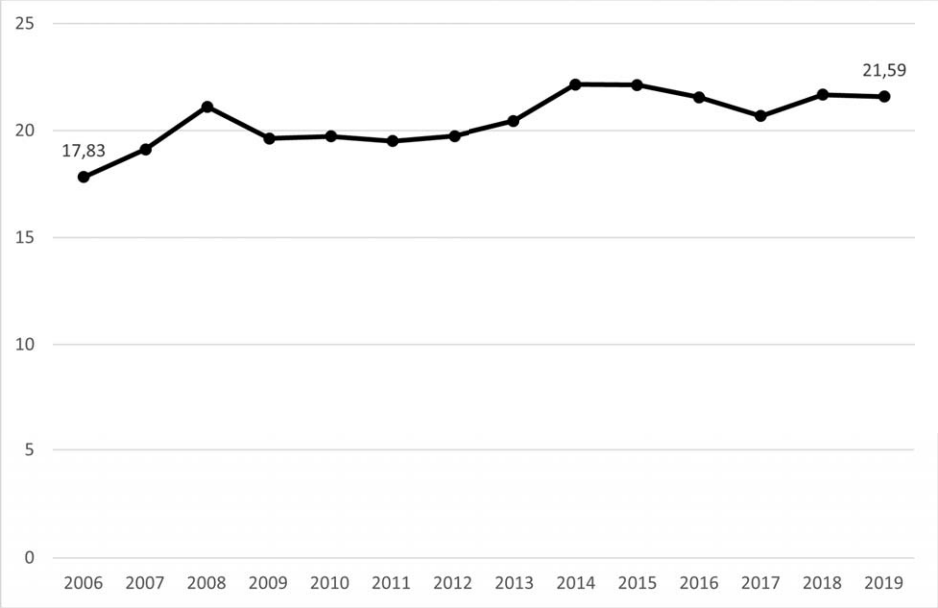


Figure 3.1: percentage of temporary employment in Dutch public organizations

Analysis

Our data required the use of fixed-effects regression models, including organization and year fixed effects (Wooldridge, 2015). Organization fixed effects controlled for possible time-invariant heterogeneity among organizations (e.g., period of organizational establishment, industry in which organizations operate) that may impact hiring of directors with specific characteristics and the use of employment practices. We also included year fixed effects to eliminate the impact of common temporal shocks (e.g., political cycle changes, changing economic conditions, changing labor laws). Our analyses utilized within-organization variation in the predictors and outcomes that was specific to the organization and not explained by common trends that may affect all organizations. Not all organizations had measurements for each year, resulting in an unbalanced dataset, but the fixed-effects estimation routines we used (Stata's *xtreg*) make the necessary adjustments and provide robust results when dealing with unbalanced data (Wooldridge, 2010, p. 830, 2015, p. 447). While fixed-effects analysis is highly suited for our data, this strategy does come with limitations, such as a lower statistical power (Hill et al., 2020). Most important to our application are, however, omitted variable bias by time-varying confounders. As a (quasi)-experimental design was not possible, we took substantial effort to control for plausible time-varying characteristics. Nevertheless, we cannot entirely rule out that there are non-observed characteristics that we don't account for in our analyses.

Board compositional changes (e.g., new directors bringing in private-sector executive experience) do not instantly influence an organization's employment practice. Strategic decisions on employment practices may involve planning and negotiations, and their effect takes time to appear. We therefore lagged our variables containing information on directors' private-sector experience by two years (T-2). We also took into account that our control variables pertaining to board composition (age, gender, maximal tenure, board size) may influence the decision to hire someone from the private sector. To control for such selection effects, we lagged these control variables by three years (T-3). As a check, we ran our analyses with a one-year lag for our explanatory variables, and two-year lag for the control variables (results not shown). As expected. these models show a weaker effect for imprinting, and poorer model fit.

All our models included the control variables. We used the log of organization size in our analysis to adjust for the left-skewed distribution due to a few organizations with many employees. To test our second hypothesis, we included an interaction term between the type of organization (0 = fully public, 1 = hybrid) and directors' early private-sector experience (proportion). Including an interaction effect requires the main effect of both variables to be included in the model (Agresti & Finlay, 2014, p. 343). However, the main effect for the type of organization is omitted from our results, as fixed-effects analysis only allows inclusion of variables that change over time (Wooldridge, 2015, p. 435). It is, however, possible to interact a time-constant variable with a variable that changes over time.

All models were checked for multicollinearity using VIF values, and we found no issues (Agresti & Finlay, 2014). Our analyses included fully robust standard errors and test statistics by clustering to reduce bias due to heteroscedasticity and autocorrelation in our data (Wooldridge, 2015, p. 459).

3.4 Results

Table 3.2 presents the results of a panel regression with organization and year fixed effects, with the proportion of temporary employment as the dependent variable. Model 1 includes directors' early private-sector experience and all control variables (with the exception of previous private-sector executive experience, the most likely confounder). We found that a change in early private-sector experience on the board of directors was positively associated with an increased use of temporary employment in the organization ($p<0.05$). Model 2 shows that directors' previous private-sector executive experience positively influenced the proportion of temporary contracts in a public organization;

however, the effect was very small and statistically insignificant when early private sector experience was not included in the model (p>0.05; b=0.001). When we included directors' early private-sector experience, total private-sector executive experience, and all other controls together in the model (model 3), the significant positive effect of the early private-sector executive experience persisted (p<0.05; b=0.017). To interpret the effect size, we imagined a board of 10 members where a director with a private imprint joined. Two years later, the proportion of temporary employment increased by 1.5%. We did not see a significant positive effect of total private-sector executive experience on the adoption of temporary employment practices. We thus found support for our first hypothesis that early-career private sector experience in management teams impacts contested practice adoption in public organizations. These results were robust to controlling for selection effects (e.g., recruitment of directors with recent private-sector experience and other compositional features of the board that impact hiring decisions). Of the control variables, we only found one organizational event that negatively influenced temporary employment in public organizations (death/collapse/combination birth death of an organization) (p<0.01; b=-.042).

To test our second hypothesis, we include an interaction between directors' early private management experience and hybrid vs. "fully" public organizations. The results are shown in model 4. We found private career imprints of directors to have a slightly stronger influence on the adoption in hybrid organizations than in "fully" public organizations (b=0.003); however, the result was not statistically significant (p>0.05). We cannot conclude that hybrid organizations moderate the relationship between private imprints and the adoption of temporary employment in public organizations. We found no evidence for our second hypothesis. We conducted additional exploratory analyses (see table A1.1 in the appendix) to see whether private imprints are distinct from hybrid organizational imprints. We did not find evidence that hybrid imprints impact adoption of temporary employment in Dutch public organizations.

Robustness checks

We conducted several additional analyses to ensure our findings were robust. First, we employed the fractional regression method suitable for modelling proportions as outcomes as a robustness check. As standard software does not facilitate fixed-effects fractional regression, we controlled for each firm by including a dummy for each category. The results strongly resemble the linear models (table A1.2 in the appendix of this chapter). We report the latter because they allow higher computational efficiency and more straightforward interpretations.

Table 3.2: Linear fixed-effects regression results for public organizations' use of temporary employment contracts*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Directors' early private-sector experience (proportion)	.015*		.017*	.015
	(.006)		(.009)	(.026)
Directors' last private-sector experience (proportion)		.001	-.003	-.004
		(.007)	(.008)	(.008)
Directors' early private-sector experience (proportion) * Hybrid organization (0 = no, 1 = yes)				.003
				(.024)
Average age of board members	<-.001	<-.001	<-.001	<-.001
	(<.001)	(<.001)	(<.001)	(<.001)
Female directors (proportion)	-.003	-.002	-.001	-.002
	(<.001)	(.008)	(.009)	(.009)
Maximal tenure in board	<-.001	<-.001	<-.001	<-.001
	(<.001)	(<.001)	(<.001)	(<.001)
Organization size (log)	.031**	.019	.020	.020
	(<.001)	(.012)	(.012)	(.012)
Board size	.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	(<.001)	(<.001)	(<.001)	(<.001)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	.031	-.041**	-.042**	-.042**
	(.029)	(.010)	(.010)	(.011)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	.002	<-.001	<-.001	<-.001
	(.005)	(<.001)	(<.001)	(<.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.008	-.013	-.013	-.013
	(.008)	(.010)	(.010)	(.010)
Adjusted R^2	.699	.726	.727	.727
Observations	20,418	12,815	12,815	12,815
Number of organizations	2469	1881	1881	1881

Models include organization and year (2006-2019) fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < 0{,}05$; **$p < 0{,}01$

*The main effect for type of organization: hybrid (0 = no, 1 = yes) is omitted due to the variable having no variance over time

Second, to investigate the possibility of autocorrelation bias, we included our dependent variable (t-3) as a control variable (table A1.3 in the appendix). The results do not alter our conclusions from our main analyses.

Finally, there may be a discontinuity of the effect of directorate imprint on temporary work use if organizations strive for a flexible component of approximately 20% of their employees. Above this threshold, there could be additional barriers to implementing flexible employment and to imprinting having an impact. Table A1.4 in the appendix shows models with an interaction term between our explanatory variables and (1) whether an organization's proportion of temporary employment was under 20% at the beginning of the observation period, and (2) after the organization exceeded the 20% threshold (lagged with two years as directorate imprints). There is no evidence of a threshold effect in these models.

3.5 Conclusion and discussion

In recent decades, "hard" HRM practices popularized in business settings have become staple features of public employment. This diffusion has occurred despite the poor "fit" of these practices with traditional notions and practices of public employment, such as secure jobs and life-long employment, triggering disapproval and contestation from external and internal stakeholders. In line with recent efforts in organizational scholarship to understand organization-level and agentic processes constituting the "microfoundations" of institutional change (e.g., Powell & Rerup, 2017; Ruotsalainen, 2019), we provided an actor-focused account of contested practice adoption in the public sector. Focusing on the use of temporary employment, we studied whether directors' early career experiences—imprints—in fields where contested practices have legitimacy can further our understanding of how such practices overcome contestation. We used unique, linked employer–employee administrative data from the Netherlands to capture directorate careers, and our longitudinal analyses show that a higher prevalence of early-career private sector imprinting in boards of directors increases the extent of temporary employment use within public-sector organizations.

Our main finding is in line with accounts of the growing influence of organizational leaders in the public sector (e.g., Boyne, 2002; Boyne et al., 2011; James et al., 2021), owing to the influx of executives with diverse past experiences to the private sector (e.g., Boardman et al., 2010; Frederiksen & Hansen, 2017), and growing managerial autonomy (e.g., Fiss & Zajac, 2004; Hwang & Colyvas, 2019; Kraatz et al., 2002; Kraatz & Moore, 2002). While existing studies on "publicness fit" document how new public leaders' backgrounds impact organizational performance (James et al., 2021), our results show the transformational influence on organizational practices. Processes that follow public-sector reforms (Knies & Steijn, 2021) generate more room for personal influence and agentic processes in public organizations, which have traditionally only been attributed to the private sector (Nieto Morales et al., 2013). The findings also imply that research on public-sector HRM practices would benefit from complementing its current focus on organization-level strategic and organizational fit (Boselie et al., 2021; Wood, 1999) and macro-level environmental contingencies (Boxall & Purcell, 2000) as drivers of HRM practice adoption in public organizations with studies on the influence of key organizational decision makers. A related literature in sociology on the nature and origins of the changing employment relationship (Cappelli, 1998; Kalleberg, 2011; Spreitzer et al., 2017) is similarly focused on macro-economic processes and institutions (e.g., Bidwell, 2013; Cobb, 2015). It has paid less attention to organizational processes and agency that explain the spread of contested employment practices.

We suggest three main avenues for future research that link public-sector decision makers to contested organizational practices and that have the potential to overcome limitations of scope and data in our current study: Individual-level cognitive and motivational processes of imprinting and contested practice adoption, the interplay of imprints with relational processes of organizational practice adoption, and variation by organizational and institutional characteristics.

Cognitive and Motivational Processes. Our study built upon, but could not directly observe, cognitive and motivational processes of how directors with private sector imprints interpret and evaluate contested practices. Similarly, we only theoretically established how experiences and knowledge acquired during imprinting motivate leaders to keep these practices in their leadership repertoire. A fruitful avenue could be to study managers' own recollections of the process of deciding on using practices that are contested in the public sector. This approach would illuminate how managers draw on their experiences to justify the use of these practices (Bisel et al., 2017; Söderlund & Borg, 2018). In addition, managerial narratives could shed light on the cognitive process of how managers reconcile tensions involved in using these practices.

While our study shows how imprints developed during a key transition period (e.g., first executive experience) impact future organizational outcomes, it is important to note that individuals can experience several transition periods during their lives (McEvily et al., 2012). For directors, studies note that imprints do not only develop during their professional career but also stem from educational or social class background (Kish-Gephart & Campbell, 2015; Sanders & Tuschke, 2007). A worthwhile avenue for future research is to make the contextual and internal processes explicit that underlie learned behavior and see how early imprints influence the development of new ones (Cowen et al., 2022).

Relational Processes. Beyond the individual decision maker, imprints may intersect with relational processes and shape the implementation of contested practices in public-sector organizations. While cognitive features of board directors can impact board functioning, studies document how relational equality and degree of information sharing between main actors (e.g., directors) also play a large role (Cowen et al., 2022). Earlier research suggests that organizational practices are adopted (and enacted) as "negotiated orders" following relational and interactional processes between organizational participants at and below executive level (e.g., worker's councils, members of the directorate) (Hallett, 2010). It could be fruitful to compare the leadership of organizations with public and private sector influence and study how imprinted experiences and leadership repertoires enter the negotiation process of adopting employment practices (or other contested

HR provisions, such as performance pay) and the final form these practices take when implemented. An important and theoretically relevant consequence could be that contested practices transform during the negotiation process of implementation, forming unique adaptations "on the ground" that incorporate elements from both the origin and the destination environments.

Organizational and Institutional Variation. We advocate further research into the embeddedness of agentic influences on organizational practice adoption in different types of organizations and institutions (Breaugh & Hammerschmid, 2021; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2010; Paauwe & Farndale, 2017). In the current study, we explored variation by types of public-sector organizations and did not find differences between fully public and hybrid organizations, which may be related to countervailing buffering and reinforcing mechanisms. We would need more fine-grained data on decision-making processes within boards of directorates to disentangle these mechanisms. A potentially interesting source of organizational variation could be distinguishing first and late adopters, which we could not undertake due to our data being limited to an observation period between 2006 and 2019. Organizations that are the first to violate norms and values in an institutional field are the most susceptible to opposition in the field (Sanders & Tuschke, 2007), but it is less known to what degree imprints play a role in "pioneering" new and contested practices in the private sector. More importantly, it was beyond the scope of our single-country study to capture institutional variation in the processes we studied across administrative traditions (i.e., the distinction between sovereign and model employer; see (see Bach & Kessler, 2021, and Peters, 2021) and different degrees of centralization and individualization of decision making (Meyer & Hammerschmidt, 2010). These institutional influences are relevant to consider in future theorizing on imprinting mechanisms, as they potentially shape the contestedness of private-sector practices in public organizations, in addition to the recruitment process and values of public-sector executives and their executive decision-making latitude. For example, countries following the sovereign model tradition, such as France, emphasize an active role of the state and stronger attachment to public employment traditions. Here, civil servants enjoy a distinctive status and employment, which continues to reflect Weberian principles (Bach & Bordogna, 2011). Temporary employment is expected to face more contestation in the public sector in France, where it violates both the image of public employers and the status and lifelong employment tradition associated with civil servants. In addition, administrative traditions impact recruitment channels of leaders (e.g., institutions and typical career ladders) and their value orientations, which may intersect with early-career imprints in the process of decision making.

The processes we studied are also embedded in institutionalized participatory decision making (e.g., employee representation and workers council) and systems that vary in their degree of centralized decision making. These institutions will likely shape how strongly the executive level (and imprints of directors) can influence practice adoption. The Netherlands leans toward more decentralized decision making, characterized by involvement of lower-level organizational actors and less autonomy of individual leaders (Meyer & Hammerschmidt, 2010), which may explain the modest effect sizes in our study. However, even in decentralized HRM systems, lower-level management is involved in decisions on HRM practices and employment strategy. Therefore, decentralization does not directly translate to individualized lower-level decision making; rather, lower levels of management participate by providing input in strategizing on HRM and employment practices (Meyer & Hammerschmidt, 2010). We can still reasonably expect high-level decision making—and, as we theorized, imprints—to be consequential for the overall degree of temporary employment use. While it was beyond the scope of our research to investigate the role of institutionalized forms of stakeholder involvement in decision making, we see it as a fruitful avenue for research on private-sector imprinting and contested practice adoption.

It is important to note that our study only focused on temporary employment, but there are many more instances of "contested" private-sector practices that are contested in public-sector organizations, such as the use of performance indicators (Van Dooren et al., 2015). While temporary employment is highly contested and polarizes organizations and management teams, our research calls for further, preferably comparative, research on practices with different degrees of contestedness in the field.

In sum, our article contributes to endeavors to understand adoption of institutionally contested practices in public organizations. Our results support and further encourage the growing interest in the role of organizational leaders in organizational change (Carberry & Zajac, 2021) and the study of contested practices (Sanders & Tuschke, 2007). We have furthered the understanding of the adoption of contested practices by incorporating the mechanism of imprinting (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). We encourage scholars to explore specific mechanisms by which individual pasts affect the organizational present.

3.6 Appendix

Table A3.1 Linear fixed-effects regression results for public organizations' use of temporary employment contracts – exploratory analyses for hybrid-sector imprint.*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Directors' early hybrid experience (proportion)	-.017 (.020)		.015 (.032)	.018 (.035)
Directors' last hybrid experience (proportion)		004 (.007)	.008 (.007)	.009 (.007)
Directors' early private-sector experience (proportion)	.001 (.019)	.018* (.009)	.033 (.034)	.032 (.034)
Directors' early hybrid experience (proportion) * Hybrid organization (0 = no, 1 = yes)				-.004 (.017)
Average age of board members	<-.001 (<.001)	<-.001 (<.001)	<-.001 (<.001)	<-.001 (<.001)
Female directors (proportion)	-.003 (.006)	-.002 (.008)	-.001 (.009)	-.002 (.009)
Maximal tenure in board	<-.001 (<.001)	<-.001 (<.001)	<-.001 (<.001)	<-.001 (<.001)
Organization size (log)	.032** (.009)	.020 (.012)	.021 (.012)	.020 (.012)
Board size	.001 (<.001)	.001 (<.001)	.001 (<.001)	.001 (<.001)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	.030 (.029)	-.041** (.010)	-.041** (.010)	-.041** (.011)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	.002 (.005)	-.001 (.005)	-.001 (.005)	-.001 (.005)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.008 (.008)	-.013 (.010)	-.013 (.010)	-.013 (.010)
Adjusted R^2	.699	.726	.727	.727
Observations	20,418	12,815	12,815	12,815
Number of organizations	2469	1881	1881	1881
Models include organization and year (2006-2019) fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses. *$p < 0{,}05$; **$p < 0{,}01$				

*The main effect for type of organization: hybrid (0 = no, 1 = yes) is omitted due to the variable having no variance over time

Table A3.2: Fractional regression results for public organizations' use of temporary employment contracts *.

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
Directors' early private-sector experience (proportion)	.101*		.115*†	.098
	(.042)		(.060)	(.182)
Directors' last private-sector experience (proportion)		.001	-.027	-.029
		(.048)	(.052)	(.052)
Directors' early private-sector experience (proportion) * Hybrid organization (0 = no, 1 = yes)				.024
				(.167)
Average age of board members	-.003	-.003	-.003	-.003
	(.003)	(.004)	(.003)	(.004)
Female directors (proportion)	-.023	-.014	-.008	-.010
	(.045)	(.060)	(.059)	(.058)
Maximal tenure in board	-.004	-.003	-.002	-.002
	(.003)	(.004)	(.004)	(.004)
Organization size (log)	.197**	.116	.122	.122
	(.061)	(.083)	(.083)	(.083)
Board size	.010	.002	.004	.003
	(.005)	(.006)	(.006)	(.006)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	.230	-.241**	-.247**	-.258**
	(.229)	(.025)	(.024)	(.033)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	.015	.001	-.002	-.002
	(.037)	(.037)	(.037)	(.037)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.074	-.112	-.120	-.121
	(.068)	(.089)	(.089)	(.088)
McFadden's Pseudo R^2	.107	.111	.111	.111
Observations	20,574	13,022	13,022	13,022
Number of organizations	2777	2776	2776	2776

Models control for organization and year (2006-2019) with dummy fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses.
** $p < 0{,}05$; * $p < 0{,}01$
† marginally significant ($p = .054$)

*The main effect for type of organization: hybrid (0 = no, 1 = yes) is omitted due to the variable having no variance over time

Table A3.3: Linear fixed-effects regression results for public organizations' use of temporary employment contracts – robustness analysis of controlling for lagged dependent variable*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Directors' early private-sector experience (proportion)	.015*		.017*	.014
	(.006)		(.008)	(.026)
Directors' last private-sector experience (proportion)		.001	-.003	-.003
		(.007)	(.008)	(.007)
Directors' early private-sector experience (proportion) * Hybrid organization (0 = no, 1 = yes)				.004
				(.024)
Proportion temporary employees in organizations (T-3)	.030	.023	.023	.023
	(.020)	(.026)	(.026)	(.027)
Average age of board members	<-.001	<-.001	<-.001	-.001
	(<.001)	(.001)	(<.001)	(.001)
Female directors (proportion)	-.003	-.002	-.001	-.001
	(.007)	(.009)	(.009)	(.008)
Maximal tenure in board	-.001	<-.001	<.001	<-.001
	(<.001)	(.001)	(<.001)	(.001)
Organization size (log)	.030**	.018	.019	.019
	(.008)	(.012)	(.012)	(.012)
Board size	.001	<.001	.001	.001
	(<.001)	(<.001)	(.001)	(.001)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	.031	-.040**	-.041**	-.042**
	(.030)	(.010)	(.009)	(.011)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	.002	<-.001	-.001	-.001
	(.005)	(.005)	(.008)	(.005)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.008	-.013	-.013	-.015
	(.008)	(.010)	(.010)	(.010)
Adjusted R^2	.699	.727	.726	.726
Observations	20,418	12,815	12,815	12,815
Number of organizations	2469	1881	1881	1881

Models include organization and year (2006-2019) fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses.
$^{**}p < 0{,}05$; $^{*}p < 0{,}01$

*The main effect for type of organization: hybrid (0 = no, 1 = yes) is omitted due to the variable having no variance over time

Table A3.4: Linear fixed-effects regression results for public organizations' use of temporary employment contracts – robustness analysis of flexibility threshold at first observation*

	Model 1	**Model 2**
Directors' early private-sector experience (proportion)	.037*	.018*
	(.016)	(.009)
Directors' last private-sector experience (proportion)	-.004	-.012
	(.008)	(.014)
Directors' early private-sector experience (proportion) * first observation temporary employment under 20% (0 = no, 1 = yes)	-.027	
	(.018)	
Directors' last private-sector experience (proportion) * first observation temporary employment under 20% (0 = no, 1 = yes)		.011
		(.016)
Average age of board members	<-.001	<-.001
	(<.001)	(.001)
Female directors (proportion)	-.001	-.001
	(.009)	(.009)
Maximal tenure in board	<-.001	<-.001
	(<.001)	(<.001)
Organization size (log)	.021	.020
	(.012)	(.012)
Board size	.001	.001
	(<.001)	(<.001)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	-.042**	-.041**
	(.009)	(.010)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	<-.001	-.001
	(.005)	(.005)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.013	-.013
	(.010)	(.010)
Adjusted R^2	.726	.727
Observations	12,815	12,815
Number of organizations	1881	1881
Models include organization and year (2006-2019) fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses.		
$^{**}p < 0{,}05$; $^{*}p < 0{,}01$		

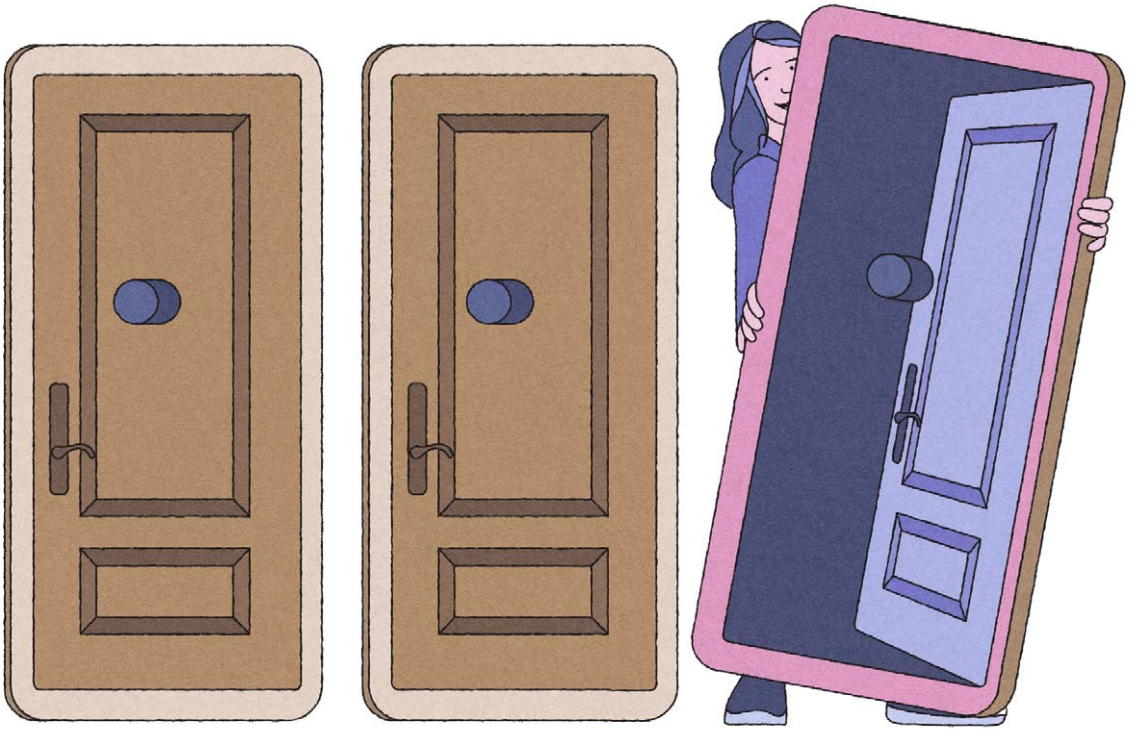
*The main effect for first observation temporary employment under 20% (0 = no, 1 = yes) is omitted due to the variable having no variance over time

Table A3.5: Linear fixed-effects regression results for public organizations' use of temporary employment contracts – robustness analysis of flexibility threshold (2-year lag)

	Model 1	**Model 2**
Directors' early private-sector experience (proportion)	.002 (.013)	.017† (.009)
Directors' last private-sector experience (proportion)	-.003 (.008)	-.006 (.010)
Organization's temporary employment exceeds 20% (0 = no, 1 = yes)	-.001 (.007)	.007 (.010)
Directors' early private-sector experience (proportion) * organization's temporary employment exceeds 20% (0 = no, 1 = yes)	-.023 (.014)	
Directors' last private-sector experience (proportion) * organization's temporary employment exceeds 20% (0 = no, 1 = yes)		.004 (.010)
Average age of board members	<-.001 (.001)	<-.001 (.001)
Female directors (proportion)	-.001 (.009)	-.001 (.009)
Maximal tenure in board	<-.001 (.001)	<-.001 (.001)
Organization size (log)	.020 (.012)	.020 (.012)
Board size	.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	-.042** (.009)	-.042** (.009)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.001 (.005)	-.001 (.005)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.014 (.010)	-.013 (.010)
Adjusted R^2	.727	.727
Observations	12,815	12,815
Number of organizations	1881	1881

Models include organization and year (2006-2019) fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses.
$^{**}p < 0{,}05$; $^{*}p < 0{,}01$
† marginally significant ($p = .053$)

Chapter 4



Change Agents with a Past: Female Executives' Early-Career Contexts and Gender Equality at Workplaces

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This chapter is based on a paper that is currently under review at an international journal: Wiersma, S., Lippényi, Z., & Abendroth, A. K. (2024). Change Agents with a Past: Female Executives' Early-Career Contexts and Gender Equality at Workplaces.

Abstract

This chapter studies the role of early career experiences in female organizational leaders' impact on workplace gender equality. Connecting literature on change agency with career imprinting, we present novel theorizing on how representation and power of women in leadership experienced early in managerial careers shape female leaders' impact on differences in outcomes between men and women. We used longitudinal register panel data on employee wages and linked it to the executive careers of the directors of Dutch organizations between 2006 and 2019. Fixed-effects panel regression analyses demonstrate that female organizational leaders exposed to female peers in directorate boards and a female CEO during their first managerial role are likelier to become "agents of change" by furthering female employees' wage progression and chances of receiving a permanent contract. Our study enriches the agents of change literature by drawing attention to the influence of early career experiences on female leaders' impact on gender equality in workplaces.

4.1 Introduction

Women are increasingly occupying high-ranking corporate positions (e.g., Jacobs, 1992; Sánchez-Teba et al., 2020); however, it remains debated whether gender diversity in the corporate top fosters equality between men and women in wages and career opportunities at lower organizational ranks. Female executives are potentially influential "agents of change" to challenge workplace gender inequality. As executives, they are visible and engage in decision-making processes affecting the entire organization and its employees (Neely et al., 2020). Findings on women's impact on top management positions are, however, mixed: studies either report no, negligible, or even negative effects on gender pay differentials (Dwivedi & Paolella, 2024; Srivastava & Sherman, 2015; van Hek & van der Lippe, 2019, 2023; Zimmermann, 2022) or only among low-paying and less competitive organizational ranks (Abendroth et al., 2017). Surprisingly, most evidence on "change agency" arises from studies on female mid-level managers and supervisors who personally mentor, hire, and promote employees (Abendroth et al., 2017; P. N. Cohen & Huffman, 2007; Fuller & Kim, 2024; Hultin & Szulkin, 1999, 2003; Kurtulus & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012; Skaggs et al., 2012; Stainback & Kwon, 2012; Stojmenovska, 2019); nevertheless, their impact on policies and the firm's overall culture is negligible compared to high-level executives.

A possible explanation for mixed findings may be variations in female executives' past experiences in socialization and corporate settings. Socialization into roles shapes actors' cognition, internalized norms, and future actions (DiMaggio, 1997). There has been considerable evidence that organizational leaders' experiences in early career contexts are highly influential in interpreting their later choices (Azoulay et al., 2017; Higgins, 2005; Kacperczyk, 2009; McEvily et al., 2012; Tilcsik, 2012). Recent studies also present evidence that leaders' early socialization and career experiences extend to organizational outcomes, such as wage-setting (Acemoglu et al., 2022), occupational activism in the field of sustainability (Augustine & King, 2024), the use of temporary employment (Wiersma et al., 2024) and corporate social responsibility (Choi et al., 2023), in the firms they lead. Regarding gender, experimental social psychological work suggests that female leaders' identification with women at lower ranks and femininity is affected by exposure to norms of masculinity and experiences of sex prejudice and misogyny while climbing the male-dominated managerial career ladders (Derks et al., 2016; Ellemers et al., 2012). However, the role of leaders' imprinted past experiences has not yet been explored in the literature on female executives' impact on gender equality in firms.

The present study breaks new ground in the agents of change literature by addressing female leaders' early managerial experiences of influencing wage and employment

inequalities between men and women on the work floor in organizations they lead later in their careers. We build on the concept and theory of career imprinting, which posits that individual experiences at sensitive points of their careers, such as the first experience in a new organizational role, have a long-lasting influence on their later dispositions and actions (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). While there is work on organization-level imprints of gender equality—for example, a study on how imprinted gender hierarchies are transmitted across Silicon Valley law firms through founders (Phillips, 2005)—the role of leaders' career imprints has not been featured in organizational gender inequality literature.

We present novel theorizing on potential ways how imprints from leaders' early role socialization contexts impact gender equality in the organizations they lead. Our main argument is that the context of role socialization into leadership—captured by the first top management assignment—leaves imprints on managers that shape their managerial decisions and personal agency, subsequently impacting organizational outcomes regarding (in)equality through relational processes. We developed two mechanisms through which the context of managers' first leadership role affects their likelihood of becoming an agent of change. First, we expect female directors exposed to female peers in the boardroom to develop cognitive schemas and internalized norms that make them more sensitive to women's workplace positions. We labeled this as the *representation imprint* as encountering women in leadership normalizes female representation in higher organizational ranks and justifies actions towards mentorship and advocacy. Second, we expect that experiencing a female leader in the highest corporate position (CEO) early in their managerial careers constitutes an empowering role model that makes female directors more likely to become agents of change. We refer to this the *empowerment imprint*, highlighting the conceptual and theoretical distinction between women's presence and power in corporations (Kanter, 1977).

The context of our study is the Netherlands, a developed Western economy which similarly to other OECD countries is characterized by persisting gender equality in wages (Jung et al., 2022) and underrepresentation of women in corporate power: less than 25% of high-ranking management positions are held by women (Eurostat, 2023). We use linked employer-employee register data from the Social Statistics Database (SSB) of the Statistics Netherlands (CBS)[4], between 2010 and 2019 on wages, employment, and demographic information for the entire population of workers. A unique feature of the register microdata of the Netherlands is that it contains longitudinal information on directorate appointments for the population of companies, alongside demographic and

[4] CBS microdata is non-public but accessible for statistical and scientific research. For further information, contact: microdata@cbs.nl

wage information on company directors. This allowed us to reconstruct the gender composition of organizational leadership and the career histories of the complete population of directors of Dutch organizations and link them to the wage and employment outcomes of employees. One limitation of our data is that we observed high-level executives and not all managerial layers. We followed Zimmerman's (2022) strategy, leveraging the possibilities of large-scale population data by comparing results from large firms with small and medium organizations where managerial and supervisory roles typically coincide.

We considered two persistent forms of gender (in)equality in organizations as study outcomes. Since women earn less and receive fewer promotions in companies (Blau & DeVaro, 2007; Deschacht, 2017; Penner et al., 2023), we study the gender differences in earnings. Specifically, we studied the differential wage growth of men and women within employment spells and how changes in managers' gender and imprinted experiences impacted such differentials. Second, we examined the differential likelihood of female employees obtaining a permanent employment contract relative to men. Employment contracts are less often studied than wages as a source of gender inequality, although several studies indicate that compared to their male colleagues, female employees are likelier to be employed on a temporary, precarious work contract and have lower prospects of obtaining permanent organizational positions (Bryson, 2004; Giesecke & Groß, 2004; Latner & Saks, 2022).

Our findings provide consistent support for our theoretical argument that female representation and empowerment encountered in early career contexts have an enabling effect on women in powerful organizational positions to promote gender equality. An important implication of our research for future theorizing about gender inequality in organizations is that hegemonic masculine cultures and norms in professions (Blair-Loy & Cech, 2022; Neely, 2022) can be countered by experiences in local organizational socialization.

4.2 Theory

Gender inequality, organizational leaders, and the role of early experiences

Relational inequality theory argues that social relationships produce the categorization of people and value attributions, which are activated in the process of claims-making for organizational resources and result in inequality (Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019). Beliefs about particular jobs, occupational positions, and how workers' performance is

valued are inherently linked to gender categories (Britton & Logan, 2008). Dominant in most cultures, gender is a socially constructed (dichotomous) difference between males and females, and these images of gender are reinforced and perpetuated in organizations (Acker, 1990, 2009). Inequality is shaped by individuals assigning specific characteristics and roles to women and men, especially in the workplace (Glick et al., 2004; Heilman, 2012).

Historically, management positions in organizations are male-dominated, and women have been underrepresented (Cook & Glass, 2014). This phenomenon has trickled down in gendered assumptions that shape organizational practices such as wage setting (Acker, 2009). Gendered stereotypes on who belongs in what position present themselves in beliefs that men are the more natural leaders, decreasing women's legitimacy for claims of higher organizational positions (Ridgeway, 2001). When women *do* reach higher positions, they often have to work harder than men at the same occupational level to be perceived as competent (Trzebiatowski et al., 2023); they are reviewed negatively for demonstrating leadership qualities that male leaders value (Correll et al., 2020), and are under larger scrutiny from shareholders compared to their male counterparts (Gupta et al., 2018). Stojmenovska (2023) reports that women in positions of power experience more bullying and intimidation in the workplace and have lower levels of job resources (see also Schieman et al., 2020).

The literature is divided on whether the relatively few women who reach the highest echelons are advocates of gender equality. One thread of the literature argues that despite being in management, women still occupy devalued positions (Duguid, 2011). Due to "glass ceilings" in management positions, women mainly interact with high-ranking men. In her classic study, Kanter (1977) describes how being a woman in a male-dominated environment comes with performance pressures and stereotyping. Being a minority, women may be deterred from challenging the gender status quo due to anticipation of threats and negative reactions from male co-workers (e.g., Domen et al., 2022). With no female peers to support them, it is more difficult for women to challenge gender hierarchies. Thus, male-dominated environments reduce the likelihood of solidarity and identification with other women in the organization and promote internalizing negative gender stereotypes (Katz et al., 2002). Adapting themselves to these masculine cultures could result in a so-called "queen bee" behavior: women in management distancing themselves from women with lower positions in the organization. Importantly, this is a self-group distancing response rooted in career experiences in a sexist environment (Derks et al., 2016). Existing evidence for such processes mainly concerns experimental studies manipulating conditions to study leaders' attitudes. Our study aims to capture the impact of actual socialization contexts of leaders on organizational gender equality outcomes.

At its core, imprinting theory states that (1) individuals encounter transition periods where they are highly susceptible to influences from the environment, (2) during which imprints develop that reflect elements from this environment, and (3) these imprints persist despite individuals moving on to a different environment (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013, p. 199). The early career phase is a particularly sensitive period when individuals are susceptible to environmental influences (Dokko et al., 2009; Higgins, 2005; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; McEvily et al., 2012) due to a great degree of uncertainty, change, and the need to adjust to their new environment (Higgins, 2005; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). During this time, individuals are particularly likely to develop imprints that reflect the early-career environment and persist, causing future actions and behaviors to bear the stamp of the environment they experienced during this sensitive period (Azoulay et al., 2017; Kacperczyk, 2009; Tilcsik, 2012).

In this study, we applied the notion of imprinting and developed new hypotheses on specific ways in which the environment "stamps" itself onto managers (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013).

Representation imprint

Organizational conditions have the power to leave strong imprints since they affect the "taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs, and values" of individuals (Higgins, 2005, p. 10). Dokko et al. (2009) highlight how individuals become familiar with organizational norms and practices during socialization into a new organization. These experiences get stamped onto the individual and are developed into persistent cognitive schemas (DiMaggio, 1997), scripts, and normative assumptions about what is accepted and appropriate in the organization. Organizational leaders' early-career imprints impact their future management style and decisions (Higgins, 2005; Schoar & Zuo, 2017). Therefore, entering a new organizational role, such as becoming a member of the directorate for the first time, is a source of imprinted experiences that have long-lasting impact on actions in similar roles later in the career.

Based on this theory, we expect that experiencing environments with a greater representation of women in high positions will normalize the notion in leaders' perceptions that women can achieve successful careers. Additionally, it will normalize the expectation that organizations should support women's advancement. Furthermore, female leaders with early-career exposure to a higher number of similar-status female peers (i.e., female directors) are less likely to experience gender discrimination and internalize negative stereotypes about women in the workplace. Therefore, they are more likely to advocate

for gender inequality, challenge existing wage and contract inequalities, and encourage other directors to pursue action for gender equality in their organizations (Domen et al., 2022).

However, representation may fail to transmit the role expectations of the change agency since women typically fulfill positions with less power and influence than men in leadership (e.g., Cook et al., 2019). We therefore consider early-career exposure to *powerful and influential* women as potential role models as a second imprinting mechanism.

Empowerment imprint

Individuals are inclined to seek behavioral cues from others in their environment in the initial phase of their careers (Higgins, 2005). Senior, experienced workers, as role models, are important (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013), especially same-sex role models (Eble & Hu, 2017; Kofoed, 2019; Rocha & van Praag, 2020). In a study of the academic field, Azoulay et al. (2017) establish how early-career experienced mentors affect the future work choices of young scientists. Scientists' patenting behavior traces back to their early careers, where they were exposed to their mentor's orientation toward commercial science. Studies in different corporate settings present evidence of similar imprinting processes in operation: fund managers' entrepreneurial choices have roots in founding preferences of experienced co-workers from their early careers (Kacperczyk, 2009), and early ties to mentors impact the future growth of young lawyers' firms (McEvily et al., 2012).

Men are often regarded as the ideal workers and natural leaders, resulting in their dominating higher organizational positions (Acker, 2006; Cook & Glass, 2014). These gender differences also replicate among top executives, with women having lower earnings and less likely to be in strategic leadership positions (e.g., CEO) with power and influence. Therefore, despite being in management, female managers may have imprinted experiences of being less powerful and perceive fewer resources to become agents of change in negotiating resources for their employees (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002). Studies support that women in high organizational positions frequently display self-limiting behaviors due to having difficulty regarding themselves as an adequate leader (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007), and often report lower levels of job resources (Stojmenovska, 2023).

Exposure to a female role model in a powerful position during early role socialization could empower female managers about their abilities and capacity to create change (Eble & Hu, 2017; Kofoed, 2019; Rocha & van Praag, 2020). Evidence for such an empowering effect of imprints comes from a study on new venture creations: Rocha & van Praag

(2020) discover that female founders positively influence the likelihood of joiner women to start a new enterprise.

Imprints in directorate teams

Corporate boards of directors (or top-management teams) have multiple members, all of whom carry imprints from their past role socialization[5]. This is true for male directors as well, whose exposure to female peers and senior women during sensitive periods is likely to lead to the development of gender egalitarian attitudes (see Meuleman et al., 2017 on gender attitudes and exposure to female peers and supervisors in firms)[6]. Based on the attention-based theory of the behavior of demographically and experientially heterogeneous top management teams (Cho & Hambrick, 2006), we expect that boards whose members carry imprints of female representation and empowerment from their past will pay greater attention to gender equity (see Maoret et al., 2024 on attention-based explanation of gender differences in executive compensation). Such supportive contexts, in turn, will lower the perceived barriers for female directors to advocate for gender equality within the firm (Ashford et al., 1998).

Thus, we expect:

H1.1: A higher proportion of women in directorates of organizations will be more likely to positively impact female employees' wage progress relative to men when more directors have early-career exposure to female peers.

H1.2: A higher proportion of women in directorates of organizations will be more likely to positively impact women's chances of obtaining a permanent contract relative to men when more directors have early-career exposure to female peers.

H2.1: A higher proportion of women in directorates of organizations will be more likely to positively impact female employees' wage progression relative to men when more directors have early-career exposure to a female CEO.

H2.2: A higher proportion of women in directorates of organizations will be more likely to positively impact women's chances of obtaining a permanent contract relative to men when more directors have early-career exposure to a female CEO.

[5] We also analyzed a subsample of organizations with a single director, which allows us to disentangle the impact of gender and imprinted experiences at the individual level. The theoretical mechanisms pertaining to top management teams do not apply for these cases.

[6] In addition, supportive men can become allies which reduces feelings of isolation and workplace hostility of managerial women in minority positions (Moser & Branscombe, 2021) and foster the legitimacy of advocating for gender equity (Hussain et al., 2023).

4.3 Data and methods

The results of this study are based on estimations by the authors using non-public microdata from Statistics Netherlands on the complete population of companies, their functionaries, and employees between 2010 and 2019. We linked microdata from four administrative sources. First, we obtained microdata on company functionaries (personal and organizational identification, job type, start and end dates of an appointment) from the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce (KVK) Functionary Register, which includes mandatory (self-)registration of company functionaries. Second, we obtained microdata on organizations (e.g., size and sector) from the KVK Company Register. Third, we used social security registration records to gather information on employees' employment spells, wages, and employment contract types (permanent versus fixed term). Finally, we used municipal registers to obtain demographic information on individuals registered in the Netherlands (e.g., date of birth and administrative sex categories). We combined these data sources using unique company and personal identifiers to construct a linked employer-employee-functionary dataset. Our analyses included all organizations in the public and private sectors and employees on regular employment contracts (excluding internships and sheltered employment).

We selected functionaries from the KVK registers who had executive as the job type (*bestuurder* in Dutch), excluding non-executive functionaries in supervisory roles overseeing the work of executives (*toezichthouder* in Dutch). They are often external, work part-time, are not involved in company operations and strategic decisions, and have little or no contact with the work floor.

We reconstructed the managerial career of each Dutch executive in our data using the dates of assignments. We identified each director's first job spell and observed the gender composition and gender of the directorate's CEO during their *first* executive experience. We also observed the composition of their *current* directorate (e.g., size, age, and tenure). We aggregated this information per year and organization, obtaining a dataset containing one observation per directorate per organization per year. We linked this dataset with individual data on wages and employment contracts of all employees (available from 2010 onwards) per year and organization. This final multilevel and longitudinal dataset enabled us to assess how the changing gender composition of directors and the presence of imprinted career experiences in the directorate impact female and male employees' wage and contract changes.

The final dataset was an individual/year-level panel with 15,129,286 observations for 2010–2019, with an average of 1,526,925 employees per year.

Research on the career history of top managers often relies on survey data (Boardman et al., 2010; Chen, 2012; Lapuente et al., 2020). We used register data, which has distinct benefits for our study. First, director-level organizational leaders are challenging to reach for surveys or interviews (Cycyota & Harrison, 2006), leading to bias from the low response and hampering studies on organizational leaders (Card et al., 2010). It is mandatory to register the companies and share information about their leaders with the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce; therefore, we do not expect large bias due to omissions. Second, register data allowed us to obtain administrative information to reconstruct the careers of company leaders, which is arguably more accurate than respondents' own recollections of past experiences from survey data (Lapuente et al., 2020).

Dependent variables

Hourly wage. The monthly tax register documents information on wages and working hours for all Dutch employees, allowing us to calculate their average hourly wage. We opted for the hourly contractual wage to account for gender differences in working hours (Penner et al., 2023). The Netherlands has a large share of women working part-time (Wielers & Raven, 2013), thus, the hourly wage was preferred over monthly or yearly salary as a wage indicator. We log-transformed the wage variable for our regression analyses.

***Permanent contract*[7].** The monthly tax register documents the type of employment contract (temporary versus permanent) for all Dutch employees. In the Netherlands, a temporary (i.e., fixed-term) contract indicates an employee on a contract with a fixed end date. Temporary employment contracts range from several months to a one- or two-year contract. At the time of writing, temporary contracts can be renewed two times within a period of three years (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Employees holding a permanent employment contract are employed for an indefinite period, only ending when the employee or employer terminates the contract. We created a dummy variable indicating the type of contracts employees have (0 = temporary, 1 = permanent).

Independent variables

Female directors. For each observation in our dataset, we aggregated information on directorate composition. We controlled for the gender composition since multiple studies document variations in the decision-making of male and female leaders (e.g., DiTomaso

[7] CBS microdata only provides information employed by their organizations; we do not have information on non-standard work arrangements such as agency workers.

& Hooijberg, 1996; Millward & Freeman, 2002; Sonfield et al., 2001), and gender diversity in high management positions has been found to impact wage inequality of employees (P. N. Cohen & Huffman, 2007). We used a dummy to identify each director's gender (0 = male, 1 = female) and aggregated this information to obtain the proportion of female directors present in each individual's organization in our dataset per year.

Representation imprint. To test Hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2, we created a variable for all directors in our dataset indicating whether the first executive job they had was in a directorate with a minimum of two female directors present, which are unlikely to capture situations of tokenized minority in the typically small-sized boards (the average board size is just below 3). Aggregating this information to the organizational level, we constructed this variable as a dummy (0 = no directors with a representation imprint, 1 = at least one director with a representation imprint). We chose to construct a dummy since a version of the variable representing the proportion of directors with a representation imprint was heavily skewed, and log transformation was not possible due to the many values of 0.

Empowerment imprint. To test Hypotheses 2.1 and 2.2, we created a variable for all directors in our dataset indicating whether the first executive job they had was in a directorate with a female CEO. Since the Chamber of Commerce does not contain information on executive function (other than broad differentiation between executive and non-executive directors), we identified CEOs by linking their information to tax records to obtain their wages. We identified the director with the highest hourly wage within the board as the CEO, as they typically earn the highest among directors (Cools & Praag, 2000). Wage information was unavailable for directorate periods before 2006. Here, we identified the director with the longest tenure as the source for the empowerment imprint as it is the best proxy for the most experienced director. Aggregating this information to the organizational level, this variable was constructed as a dummy (0 = no director with an empowerment imprint, 1 = at least one director with an empowerment imprint).

Controls

We accounted for time-invariant factors on the individual employee and job level that could confound the impact of directorate gender composition and imprints by conducting longitudinal panel analyses with fixed effects for each employment spell. An employment spell is defined as an individual's formal, paid employment period within an employing organization. When an employee leaves an organization and starts receiving a salary from another one, a new employment spell starts. As employment spells are perfectly nested within individual workers, this strategy also controls for all time-invariant individual

worker characteristics. Given the fixed-effects design, we only included varying control variables within a spell (Wooldridge, 2015). The educational level of employees, which is common when studying wage outcomes, is stable during the vast majority of employee job spells and is therefore excluded as control. While standard as a control in cross-sectional studies on gender wage gaps, we did not include occupation in our longitudinal analyses of gender differences in wage promotions; within an employment spell, wage changes and occupation/task promotions capture the same process of career advancement (e.g., getting a managerial position and a pay raise). Controlling for occupation would unnecessarily explain away wage change.

Controls at the employee level

Gender (female). We created a dummy for each individual in our dataset, indicating whether they were female (0 = no, 1 = yes). Note that this variable does not change within employment spells and will enter into interaction with time-changing variables in our models.

Age. We controlled for each individual employee's age squared as linear age is collinear with year dummies within job spells. Machin and Puhani (2003) determined age to confound gender wage differences, with younger employees being more likely to be employed on a temporary contract (Nunez & Livanos, 2015).

Controls at the organizational level

We controlled for several factors at the organizational level that could confound the impact of director career imprints on employees' wages and type of employment contract. Given our fixed-effects analyses, we only included time-varying control variables.

Organization size. We defined organization size as the number of employees. Compared to smaller organizations, large organizations are more likely to have formal human resource management functions with best practices that promote equal opportunities for employees (Kalev et al., 2006). Studies documented lower gender segregation in large organizations (Huffman et al., 2010; Tomaskovic-Devey et al., 2006). The variable indicated the size of the organization each individual in our dataset worked at per year. We used a log version of the variable, as organization size showed a skewed distribution due to the presence of several large organizations.

Proportion of female employees. We controlled for the proportion of female employees since studies document that employees receive lower wages in organizations with a higher

proportion of female employees (Amuedo-Dorantes, 2000; Heinze, 2009). A dummy identified each individual employee's gender (0 = male, 1 = female); we aggregated this information to the organizational level. The variable shows the proportion of female employees in each individual employee's organization in our dataset per year.

Organizational events. We controlled for organizational demographic events occurring within a year, which can influence directorate change and impact wages and employment practices. Dummies (0 = no, 1 = yes) indicated four organizational events: 1) the birth of an organization, meaning that the organization first appeared in records that year; 2) death/collapse/combination birth and death of the organization, meaning that the current year is the final time this organization appeared in the records; 3) split, merge with other organization, or is taken over by another organization; 4) restructuring of the organization.

Average age of directors. For each observation in our dataset, we aggregated information on directorate composition. We controlled for the average age of directors as older management teams may resist organizational change (for an overview, see Tarus & Aime, 2014). This variable represented the average age of the directorate present in the organization of each individual in our dataset per year.

Maximum tenure in directorate. We calculated the number of years each director worked for at their current organization. The control variable represents the years of experience of the director with the longest organizational tenure. This allowed us to control for the effects of embedded directors, who are less likely to adopt new strategies (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). The variable showed the maximum tenure of the directorate in the organization for each individual in our dataset per year.

Directorate size. Larger directorates tend to resist strategic change (Tarus & Aime, 2014). The variable showed the number of directors in the organization for each individual in our dataset per year.

Table 4.1 presents the descriptive statistics for all variables in our dataset. Wages and organization size were log-transformed in our analyses. We observed a gender wage gap in our dataset, with the average (unlogged) hourly wage for female employees being €18.45 and that for male employees being €24.82. We also observed a permanency gap; 23.55% of all females are employed on a temporary contract, higher than the 16.95% of all male employees with a temporary contract.

Table 4.1: descriptive statistics of the variables in our dataset

	Observations	Mean	S.D.
Outcome variables			
Hourly wage	15,129,286	22.565	19.641
Hourly wage (female employees)	5,350,988	18.454	.870
Hourly wage (male employees)	9,778,298	24.815	1.153
Hourly wage (log)	15,129,286	2.967	.532
Type of contract male employees			
Temporary	1,656,972 (16.95%)		
Permanent	8,121,326 (83.05%)		
Type of contract female employees			
Temporary	1,260,230 (23.55%)		
Permanent	4,090,758 (76.45%)		
Directorate characteristics			
Representation imprint			
No directors present with a representation imprint	13,210,771 (87.32%)		
Directors present with a representation imprint	1,918,515 (12.68%)		
Empowerment imprint			
No directors present with an empowerment imprint	13,657,453 (90.27%)		
Directors present with an empowerment imprint	1,471,833 (9.73%)		
Average age of directors	15,129,286	51.258	6.247
Proportion female directors	15,129,286	.096	.218
Maximum tenure on directorate	15,129,286	10.595	7.809
Directorate size	15,129,286	2.619	2.225
Employee characteristics			
Age	15,129,286	41.624	12.496
Age^2	15,129,286		
Gender of employee			
Male employee	9,778,298 (64.63%)		
Female employee	5,350,988 (35.37%)		
Organization characteristics			
Organization size	15,129,286	2340.301	5644.832
Organization size (log)	15,129,286	6.109	1.877
Proportion of female employees	15,129,286	.354	.254
Organizational events (0 = did not happen, 1 = did happen)			
Birth	37,679 (.25%)		
Death/collapse/combination birth and death	61,016 (.40%)		
Split/merge/takeover	2,022,967 (13.37%)		
Varia/restructuring	1,005,079 (6.64%)		
Observations	15,129,286		
Average number of observations per year	1,526,925		

*Minimum and maximum values cannot be included here due to CBS regulations on risk of identification of individual cases

Analysis

Our fixed-effects regression models, including employment spell and year fixed effects, utilize variation within an employment spell in directorate composition and outcomes (wage and contract type), not explained by common trends that affect all jobs. We included year-fixed effects to remove the impact of common temporal shocks that affect all jobs (e.g., changing economic conditions). We performed Hausman tests, which indicated fixed effects to be preferred over random effects specification (Wooldridge, 2015). Our dataset was unbalanced, as jobs have different tenures. However, fixed-effects methods make the necessary adjustments to provide robust results when managing unbalanced data (Wooldridge, 2010, 2015). Our analyses used cluster-robust standard errors to reduce biases due to heteroscedasticity and autocorrelation.

We used linear regression to test Hypotheses 1.1 and 2.1, with log hourly wages as the outcome. Hypotheses 1.2 and 2.2 had permanent employment (0 = no, 1 = yes) as the outcome. A binary outcome typically requires nonlinear models. A fundamental assumption for logit models is that binary responses are independent over time (Kwak et al., 2021). However, this seldom occurs in panel models. Nonlinear models produce bias in the case of fixed-effects analysis (Beck, 2018; Freedman, 2008; Gomila, 2021); therefore, we opted for linear probability methods, which were demonstrated to be an effective strategy (Gomila, 2021; Kwak et al., 2021).

Directorate changes do not instantly impact employees' wages or employment practices (Fitza, 2014). Hence, we lagged the variables containing information on director career experience by one year (T−1). We also needed to consider that our control variables containing information on director composition (age, maximal tenure, and size) could influence the decision to employ or promote a female director. We lagged these composition variables by two years (T−2) to consider such selection effects.

As the employee gender is time-constant, the main effect of this variable has been omitted from the analyses. However, it remains possible to interact a time-constant variable with a variable that changes over time and test gender differences. Consequently, our fixed-effects analyses do not capture the magnitude of the gender wage and permanency gap but show gender differentials in the within-job change of wages and the likelihood of obtaining a permanent contract.

4.4 Results

Female leaders and gender differentials in wage progression and permanency

Table 4.2 presents the results of a fixed-effects linear regression with job and year effects, with log hourly wage as the dependent variable. Table 4.3 records results for obtaining a permanent contract in fixed-effect linear probability models. The baseline models (Model 1) present the interaction between the presence of female directors and female employees to assess whether female leaders reduce gender differences in wage promotions or reduce the chance of switching to a permanent contract. We observed that female directors are associated with a reduction in hourly wage ($b = -0.021$, $p < 0.01$) and an increase in the likelihood of a permanent contract among men. The interaction effect between female directors and female employees is significant for both outcomes but has opposite effects: female directors' effect on wage reduction is even more significant for female employees ($b = -0.017$, $p < 0.01$); moreover, they increase female workers' chances of obtaining a permanent contract more than for men ($b = 0.010$; $p < 0.01$). These findings corroborate earlier research that female executives' impact on gender equality concentrates on less competitive, entry-level corporate ranks (Abendroth et al., 2017), where most employees start on temporary contracts. However, in terms of wage progression, female executives seem to lead to a reduction in wages for both men and women. This may be explained by the tendency of firms to be likelier to appoint women and other underrepresented minority groups to leadership positions in times of an organizational crisis (T. Morgenroth et al., 2020).

Table 4.2: Linear fixed-effects regression results for employees' hourly wage (log)*

	(1) Baseline	(2) Representation	(3) Representation	(4) Empowerment	(5) Empowerment
Predictors					
Proportion female directors	-.021** (.001)	-.018** (.001)	-.012** (.001)	-.019** (.001)	-.019** (.001)
Proportion female directors * female employee	-.017** (.002)	-.014** (.002)	-.023** (.002)	-.015** (.002)	-.017** (.002)
Imprint		-.012** (.001)	-.009** (.001)	-.014** (.001)	-.014** (.001)
Imprint * female employee		-.003 (.002)	-.009** (.002)	-.004 (.001)	-.011** (.002)
Imprint * proportion female directors			-.021** (.002)		-.017 (.002)
Imprint * proportion female directors * female employee			.031** (.004)		.021** (.003)
Directorate characteristics					
Average age of directors	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)	<.001* (<.001)	<.001* (<.001)
Maximum tenure on directorate	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Directorate size	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)
Employee characteristics					
Age^2	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics					
Organization size (log)	.021** (.001)		.021** (.001)	.020** (.001)	.020** (.001)
Proportion of female employees	.039** (.004)		.037** (.004)	.039** (.004)	.039** (.004)
Proportion of female employees * female	-.020** (.006)		-.017** (.006)	-.020** (.006)	-.020** (.006)
Event - *birth*	.003** (.001)		.003** (.001)	.003** (.001)	.003** (.001)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	.014** (.002)		.014** (.002)	.014** (.002)	.014** (.002)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.002** (<.001)		-.002** (<.001)	-.002** (<.001)	-.002** (<.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.007** (<.001)		-.007** (<.001)	-.007** (<.001)	-.007** (<.001)
Adjusted R^2	.906	.906	.906	.906	.906
Observations	7,621,213	7,621,213	7,621,213	7,621,213	7,621,213
Number of jobs	1,637,984	1,637,984	1,637,984	1,637,984	1,637,984

Models include job and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully robust standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < 0{,}05$; **$p < 0{,}01$

*The main effect for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes) is omitted as it is time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time.

Table 4.3: Linear fixed-effects probability model results with permanent employment as the dependent variable*

	(1) Baseline	(2) Representation	(3) Representation	(4) Empowerment	(5) Empowerment
Predictors					
Proportion female directors	.005** (.001)	.006** (.001)	.006** (.001)	.006** (.001)	.005** (.001)
Proportion female directors * female employee	.010** (.002)	.018** (.002)	-.009** (.002)	.007** (.002)	.003 (.002)
Imprint		-.002** (.001)	-.002** (.001)	-.003** (.001)	-.004** (.001)
Imprint * female employee		-.018** (.001)	-.035** (.002)	.014** (.001)	.002 (.002)
Imprint * proportion female directors			.001 (.002)		.005* (.002)
Imprint * female directors * female employee			.067** (.004)		.034** (.004)
Directorate characteristics					
Average age of directors	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Maximum tenure on directorate	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Directorate size	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)
Employee characteristics					
Age^2	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics					
Organization size (log)	.014** (.001)	.015** (.001)	.014** (.001)	.015** (.001)	.014** (.001)
Proportion of female employees	.007 (.005)	.006 (.005)	.007 (.004)	.007 (.005)	.007 (.005)
Proportion of female employees * female	.032** (.008)	.034** (.008)	.036** (.005)	.031** (.008)	.031** (.008)
Event - *birth*	-.003* (.001)	-.003* (.001)	-.003** (.001)	-.003* (.001)	-.003** (.001)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.006** (<.001)	-.006** (<.001)	-.006** (<.001)	-.006** (<.001)	-.006** (<.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.006** (<.001)	-.005** (<.001)	-.005** (<.001)	-.006** (<.001)	-.006** (<.001)
Adjusted R^2	.733	.733	.733	.733	.733
Observations	7,621,213	7,621,213	7,621,213	7,621,213	7,621,213
Number of jobs	1,637,984	1,637,984	1,637,984	1,637,984	1,637,984

Models include job and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully robust standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < 0{,}05$; **$p < 0{,}01$

*The main effect for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes) is omitted as it is time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time.

The so-called glass cliff, however, does not explain why female executives disadvantage women. We repeated these analyses in two subsamples: one for firms with one organizational leader (around 38% of organizations, see results in Tables 4.4 and 4.5)[8] and on a subsample of small and medium-sized organizations[9] (on average less than 250 employees following widely used SME criteria (Pett et al., 2012) see results in Tables 4.6 and 4.7)[10]. In the single-director sample, we also observed that female leaders are associated with a reduction in hourly wage rates ($b = -0.014$, $p < 0.01$), but the wage reduction is less acute for female employees ($b = 0.07$, $p < 0.01$). With a single high-level decision-maker in organizations, we observed the change agency of senior women favoring junior women's careers. With respect to permanency, female leaders in single-director firms are associated with a higher probability of female employees obtaining a permanent contract, although the effect is statistically insignificant ($b = 0.016$, $p > 0.05$). In the sample of small and medium-sized firms, female directors are associated with an increase in hourly wages ($b = 0.007$, $p < 0.01$); however, we did not observe statistically significant differences between male and female employees. Nonetheless, this subsample corroborates that female directors lead to a higher probability of receiving a permanent contract for female employees ($b = 0.002$, $p > 0.05$).[11]

The moderating effect of imprints

To test our hypotheses regarding imprints, we estimated a three-way interaction between the representation and empowerment imprints[12], the proportion of female directors, and the employee's gender (Tables 4.2 and 4.3, Models 3 and 5). The three-way interaction of representation imprint is positive and statistically significant ($b = 0.031$, $p < 0.01$). This supports our hypothesis: in directorates where directors were exposed to female representation on boards early in their careers, female directors have a more positive influence on women's

[8] The rationale behind re-estimating our models on a single-director subsample is that we can isolate imprint and gender effects without boardroom compositional processes that are in play in multi-director boards. The control variable measuring the number of directors is omitted in models estimated on this subsample since it is constant over time (always a value of 1). The variable *proportion female director* is renamed to *female leader* here, as it now only contains values of 0 (the single leader is male) or 1 (the single leader is female).

[9] We also reran our analyses on a subsample of large organizations (on average, more than 250 employees). These results were highly similar to our analyses of the full sample. Results can be found in table the appendix of this chapter.

[10] We included the estimates from this subsample as organizational leaders are more likely to also serve as direct supervisors in smaller organizations, interacting with and possibly directly mentoring and promoting workers. Hierarchies are often more flat, and the division of labor is less strict compared to larger organizations (Van der Meer & Wielers, 1998; Zimmermann, 2022), possibly affecting how organizational leaders influence inequality in organizations.

[11] We further estimated models (Models 2 and 4) with an added interaction between an imprint (e.g., representation and empowerment imprint) and female gender of the employee to assess whether the effects of gender composition of directors remain if we control for the presence of imprints. Our findings are robust to this control.

[12] We tested the three-way imprint interactions separately due to concerns with multicollinearity in our within-employment spell estimations.

wages. The three-way interaction is also positive and statistically significant when considering the probability of obtaining a permanent contract (b = 0.067, $p < 0.01$): female leaders' impact on female employees' chance of receiving a permanent contract is more positive when board members have a representation imprint. We re-implemented this model to test our hypotheses on the empowerment imprint. Aligning with our hypothesis, the three-way interaction is positive and statistically significant ($b = 0.021$, $p < 0.01$). In directorates where members were exposed to a female CEO early in their managerial careers, female directors have a more positive impact on women's wages. We obtained similarly confirmatory results for the role of empowerment imprint in women's change of permanency compared to men: the positive and significant three-way interaction ($b = 0.034$, $p < 0.01$) shows that in directorates where an empowerment imprint is present, female directors have a more positive effect on women's chances of receiving a permanent contract.

Repeated analysis of the subsample of single-director firms generally confirms these findings (Tables 4.4 and 4.5). We established that female leaders who were exposed to a higher representation of women in the directorate during their first high-level managerial role have a more positive impact on female employees' wages than women who were not exposed to women during the sensitive period of role socialization ($b = 0.057$, $p < 0.01$). We did not find support for the hypothesis regarding the empowerment imprint as the three-way interaction is statistically insignificant ($b = -0.025$, $p > 0.05$). The results for permanency in this subsample are less supportive: the three-way interaction is negative and statistically significant ($b = -0.039$, $p < 0.05$), which is contrary to our hypothesis and earlier findings in organizations with multiple directors: a female leader imprinted with experience of higher female representation during role socialization decreases the chance of female employees receiving a permanent contract. However, considering empowerment imprint, the findings align with our hypothesis of fostering change agency, albeit statistically insignificant ($b = 0.070$, $p > 0.05$).

In the subsample of small and medium-sized organizations (see Tables 4.6 and 4.7), the results align with the full sample: in boards where directors have been exposed to female board representation early in their managerial careers, female directors have a stronger positive effect on women's wages than in boards where imprints are not present ($b = 0.053$, $p < 0.01$). An empowerment imprint also increases female directors' positive influence on women's wages, aligning with our hypotheses and earlier findings on the whole sample ($b = 0.031$, $p < 0.01$). For contract permanency, we did not encounter evidence that directorates with members carrying representation imprint enhance the effect of female directors on women's chances of receiving a permanent contract ($b = 0.019$, $p > 0.05$). Regarding the empowerment imprint, we once again obtained evidence for imprinting processes: imprinted experiences of female CEOs within the board of small and medium-sized organizations increase the impact of female directors on women's chances of a permanent employment contract ($b = 0.025$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4.4: Linear fixed-effects regression results with logwage as the dependent variable, in organizations with one leader*

	(1) Baseline	(2) Representation	(3) Representation	(4) Empowerment	(5) Empowerment
Predictors					
Female leader	-.014** (.003)	-.013** (.003)	-.013** (.003)	-.014** (.003)	-.014** (.003)
Female leader * female employee	.007 (.005)	.006 (.005)	.005 (.005)	.007 (.005)	.007 (.005)
Imprint		-.005 (.006)	.042** (.007)	-.021 (.014)	-.033** (.012)
Imprint * female employee		.062** (.005)	.015 (.010)	.042 (.025)	-.005 (.014)
Imprint * female leader			-.056** (.010)		.157* (.063)
Imprint * female leader * female employee			.057** (.016)		-.025 (.065)
Directorate characteristics					
Age of directors	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Maximum tenure of director	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)
Employee characteristics					
Age^2	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics					
Organization size (log)	.019** (.001)	.019** (.001)	.019** (.001)	.019** (.001)	.019** (.001)
Proportion of female employees	.030** (.007)	.030** (.007)	.030** (.007)	.030** (.007)	.030** (.007)
Proportion of female employees * female	-.019 (.011)	-.019 (.011)	-.019 (.011)	-.019 (.011)	-.019 (.011)
Event - *birth*	<-.001 (.002)	<-.001 (.002)	<-.001 (.002)	<-.001 (.002)	<-.001 (.002)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	.003 (.002)	.002 (.002)	.002 (.002)	.003 (.002)	.003 (.002)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.003** (<.001)	-.003** (<.001)	-.003 (<.001)	-.003** (<.001)	-.003** (<.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	.004** (.001)	.004** (.001)	.004** (.001)	.004** (.001)	.004** (.001)
Adjusted R^2	.912	.912	.912	.912	.912
Observations	1,441,126	1,441,126	1,441,126	1,441,126	1,441,126
Number of jobs	322,942	322,942	322,942	322,942	322,942

Models include job and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully robust standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < 0{,}05$; **$p < 0{,}01$

*The main effect for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes) is omitted as it is time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time. Directorate size is not included, since it remains constant over time (only 1 leader)

Table 4.5: Linear fixed-effects probability model results with permanent employment as the dependent variable, in organizations with 1 leader*

	(1) Baseline	(2) Representation	(3) Representation	(4) Empowerment	(5) Empowerment
Predictors					
Female directors	<-.001 (.005)	<-.001 (.005)	<-.001 (.005)	<.001 (.005)	<-.001 (.006)
Female directors * female employee	.016 (.009)	.016 (.009)	.016 (.009)	.016 (.009)	.016 (.009)
Imprint		.001 (.005)	-.003 (.003)	-.003 (.028)	-.003 (.031)
Imprint * female employee		.008 (.013)	.024 (.017)	-.036 (.042)	-.069 (.060)
Imprint * female directors			.004 (.007)		.006 (.031)
Imprint * female directors * female employee			-.039* (.019)		.070 (.061)
Directorate characteristics					
Average age of directors	<.001* (<.001)	<.001* (<.001)	<.001* (<.001)	<.001* (<.001)	<.001* (<.001)
Maximum tenure on directorate	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)
Employee characteristics					
Age^2	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics					
Organization size (log)	.025** (.001)	.025** (.001)	.025** (.001)	.025** (.001)	.025** (.001)
Proportion of female employees	.007 (.010)	.007 (.010)	.007 (.010)	.007 (.010)	.007 (.010)
Proportion of female employees * female	.007 (.016)	.007 (.016)	.007 (.016)	.007 (.016)	-.010 (.016)
Event - *birth*	.002 (.003)	.002 (.002)	.002 (.002)	.002 (.003)	.002 (.003)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	.002 (.002)	.002 (.002)	.002 (.002)	.002 (.002)	.002 (.002)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	.003** (.001)	.003** (.001)	.003** (.001)	.003** (.001)	.003** (.001)
Adjusted R^2	.761	.761	.761	.761	.761
Observations	1,441,126	1,441,126	1,441,126	1,441,126	1,441,126
Number of jobs	322,942	322,942	322,942	322,942	322,942

Models include job and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully robust standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < 0,05$; **$p < 0,01$

*The main effect for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes) is omitted as it is time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time. Directorate size is not included, since it remains constant over time (only 1 leader)

Table 4.6: Linear fixed-effects regression results with logwage as the dependent variable, in small and medium organizations (on average less than 250 employees) *

	(1) Baseline	(2) Representation	(3) Representation	(4) Empowerment	(5) Empowerment
Predictors					
Female directors	.007** (.002)	.007** (.002)	.010** (.002)	.007** (.002)	.007** (.002)
Female directors * female employee	<.001 (.002)	-.003 (.002)	-.010** (.003)	<.001 (.002)	-.004 (.003)
Imprint		-.003 (.002)	.001 (.002)	.007** (.002)	.006** (.002)
Imprint * female employee		.022** (.004)	.005 (.004)	-.003 (.003)	-.016** (.004)
Imprint * female directors			-.019** (.005)		.003 (.004)
Imprint * female directors * female employee			.053** (.008)		.031** (.007)
Directorate characteristics					
Average age of directors	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Maximum tenure on directorate	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Directorate size	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)
Employee characteristics					
Age^2	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics					
Organization size (log)	.018** (.001)	.018** (.001)	.018** (.001)	.018** (.001)	.018** (.001)
Proportion of female employees	.026** (.005)	.026** (.005)	.026** (.005)	.026** (.005)	.026** (.005)
Proportion of female employees * female	-.024** (.005)	-.024** (.007)	-.024** (.007)	-.024** (.007)	-.024** (.007)
Event - *birth*	-.002 (.001)	-.002 (.001)	-.002 (.001)	-.002 (.001)	-.002 (.001)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	.005** (.001)	.004** (.001)	.004** (.001)	.004** (.001)	.004** (.001)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)
Adjusted R^2	.916	.916	.916	.916	.916
Observations	3,269,172	3,269,172	3,269,172	3,269,172	3,269,172
Number of jobs	688,960	688,960	688,960	688,960	688,960

Models include job and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully robust standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < 0,05$; **$p < 0,01$

*The main effect for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes) is omitted as it is time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time.

Table 4.7: Linear fixed-effects probability model results with permanent employment as the dependent variable, in small and medium organizations (on average less than 250 employees) *

	(1) Baseline	(2) Representation	(3) Representation	(4) Empowerment	(5) Empowerment
Predictors					
Female directors	-.001 (.002)	-.001 (.002)	-.005* (.002)	-.002 (.002)	-.004 (.002)
Female directors * female employee	.002 (.003)	.001 (.004)	-.003 (.004)	.001 (.003)	-.003 (.004)
Imprint		-.003 (.002)	-.010** (.003)	.007** (.002)	.002 (.003)
Imprint * female employee		.008 (.004)	-.004 (.005)	.001 (.003)	-.007 (.005)
Imprint * female directors			.032** (.007)		.020** (.006)
Imprint * female directors * female employee			.019 (.011)		.025** (.009)
Directorate characteristics					
Average age of directors	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)
Maximum tenure on directorate	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)
Directorate size	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)
Employee characteristics					
Age^2	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics					
Organization size (log)	.018** (.001)	.018** (.001)	.018** (.001)	.018** (.001)	.018** (.001)
Proportion of female employees	-.004 (.006)	-.004 (.006)	-.005 (.006)	-.005 (.006)	-.005 (.006)
Proportion of female employees * female	.010 (.010)	.010 (.010)	.010 (.010)	.010 (.010)	.011 (.010)
Event - *birth*	-.003 (.002)	-.003 (.002)	-.003 (.002)	-.003 (.002)	-.003 (.002)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	-.006** (.001)	-.006** (.001)	-.006** (.001)	-.006** (.001)	-.006** (.001)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.002** (<.001)	-.002** (<.001)	-.002** (<.001)	-.002** (<.001)	-.002** (<.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	.002** (.001)	.002** (.001)	.002** (.001)	.002** (.001)	.002** (.001)
Adjusted R^2	.763	.763	.763	.763	.763
Observations	3,269,172	3,269,172	3,269,172	3,269,172	3,269,172
Number of jobs	688,960	688,960	688,960	688,960	688,960
Models include job and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully robust standard errors in parentheses. *$p < 0,05$; **$p < 0,01$					

*The main effect for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes) is omitted as it is time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time.

4.5 Conclusions and discussion

Women are increasingly occupying high organizational positions; however, research has produced mixed results regarding their impact on gender equality in the organizations they manage. We aimed to break new ground in the agents of change literature by addressing how critical, early-career experiences of female representation and power experienced by women in the highest organizational positions shape their impact on gender equality in organizations. We used linked employer-employee and functionary register data from the Netherlands to trace the careers of managers and the context of their first managerial assignments and linked it to wage and employment permanency outcomes for men and women in firms. Our longitudinal analyses robustly support that personal pasts shape the degree to which female directors serve as agents of change. We observed highly similar patterns in separate analyses for organizations with a single leader (CEO) and in small and medium-sized as well as large organizations. Experiencing women on boards and in powerful positions early in their managerial careers is generally associated with female leaders having a more positive effect on women's wages and job permanency on the work floor.

Our findings on the role of early career leadership experiences have important theoretical implications for understanding the consequences of changing societal and professional norms for inequality. Recent in-depth analyses of inequality in finance (Neely, 2022) and academic STEM (Blair-Loy & Cech, 2022) argues that hegemonic masculine cultures and norms that produce inequality are perpetuated and internalized through professional socialization and are durable even when challenged by mainstream society. The managerial profession is very similar to the devotional and excellence-oriented cultural schemes in its hegemonic masculine conceptions of the ideal worker, which resist outside intervention and influence. Our findings do not deny the importance and persistence of such broad professional cultures, but they do remind us that local organizational contexts, such as management teams and boardrooms, are important avenues of socialization where individual experiences can deviate from, overwrite, and challenge dominant patterns (Fine & Hallett, 2022). In turn, we have shown that the long-lasting effects of such local 'deviant socialization' experiences of actors that can produce meaningful change provide clues to understanding how incremental changes in inequality might emerge. Moreover, these findings also support the currently contested organizational diversity by showing that these efforts could, in the long run, break the cycle of inequality generation. To further investigate the role of imprints in gender equality and address some of the limitations of our study we suggest three avenues for future research.

(Career) experiences as sequences

We endorse future studies to further explore how past career experiences influence women's change agency. In line with the central tenet of imprinting theory, we focused on the most sensitive period of role transitioning, the first managerial role. Studies involving directors indicate that influential imprints also stem from the educational or social class background (Kish-Gephart & Campbell, 2015; Sanders & Tuschke, 2007). Furthermore, individuals encounter many other transition periods throughout their professional lives (McEvily et al., 2012) and early imprints can impact the development of new ones (Cowen et al., 2022). While our data was inadequate to study early childhood and educational socialization, it would be beneficial for future research to study the full sequence of critical transitions in leaders' lives and their interplay. It will be particularly interesting to examine whether experiences of male-dominated environments and devalued positions later in careers weaken early empowering imprinted experiences. Additionally, do empowering experiences later overwrite early imprints that constrain women's agency?

Women in positions of authority at different stages of their careers

A limitation of our data is that we did not observe (middle) management or supervisory positions. Some of the female supervisors and mid-level managers are in the earlier stages of their careers and are on track to later become executives. One concern of not observing them could be selection effects: it is possible that female directors in our dataset are the ones who successfully assimilated themselves into the male-dominated environment. Stojmenovska (2023) describes how women are more likely than men to leave jobs with higher levels of authority due to negative experiences such as harassment and bullying. Such selective drop-out on executive career tracks might help explain why we discovered mixed evidence for female leaders to lower inequality in their organizations in some of our baseline models. Another group of mid-level managers may have been pushed out of executive career tracks (Neely, 2022) and encounter different professional norms, expectations, and level of competition, which limits the generalizability of our findings on imprinted experiences to all managerial layers. Even though our additional analyses of smaller organizations with fewer management layers and shorter career trajectories confirm the findings that imprints matter for the impact of women in leadership, we calls for future analyses that include all levels of management and their personal histories.

The role of organizational imprints

Our study focused on individuals' career imprints; however, imprinting also occurs on the organizational level (for an overview, see Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). Organizations absorb elements from their environment during their founding and later sensitive periods that persist over time despite environmental changes (Johnson, 2007; Stinchcombe, 1965). Organizational imprints might play a role in the degree to which an organization is susceptible to the influence of a (female) leader. Organizations that emerged during times of higher levels of gender inequality or consisted only of male leaders during their inception might resist the influence of female leaders to a larger degree. Future endeavors could investigate the interplay between individual agency and organizational imprints to add to current theorizing on organization conditions under which female leaders can exert more influence on gender equality (see Fuller & Kim, 2024).

Our study also illustrates that change towards gender equality in organizations is not achieved by just adding women and stir. Policy efforts to achieve gender equality, such as corporate boardroom quota, are often accompanied by gender essentialism, the idea that all women possess similar characteristics just because they are women (Mansbridge, 2005). To overcome this, we need to take a more rich and contextualized understanding of change agency of women in powerful positions in organizations (Torchia et al., 2011) and we hope our study on the importance of personal career experiences contributes to this efforts.

4.6 Appendix

Table A4.1: Linear fixed-effects regression results with logwage as the dependent variable, in large organizations (on average 250 employees or more) *

	(1) Baseline	(2) Representation	(3) Representation	(4) Empowerment	(5) Empowerment
Predictors					
Female directors	-.036** (.001)	-.033** (.001)	-.029** (.002)	-.035** (.001)	-.034** (.001)
Female directors * female employee	-.018** (.002)	-.014** (.003)	-.036** (.003)	-.016** (.002)	-.018** (.002)
Imprint		-.011** (.001)	-.009** (.001)	-.017** (.001)	-.016** (.001)
Imprint * female employee		-.004* (.002)	-.013** (.002)	-.001 (.001)	-.007** (.002)
Imprint * female directors			-.010** (.003)		-.004 (.003)
Imprint * female directors * female employee			.046** (.005)		.018** (.004)
Directorate characteristics					
Average age of directors	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)
Maximum tenure in directorate	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Directorate size	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)
Employee characteristics					
Age^2	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics					
Organization size (log)	.023** (.002)	.023** (.001)	.023** (.001)	.021** (.001)	.021** (.001)
Proportion of female employees	.078** (.007)	.076** (.007)	.074** (.007)	.076** (.007)	.076** (.007)
Proportion of female employees * female	-.031** (.011)	-.027* (.011)	-.022 (.011)	-.028* (.011)	-.028* (.011)
Event - *birth*	.013** (.002)	.013** (.002)	.013** (.002)	.014** (.002)	.014** (.002)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	.030** (.003)	.029** (.003)	.030** (.003)	.030** (.003)	.030** (.003)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.004** (<.001)	-.004** (<.001)	-.004** (<.001)	-.004** (<.001)	-.004** (<.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.009** (<.001)	-.009** (<.001)	-.009** (<.001)	-.009** (<.001)	-.009** (<.001)
Adjusted R^2	.900	.900	.900	.900	.900
Observations	4,352,041	4,352,041	4,352,041	4,352,041	4,352,041
Number of jobs	949,024	949,024	949,024	949,024	949,024

Models include job and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < 0,05$; **$p < 0,01$

*The main effect for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes) is omitted as it is time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time.

Table A4.2: Linear fixed-effects probability model results with permanent employment as the dependent variable, in large organizations (on average 250 employees or more) *

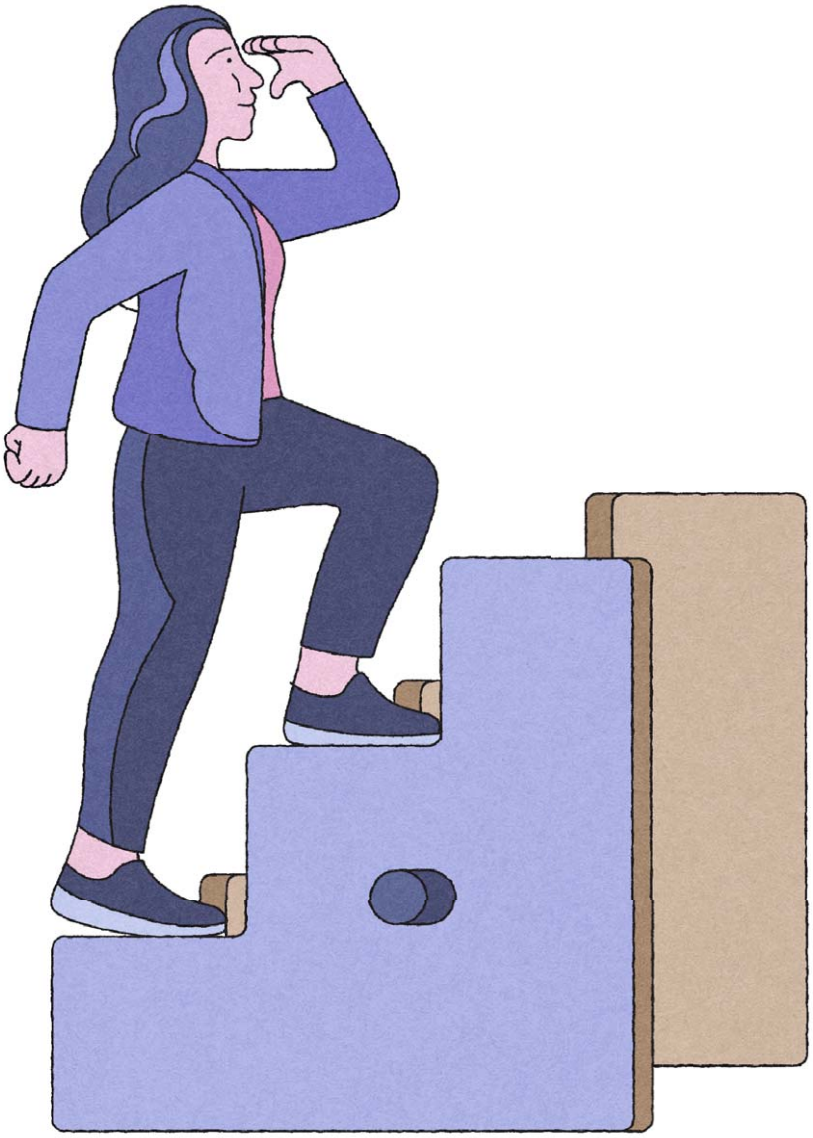
	(1) Baseline	(2) Representation	(3) Representation	(4) Empowerment	(5) Empowerment
Predictors					
Female directors	.011** (.001)	.011** (.001)	.015** (.002)	.011** (.001)	.011** (.001)
Female directors * female employee	.012** (.002)	.027** (.003)	-.015** (.003)	.009** (.002)	.004 (.002)
Imprint		-.002* (.001)	<.001 (.001)	-.004** (.001)	-.005** (.001)
Imprint * female employee		.027** (.003)	-.041** (.002)	.017** (.001)	.002 (.002)
Imprint * female directors			-.011** (.002)		<-.001 (.002)
Imprint * female directors * female employee			.081** (.005)		.041** (.003)
Directorate characteristics					
Average age of directors	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Maximum tenure on directorate	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Directorate size	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)
Employee characteristics					
Age^2	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics					
Organization size (log)	.011** (.001)	.012** (.001)	.011** (.001)	.011** (.001)	.011** (.001)
Proportion of female employees	.031** (.007)	.029** (.007)	.028** (.007)	.033** (.007)	.033** (.007)
Proportion of female employees * female	.062** (.011)	.068** (.012)	.075** (.011)	.057** (.012)	.057** (.012)
Event - *birth*	<-.001 (.002)	<-.001 (.002)	<-.001 (.002)	<-.001 (.002)	<-.001 (.002)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	<-.001 (.001)	<-.001 (.001)	<-.001 (.001)	<-.001 (.001)	<.001 (.003)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.008** (<.001)	-.008** (<.001)	-.008** (<.001)	-.008** (<.001)	-.008** (<.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.007** (<.001)	-.007** (<.001)	-.007** (<.001)	-.007** (<.001)	-.007** (<.001)
Adjusted R^2	.681	.681	.681	.681	.681
Observations	4,352,041	4,352,041	4,352,041	4,352,041	4,352,041
Number of jobs	949,024	949,024	949,024	949,024	949,024

Models include job and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < 0{,}05$; **$p < 0{,}01$

*The main effect for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes) is omitted as it is time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time.

4

Chapter 5



Setting the Stage: How Organizational Founding Context Impacts Female Leaders' Influence on Wage and Employment Equality

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This chapter is currently in preparation for submission at an international journal. This study is co-written with Zoltán Lippényi.

Abstract.

This chapter studies how organizational founding contexts – in particular the presence of female founders, the degree of urbanization of the organizational environment at time of founding, and presence of a feminist movement during founding – affect the degree to which female leaders serve as “agents of change” who promote workplace gender equality. We focus on wage and employment contract disparities between male and female employees and used unique employee/year-level register panel data to analyse the founding conditions of Dutch organizations alongside characteristics of their leaders and employees. Findings are mixed: female leaders in female-founded organizations are more likely to advance gender equality, in other founding conditions female leaders either have no or negative impact on workplace equality. Our study enriches the agents of change literature by underscoring the important role of founders, who are able to have long-lasting effects on future female leaders’ change agency.

"Old-fashioned ways which no longer apply to changed conditions are a snare in which the feet of women have always become readily entangled." – Jane Addams (1860-1935), written in Newer Ideas of Peace (1906).

5.1 Introduction

Representation of women in high-ranking corporate positions is increasing over the last decades in Western economies (e.g., Jacobs, 1992; Sánchez-Teba et al., 2020), but research provides mixed evidence regarding whether these female executives act as "agents of change" who challenge gender equality within their organizations (Cohen & Huffman, 2007; Kurtulus & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012; Skaggs et al., 2012; Stojmenovska, 2019). Conflicting findings could stem from the variety of organizational contexts in which female leaders operate, as such contexts come with varying constraints that affect leader's agency. Only recently scholars started to explicitly test organization-level mechanisms (Stojmenovska, 2019), or considered organizational influences on female leaders' agency such as size of the firm (Zimmermann, 2022).

An important constraining influence that remains understudied is organizational history: over time, organizations accumulate certain events and experiences that cause rigidity and resistance to change (Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Selznick, 1948; Suddaby & Foster, 2017). The founding phase of an organization is particularly impactful (Stinchcombe, 1965; Suddaby & Foster, 2017); characteristics present at time of founding "stamp" onto the organization and persist over time despite environmental changes (Johnson, 2007; Kimberly, 1975; Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006; Marquis & Qiao, 2020; Stinchcombe, 1965). These stamps are referred to as "imprints" (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013), that in turn drive organizational persistence and affect the degree to which organizational leaders can act as change agents (Suddaby & Foster, 2017). Notably, workplace gender inequality has been shown to be a persistent phenomenon that tends to be replicated through generations of organizations (Baron et al., 2002; Phillips, 2005), contributing to "inequality regimes" (Acker, 2006, 2009) where the practices, actions, meanings, and processes result in persistent gender inequality in work organizations.

Although research by Phillips (2005) demonstrated the role founders play in embedding gender hierarchies within their organizations, it remains unclear whether these founding conditions continue to affect the agency of *current* leaders to become change agents. We build on the theories of organizational imprinting (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Stinchcombe, 1965), and bridge this framework with change agents literature to examine how organizational imprints impact current female leaders' agency in shaping workplace

gender equality. We present two potential ways how organizational imprints impacts female leader's change agency. First, a *founder imprint*. We theorize that compared to male founders, female founders are more likely to create an organization that legitimizes and supports future female leadership, and thus sets the stage for future female leaders to become change agents. Second, we propose a *founding context imprint*. We theorize that organizations founded in progressive settings, such as more urbanized environments or during social feminist movements, to become imprinted with cultural values that support and legitimize female leadership.

We conduct our study within the context of the Netherlands in which, similarly to other OECD countries, gender inequality in wages and employment continue to persist (Jung et al., 2022). Women are also underrepresented in positions of corporate power with less than 25% of high-ranking management positions are held by women (Eurostat, 2023). The primary focus in this chapter is on female executives, leaders at the highest organizational ranking, as they have potential to become influential change agents as their decision-making affects whole organizations (Neely et al., 2020). In this chapter, we thus do not focus on female mid-managers or supervisors (many studies on female change agents do focus on these groups, see Abendroth et al., 2017; Cohen & Huffman, 2007; Fuller & Kim, 2024; Hultin & Szulkin, 1999, 2003; Kurtulus & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012; Skaggs et al., 2012; Stainback & Kwon, 2012; Stojmenovska, 2019).

We use register data from the Social Statistics Database (SSB) made available by Statistics Netherlands (CBS)[13]. This database consists of linked microdata from several administrative sources, such as the Chamber of Commerce, population administration, and tax information. Data from these sources allow us to obtain information on the complete population of female leaders, employees, and organizations. We are able to identify the founders, founding date, and founding location of Dutch organizations. We use this data to conduct employment-spell fixed-effects analysis to examine the effect of female leaders on organizational gender equality, and the role of organizational founding context in this relationship, in Dutch organizations in the period of 2006-2019.

We consider two outcomes in our study that capture persisting gender inequality in organizations: wages and permanent jobs. We look at wage differences by studying the differences in wage growth within employment spells of male and female employees, and how different organizational imprints affect female leader's influence such differences. Second, we look at the likelihood of female employees receiving a permanent contract

[13] CBS microdata is non-public. Under certain conditions, this microdata is accessible for statistical and scientific research. For further information: microdata@cbs.nl

compared to their male colleagues. Women are more likely to be employed on a temporary work contract and have less prospect of a permanent contract compared to their male colleagues (Bryson, 2004; Casey & Alach, 2004; Giesecke & Groß, 2004; Rubery et al., 1999), which contributes to gender inequality in organizations (Morgenroth et al., 2022). We refer to this difference in contracts between male and female employees as the permanency gap.

This chapter contributes to growing literature on how historical imprints shape organizational outcomes, by specifying and testing theoretical mechanisms through which past impacts the likelihood of change agency of leaders in the present (Suddaby & Foster, 2017). We enrich literature on female change agents by not only addressing *current* organization-level influences (Stojmenovska, 2019; Zimmermann, 2022) but also *past* influences – growing our understanding on sources of constraining influences that executives face in their decision-making.

5.2 Theory

Marquis & Tilcsik (2013) define imprinting as a process where during a period of susceptibility, a focal entity (in our case, the organization) "develops characteristics that reflect prominent features of the environment, and these characteristics continue to persist despite significant environmental changes in subsequent periods" (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013, p. 199). In this definition, imprints thus come to existence during a sensitive phase for organizations where it is highly susceptible to environmental influences. In this sensitive phase, the environment "stamps" onto an organization which leads to the creation of "imprints" that influence internal practices, structure, and culture of the organization. Organizations can encounter several sensitive periods throughout their lifespan (Carroll & Hannan, 2000), however, the early founding phase of an organization is perhaps the most important sensitive phase during which imprints will always be created (e.g., Dobbin, 1994; Johnson, 2007; Kimberly, 1975; Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006; Marquis & Qiao, 2020).

Environmental influences can stem from several sources (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). In this study, we focus on two sources of the imprint. First, we look at individuals. Studies document the long-lasting influence of founders on organizational practices and structure (Baron et al., 1999; Johnson, 2007). Second, we look at contextual influences, as studies document persisting influence of how external environmental influences such as the characteristics of the specific city or country the organization was founded in (Dobbin, 1994; Lounsbury, 2007), or the social movements at time of founding (Kimberly, 1975).

Founder imprint and inequality

In their theory of relational inequalities, Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt (2019) argue that social relations produce categorizations of people and their value. Claims-making (e.g., asking for a raise or promotion, advocating for change, challenging existing structures) reflect the power and status dynamics in the organizations. Powerful actors and groups are more likely to make claims, and more likely to be perceived as legitimate in making those claims (Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014; Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019). Historically, these powerful actors in organizations are male (Cook & Glass, 2014), leading to gendered assumptions on "who belongs in which position" that in turn affect organizational practices that divide resources among employees (such as wage setting) (Acker, 2009, p. 200). These gendered beliefs and associated practices within organizations are referred to as "inequality regimes" (Acker, 2006, 2009). Organizational actors utilize their local cultural and normative frames that are part of the inequality regime to determine whether a claim is legitimate (Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014). These frames therefore impact the degree to which leaders can legitimately support claims of disadvantaged groups.

Multiple studies document the lasting impact that founders have on organizations, explaining how founders determine the adoption of structures and guide decision-making for years to come (e.g., Baron et al., 1999; Dimov et al., 2012; Hannan et al., 1996; Phillips, 2005). In her seminal contribution on the founding of the Paris opera, Johnson (2007) highlights the important role of founders: they act as entrepreneurs who select and incorporate environmental elements, thus determining which imprints are formed.

Organizations with female founders are more likely to promote other women into management positions – reproducing a gender equal leadership structure in the organization (Phillips, 2005). Through the appointment of women to leadership positions, female leaders are less likely to occupy a devalued "token" position which challenges the legitimacy of their position (Kanter, 1977). Besides the succession mechanism, when women are historically part of the powerful actors in the organizations, the organization becomes "imprinted" with the norm and belief that not only men, but women are also legitimate leaders. In turn, their claims-making will be met with more support (Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019) and such supportive contexts lower the barriers for female leaders to advocate for gender equality within their organization (Ashford et al., 1998).

Thus, we hypothesize:

H1.1: In organizations with a female founder imprint, a higher proportion of women in directorates of organizations will be more likely to positively impact female employees' wage progress relative to men

H1.2: In organizations with a female founder imprint, a higher proportion of women in directorates of organizations will be more likely to positively impact women's chances of obtaining a permanent contract relative to men

Founding context imprint

In a classic study, Stinchcombe (1965) found that organizations founded during specific time periods were similar up until the present day. Conditions at time of founding such as the dominant culture, available technology, and societal legitimacy exerts influences on organizations, where structures and patterns become institutionalized and remain constant over time despite environmental changes. In this chapter, we focus on two founding context imprints.

The first founding context imprint we consider is the geographical environment of the organization at time of founding. Lounsbury (2007) found differences between strategies of mutual funds to be explained by the prevailing institutional logic of the city in which they were founded. Mutual funds in Boston would emphasize long-term conservative investments, while in New York the more aggressive and competitive financial logic prevailed and firms emphasized money management strategies focused on growth. Marquis et al. (2013) also found that elite traditions in cities affect the founding of nonprofit organizations in arts, culture, and private education. Prevailing norms, logics, and values from the geographical location can thus imprint on organizations.

The geographical imprint we look at is the level of urbanization at time of founding. Urbanization is generally defined as the process through which cities change in size, density, and heterogeneity. Urbanization is regarded as a "core process" of modernization (Banks & Carr, 1974; Marsh, 2014; Schnaiberg, 1971; Stockemer & Sundström, 2016). Modernization theory predicts that more modernized contexts develop post-materialist values (Bell, 1976). An important value that gets embraced as communities urbanize and modernize, is the value of gender equality (Glijn & Begall, 2021; Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Stockemer & Sundström, 2016).

Inhabitants of rural areas emphasize the importance of traditional family values, and labor participation of women is generally lower as men are seen as the "bread-winner" of the house (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Stockemer & Sundström, 2016). In more urbanized societies, gender attitudes shifted as people became more liberal in their views on gender relations, and embraced gender equality as an important value (Bergh, 2007). Urbanized environments are accompanied by progressive gender views, leading to more women participating in the labor force and the political system (Stockemer & Sundström, 2016). In

the Netherlands, as in many European countries, both highly urban areas and rural areas can be found[14] (Stockemer & Sundström, 2016). In the context of the Netherlands, a study from the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) shows how Dutch women living in rural areas participate less in the labor force than women living in urban areas (Steenbekkers et al., 2006).

Organizations aim for fit with their environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Hannan & Freeman, 1977), and multiple studies document that especially at time of founding the societal values of that time thus become imprinted in organizations (Haveman et al., 2007; Haveman & Rao, 1997). We therefore expect organizations that are founded in areas with higher levels of urbanization, to be imprinted with the modern values and progressive views on gender equality. These organizations will lower the perceived barriers for female directors to advocate for gender equality within the firm (Ashford et al., 1998), as their imprinted values reflect an (in)equality regime where claims-making by female organizational actors is legitimized and supported (Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019).

We hypothesize:

H2.1: In organizations with a high urbanization imprint, a higher proportion of women in directorates of organizations will be more likely to positively impact female employees' wage progress relative to men

H2.2: In organizations with a high urbanization imprint, a higher proportion of women in directorates of organizations will be more likely to positively impact women's chances of obtaining a permanent contract relative to men

In addition to the geographical imprint, we also investigate an founding context imprints stemming from a social movements (Lounsbury & Ventresca, 2002; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). As Lounsbury & Ventresca (2002) explain, contemporary social conflicts that address economic development exert influence on the founding of new organizational forms. An example of is how microbreweries emerged as a new organizational form in response to the mass production movement in large-scale industrial breweries (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000). A study by Haveman et al. (2007) shows the influence of the Progressive movement in California on the thrift industry, and Kimberly (1975) found rehabilitation centers to incorporate the shifting societal values in their organizational structure.

[14] For an overview of urban and rural areas in the Netherlands, see Steenbekkers et al. (2006, p.20)

We focus on feminism, a social movement that shaped Dutch society by transforming the position of women in society (Buikema & van der Tuin, 2014). Similar to other industrialized and Western democracies (Malinowska, 2020), the Netherlands experienced three feminist waves. The first feminist wave (occurring from 1870 to 1920) focused on challenging the dominant image of woman- and motherhood. The first wave aimed to secure women's citizenship through advocating for their legal rights such as becoming the prime recipients of public services like maternity insurance (Allen, 2005), the right to vote, to participate in the paid labor market, and to enroll in higher education (Buikema, 2016; Buikema & van der Tuin, 2014).

The second feminist wave lasted approximately from 1960 to 1980. A seminal contribution in the second wave is the article by Kool-Smit (1967) titled "*Het onbehagen bij de vrouw*" (in English: "the discontent of women"). In her piece, Kool-Smit (1967) critiques how Dutch society only values a woman by her contributions to the household and her children. Kool-Smit urged women to participate in society by working and becoming financially independent. Ultimately, the economic position of Dutch women was the most important battle for second-wave feminists (Kool-Smit, 1967; Van de Loo, 2005). Improving the economic position involved equal wages, but also better education opportunities for women, challenging dominant role-patterns in Dutch households, and legalizing contraception and abortion (Buikema & van der Tuin, 2014).

The third feminist wave started in 1990's (Gillis et al., 2004), and while it is regarded as still ongoing, some argue the third feminist is the weakest wave thus far, doubting whether it even truly started (Pieks, 2008; Van de Loo, 2005). Third-wave feminism characterizes itself by focusing on intersectionality where oppression manifests itself at the intersection of gender, race, class, and other factors (Lotz, 2003). The salience of women's issues therefore shifted to intersectional forms of inequality and injustice, in contrary to first- and second-wave feminism where the position of women in society stood central.

While all feminist movements challenged existing gender structures in society, we argue the second feminist wave to be most important for gender equality in the workplace. Second-wave feminism in the Netherlands managed to institutionalize their progressive beliefs on women in the workplace. The manifesto by Kool-Smit (1967) eventually lead to the establishment of the political action group MVM ("*Man Vrouw Maatschappij"*, in English: "Man, Woman, Society") (Buikema & van der Tuin, 2014; Ribberink, 1989). MVM strived for equal chances for men and women on the labor market. MVM specifically focused on young, married women, as they traditionally had the worst, or absent, labor market position and were financially dependent on others. MVM lobbied for organized childcare,

unemployment benefits for married women, and equal chances for male and female students in education. MVM was highly influential in Dutch politics, as their endeavors led to the installment of State Secretary for Emancipation and an Emancipation Committee that advised the Dutch government (Buikema & van der Tuin, 2014). The salience of women's issues became more blurred during the third feminist wave, we argue that it is less likely to become as strongly imprinted in organizations as during the second feminist wave.

Multiple studies document that values of salient social movements become imprinted in organizations (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000; Haveman et al., 2007), we expect female leaders in an organization with a second feminist wave imprint to be more likely to act as agents of change. These organizations will lower the perceived barriers for female directors to advocate for gender equality within the firm (Ashford et al., 1998), as their imprinted values reflect an "equality regime" where claims-making by female organizational actors is legitimized and supported (Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019).

We hypothesize:

H3.1: In organizations with a second feminist wave imprint, a higher proportion of women in directorates of organizations will be more likely to positively impact female employees' wage progress relative to men

H3.2: In organizations with a second feminist wave imprint, a higher proportion of women in directorates of organizations will be more likely to positively impact women's chances of obtaining a permanent contract relative to men

5.3 Data and methods

Results of this study are based on calculations by the authors using non-public microdata from Statistics Netherlands. The raw data cover the complete population of employing organizations. In this study, we linked microdata from five sources. First, the company registers from the KVK, the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce, to identify and obtain information on directors (start and end date of their appointments), and their organizations. In this data source, the registration of directors is at the executive level (in Dutch: "*bestuurders*"). This is the level where we expect organization-wide decisions on wage and employment strategies to be made. For this study, we selected economically active organizations in the public or private sector. Second, we used information from Company Demographic Framework (in Dutch: "*Bedrijfsdemografisch Kader*"). This data source provided us with the founding dates of all organizations in our dataset. Third, we used

the dataset Municipalities in the Netherlands (in Dutch: *"Gebieden in Nederland (GIN)"*) to obtain information yearly information on municipality codes and corresponding levels of urbanization in that municipality in that year. Fourth, tax records were used to obtain information on the employees of the organizations. From this source we identified wages and type of employment contract (permanent versus fixed-term). Our last data source is the population administration to obtain demographic information on all individuals (employees and directors) in our dataset (e.g., age, sex).

We identified the founding date of each organization in our dataset, and who the directors were of the organization at time of founding. We identified those directors as the founders of the organization. Registration of companies and information on their directors to the Dutch Chamber of Commerce is only mandatory since 2008. We found founder information for 12,84% of all Dutch organizations, a total of 8,258 organizations. We excluded organizations who did not register a director at time of founding from this dataset.

We created a second dataset to test our founding context imprints. For the first contextual imprint we used the level of urbanization at time of founding. Combining the information available in the Dutch Firm Demographic Framework and Chamber of Commerce, we were able to identify the founding date and of each organization in our dataset. We then linked this information to the Municipalities in the Netherlands dataset, to obtain the municipality codes and corresponding level of urbanization of the organization at time of founding. For the second contextual imprint, we used the year of founding to identify whether the firm was founded during the second feminist wave (1960-1980).

For both datasets, we also observed the *current* directorate composition of all organizations in the dataset (e.g., gender, size, age, tenure), with the gender composition of the directorate as an important predictor in our study. Aggregating this information per year and organizations, we obtained a dataset containing one observation of directorate composition per organization per year. We then linked this dataset with individual data on wages and employment contract off all the employees per year per organization. The data on individuals is available from 2010 onwards. Our final datasets enabled us to investigate 1) the gender composition of organizational founders, 2) the urbanization level at time of founding, or 3) whether the organization was founded during a feminist wave, and how this affects whether the presence of female directors affects individual (female) employees' wages and chance of receiving a permanent contract.

The final datasets are on the level of yearly observation of employment spells. Employment spells are defined as the employment match of a person with an employer organizations.

As we follow workers over time, when an employee switches to a new employer, this constitutes a new employment spell. Variables that represent characteristics at the organizational level thus represent an observation of that characteristic, of the organization an employee worked for, in that year. The final dataset for the *founder imprint* includes 1,896,027 yearly observations of employment spells for the period 2010-2019, with an average of 191,962 employees per year and 2,452 distinct organizations. The average employment spell is 5.9 years. The final dataset for the *founding context imprints* contains 15,049,627 yearly employment spell observations for the period 2010-2019, with an average of 1,518,612 employees per year and 19,818 distinct organizations. The average employment spell in this dataset is 6.8 years.

Dependent variables

Hourly wage. The monthly tax register contains information on wages and working hours for all Dutch employees. To account for gender differences in working hours, we chose to calculate hourly wage (Penner et al., 2022) as opposed to monthly or yearly salary, as historically and presently large share of women in the Netherlands works part-time (Beham et al., 2019). We used a log-transformed version of the wage variable.

Permanent contract[15]. The monthly tax register documents the type of employment contract (permanent versus fixed-term) of all Dutch employees. In the Netherlands, a fixed-term (i.e., temporary) contract indicates an employee employed by the organization on a contract with a fixed end date. Temporary employment contracts can range from several months to one- or two- year contracts. At the time of writing, temporary contracts can be renewed two times within a period of three years (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Employees who hold a permanent employment contract are employed for an indefinite period. The contract can only end when the employee or employer terminates the contract. We created a dummy variable indicating the type of contracts employees have (0 = temporary, 1 = permanent).

Independent variables

Female directors. We created a dummy to identify each director's gender (0 = male, 1 = female). We aggregated information on directorate composition for each observation in our dataset, and obtained the proportion of female directors present in the organization of each individual in our dataset per year.

Female employee. We created a dummy for each individual in our dataset indicating whether they were female (0 = no, 1 = yes).

Founder imprint. We identified the founding date of each organization, and identified directors present at that moment as the founders. We linked this information to the municipality register to obtain information on the director's gender, and were able to observe whether female founders were present. We created a dummy indicating whether female founders were present (0 = all founders male, 1 = female founder(s) present). We did not create a category representing organizations founded only by women, as the number of organizations with all-female founders is too low to be used for analytical purposes.

Founding context imprint: urbanization. The founding location of organizations is identified at the municipality level. CBS provides unique codes for each municipality in the Netherlands. We linked this information to CBS-measures of the urbanization per municipality per year to obtain the urbanization at time of founding for each organization. CBS uses the average environmental address density (EAD) (in Dutch: *omgevingsadressendichtheid (OAD)*) to determine the degree of urbanization in a municipality (CBS, n.d.). First, the EAD for each single address in a neighborhood is created by counting the number of other addresses within a radius of one kilometer, divided by the area of the circle. The EAD for each address thus expresses the number of addresses per km^2. Then CBS calculates the average EAD of all addresses within a neighborhood or municipality. CBS distinguishes five degrees of urbanization on the municipality level. We identified the degree of urbanization at time of founding for each organization and created a variable with the following values:

- 0: very low urban, average EAD of less than 500 addresses per km^2
- 1: low urban, average EAD of 500 to 1,000 addresses per km^2
- 2: medium urban, average EAD of 1,000 to 1,500 addresses per km^2
- 3: high urban, average EAD of 1,500 to 2,500 addresses per km^2
- 4: very high urban, average EAD 2,500 or more addresses per km^2

Founding context imprint: feminist wave. We created a dummy variable indicating whether the organization was founded during the second feminist wave between 1965-1985 (0 = no, 1 = yes). To investigate whether the second feminist wave was the most impactful, we also created a dummy variable indicating whether the organization was founded during the first feminist wave between 1870-1920 (0 = no, 1 = yes). We also created a dummy variable indicating whether the organizations was founded during the

third feminist wave between 1990-2019 to investigate how many organizations were founded during this wave. As we use the third feminist wave as a reference category, this dummy variable is not included in analyses.

Directorate characteristics

We expected certain factors on the directorate level to confound the impact of directors and organizational imprints on employees' wages and employment contracts. We thus decided to control for the following in the analysis:

Average age of directorate. Each observation in our dataset contains aggregated information on directorate composition of the organization. We controlled for the average age of directors, as older directorates are more likely to resist organizational change (for an overview, see Tarus & Aime, 2014). This variable showed the average age of the directors in the organization of each individual in our dataset per year.

Maximum tenure on directorate. Directors who are highly embedded in the organization are less likely to adopt new strategies (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). We thus calculated the number of years each director worked at the current organization. The resulting control variable represented the number of years of the directorate member with the longest organizational tenure. The variable showed the maximum tenure within the directorate in the organization of each individual in our dataset per year.

Directorate size. This variable showed the number of directors in the organization of each individual in our dataset per year, as larger directorates are more likely to resist change (Tarus & Aime, 2014).

Employee characteristics

We expected certain factors on the individual employee level to confound the impact of directors and organizational imprints on employees' wages and employment contracts. As our fixed-effects analysis method controls for time-invariant personal and employment spell characteristics, we only included the time-varying control variable ***age/age squared.*** Age partially explains the gender wage gap (Machin & Puhani, 2003), and as employees age, they are more likely to be employed on a permanent contract (Nunez & Livanos, 2015). Thus, we controlled for each individual employee's age.

Organization characteristics

We expected certain factors on the organizational level to confound the impact of directors and organizational imprints on employees' wages and employment contracts. Given our employment-spell fixed-effects analysis method, we only included time-varying control variables (Wooldridge, 2015).

Organization size. Larger organizations tend to have more formalized human resource practices, which are more likely to promote equal opportunities for employees (Kalev et al., 2006). Studies indeed documented lower gender segregation in large organizations (Huffman et al., 2010; Tomaskovic-Devey et al., 2006). We defined organization size as the number of employees. This control variable showed the size of the organization each individual worked at in our dataset per year. We used a log-version of the variable, as there are several very large organizations.

Proportion of female employees. Employees tend to receive lower wages in organizations with a high proportion of female employees present (Amuedo-Dorantes, 2000; Heinze, 2009). We aggregated our dummy indicating an employee's gender (0 = male, 1 = female) toe the organizational level, and obtained a variable showing the proportion of female employees of the organization of each individual in our dataset per year.

Founding cohort. To disentangle the effects between our organizational imprints and the notion that organization become more gender equal over time (Blau & Kahn, 2017), we control for the founding cohort of the organization. We created a variable ranging from 1 through 6 which indicated a founding cohort starting from organizations with a founding date before 1968 (1), between 1968 and 1977 (2), between 1978 and 1987 (3), between 1988 and 1997 (4), 1998 and 2007 (5) and organizations with a founding date after 2007.

Organizational events. Demographic events can happen to organizations that influence directorate change, and impact wages and employment practices. While the founding phase of an organization *always* leads to the development of imprints, organizational events (i.e., "shocks") can also open up the organization for development of new imprints and thus need to be accounted for in our analyses (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Suddaby & Foster, 2017). Dummies (0 = no, 1 = yes) indicated four organizational events: 1) the birth of an organization, meaning that the organization unit first appeared in records that year; 2) death/collapse/combination birth and death of the organization, meaning that the current year is the final time this organization appeared in the records; 3) split, merge with other organization, or is taken over by another organization; 4) restructuring of the organization.

Table 5.1 shows the descriptive statistics for all variables in our datasets. Table 5.2 additionally displays organization-level descriptive statistics of the characteristics of directorates and organizations. We included the log version of the wage and organization size variable in our analyses due to their skewed distribution. For the *founder imprint* dataset, table 5.1 shows that the average hourly wage for female employees is 20.84 euros, lower than the average male employee hourly wage which is 28.08 euros. Additionally, 23.34% of women are employed on a temporary contract, higher than the 15.90% of male employees employed on a temporary contract. We thus observed a wage and permanency gap in this dataset. Table 5.2 shows that of all organizations in this dataset, 299 organizations (12.19%) have female founders. We calculated the average hourly wage for male and female employees for organizations with and without a female founder imprint, as shown in figure 5.1. We saw male and female employees have a higher average hourly wage in organizations with a female founder imprint than in organizations without a female founder imprint. The gap between male and female hourly wage is highly similar between the two types of organizations. Women earn 25.94% less than men in organizations without a female founder imprint, and 25.89% less than men in organizations with a female founder imprint. Figure 5.2 shows the distribution of permanent employment contracts in organizations with and without a female founder imprint. Here, the gap between the proportion of male and female employees with a permanent contract is practically the same in the two types of organizations. In organizations without a female founder imprint, the proportion of women with a permanent contract is 7.54% lower than the proportion of men with a permanent contract. In organizations with a female founder imprint, the proportion of women with a permanent contract is 6.67% lower than the proportion of men with a permanent contract.

For the *founding context imprint* dataset, table 5.1 shows the average wage of female employees in this dataset to be 18.53 euros, lower than the average male employee wage of 24.95 euros. Of all female employees in this dataset, 23.49% hold a temporary contract. Of the male employees, a lower proportion of 16.88% hold a temporary contract. Table 5.2 shows that 36.85% of the organizations in this dataset were founded during the second feminist wave. Only 95 (0.48%) of organizations were founded during the first feminist wave, and 9,212 (46.48%) organizations were founded during the third feminist wave (not shown in table). We made additional calculations where we investigated the average wage and contract distribution per type of organizational imprint. Figure 5.3 shows the average hourly wage of male and female employees per urbanization imprint. We observed that female employees in organizations with a high urbanization imprint have the highest hourly wage (20.09 euros), and female employees in organizations

with a very low urbanization imprint have the lowest hourly wage (14.61 euros). The gap between wages is the lowest in organizations with a high urbanization imprint (women's wages are 23.61% lower than men's wages here), and the gap is highest in organizations with a very low urbanization imprint (women's wages are 30.95% lower than men's wages here). In figure 5.4, we observed that in high urban imprint organizations, the proportion of female employees on a permanent contract is the highest (78.86%), and the lowest in organizations with a very low urban imprint (67.29%). The gap between the proportion of men and women on a permanent contract is lowest in organizations with a medium urban imprint (5.41% difference) and highest in organizations with a very low urban imprint (13.07% difference).

In figure 5.5, we saw female hourly wage to be highest in organizations founded during the third feminist wave (19.89 euros), and female hourly wage to be lowest in first feminist wave imprint organizations (13.91 euros). The gap between men and women's wages is greatest in organizations founded during the first feminist wave (women earn 30.34% less than men here), and smallest in organizations founded during the second feminist wave (women earn 24.28% less than men here). We saw in figure 5.6 that in organizations founded during the second feminist wave, the proportion of female employees on a permanent contract is highest (77.59%), and lowest in organizations founded during the first feminist wave (67.14%). The gap between the proportion of men and women on a permanent contract is lowest in organizations founded during the second feminist wave (6.67% difference) and highest in organizations founded during the first feminist wave (8.88% difference).

Table 5.1: descriptive statistics of the variables in our founder imprint- and founding context imprints dataset*

	Founder imprint dataset			Founding context imprints dataset		
	Observations	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Observations**	**Mean**	**S.D.**
Outcome variables						
Hourly wage	1,896,027	25.342	25.904	15,049,627	22.670	19.803
Hourly wage (female employees)	717,207	20.843	1.930	5,339,295	18.532	.910
Hourly wage (male employees)	1,178,820	28.079	5.593	9,710,332	24.946	1.199
Hourly wage (log)	1,896,027	3.069	.554	15,049,627	2.970	.533
Type of contract male employees						
(0) Temporary	187,418 (15.90%)			1,638,680 (16.88%)		
(1) Permanent	991,402 (84.10%)			8,071,652 (83.12%)		
Type of contract female employees						
(0) Temporary	167,395 (23.34%)			1,254,243 (23.49%)		
(1) Permanent	549,812 (76.66%)			4,085,052 (76.51%)		
Founder imprint						
Founder composition						
(0) *No female founder present*	1,705,459 (88.83%)					
(1) *Female founder present*	190,568 (11.17%)					
Founding context imprints						
Degree of urbanization at founding						
(0) Very low				905,760 (6.02%)		
(1) Low				2,303,044 (15.30%)		
(2) Medium				3,207,578 (21.31%)		
(3) High				4,021,031 (26/72%)		
(4) Very high				4,612,214 (30.65%)		
Founding during second feminist wave						
(0) No				9,879,489 (65.65%)		
(1) Yes				5,170,138 (34.35%)		

	Founder imprint dataset			Founding context imprints dataset		
	Observations	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Observations**	**Mean**	**S.D.**
Directorate characteristics						
Average age of directorate	1,896,027	50.834	5.593	15,049,627	51.241	6.224
Proportion female directors	1,896,027	.100	.196	15,049,627	.096	.218
Maximum tenure on directorate	1,896,027	10.863	7.416	15,049,627	10.545	7.741
Directorate size	1,896,027	3.930	3.463	15,049,627	2.673	2.345
Employee characteristics						
Age	1,896,027	41.556	12.093	15,049,627	41.620	12.486
Gender of employee						
(0) *Male employee*	1,178,820 (62.17%)			9,710,332 (64.52%)		
(1) *Female employee*	717,207 (37.83%)			5,339,295 (35.48%)		
Organization characteristics						
Organization size	1,896,027	2294.398	4275.888	15,049,627	2382.086	5675.328
Organization size (log)	1,896,027	6.390	1.845	15,049,627	6.133	1.882
Proportion of female employees	1,896,027	.379	.252	15,049,627	.355	.253
Founding cohort						
(0) *Founded before 1968*	571 (0.03%)			3,687,607 (24.50%)		
(1) *Founded in 1968 through 1977*	7,608 (0.40%)			1,478,600 (9.82%)		
(2) *Founded in 1978 through 1987*	41,127 (2.17%)			1,734,710 (11.53%)		
(3) *Founded in 1988 through 1997*	168,884 (8.91%)			2,469,874 (16.41%)		
(4) *Founded in 1998 through 2007*	765,972 (40.40%)			3,528,577 (23.45%)		
(5) *Founded after 2007*	911,865 (48.09%)			2,150,259 (14.29%)		
Organizational events (0 = did not happen, 1 = did happen)						
Birth	15,952 (.84%)			37,269 (0.25%)		
Death/collapse/combination birth and death	9,281 (.49%)			61,405 (0.41%)		
Split/merge/takeover	342,614 (18.07%)			1,984,401 (13.19%)		
Varia/restructuring	194,382 (10.25%)			1,061,707 (7.05%)		
Observations	1,896,027			15,049,627		
Average number of observations per year	191,972			1,518,612		

*Minimum and maximum values cannot be included here due to identification risk

Table 5.2: descriptive statistics on the organizational level of the directorate- and organization-level variables in our founder imprint- and founding context imprints dataset*

	Founder imprint dataset			Founding context imprints dataset		
	Observations	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Observations**	**Mean**	**S.D.**
Founder imprint						
Founder composition						
(0) *No female founder present*	2,153 (87.81%)					
(1) *Female founder present*	299 (12.19%)					
Founding context imprints						
Degree of urbanization at founding						
(0) Very low				1,700 (8.58%)		
(1) Low				4,088 (20.63%)		
(2) Medium				4,880 (24.62%)		
(3) High				4,705 (23.74%)		
(4) Very high				4,445 (22.43%)		
Founding during second feminist wave						
(0) No				12,516 (63.15%)		
(1) Yes				7,302 (36.85%)		
Directorate characteristics						
Average age of directorate	2,452	50.486	7.905	19,818	51.047	8.035
Proportion female directors	2,452	.103	.253	19,818	.092	.245
Maximum tenure on directorate	2,452	11.493	8.795	19,818	11.841	9.048
Directorate size	2,452	1.960	1.741	19,818	1.667	1.191

	Founder imprint dataset			Founding context imprints dataset		
	Observations	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Observations**	**Mean**	**S.D.**
Organization characteristics						
Organization size	2,452	156.312	790.016	19,818	132.150	779.190
Organization size (log)	2,452	3.823	1.202	19,818	3.873	1.105
Proportion of female employees	2,452	.339	.253	19,818	.308	.245
Founding cohort						
(0) *Founded before 1968*	†			3,654 (18.44%)		
(1) *Founded in 1968 through 1977*	†			2,083 (10.51%)		
(2) *Founded in 1978 through 1987*	121 (4.93%)			2,574 (12.99%)		
(3) *Founded in 1988 through 1997*	414 (16.88%)			3,500 (17.66%)		
(4) *Founded in 1998 through 2007*	864 (35.24%)			4,367 (22.04%)		
(5) *Founded after 2007*	1,033 (42.13%)			3,640 (18.37%)		
Organizational events (0 = did not happen, 1 = did happen)						
Birth	86 (3.51%)			233 (1.18%)		
Death/collapse/combination birth and death	32 (1.31%)			200 (1.01%)		
Split/merge/takeover	290 (11.83%)			2,466 (12.44)		
Varia/restructuring	92 (3.75%)			618 (3.12%)		
Observations	2,452			19,818		

*Minimum and maximum values cannot be included here due to identification risk

† Values cannot be shown due to identification risk

Figure 5.1: average hourly wage for male and female employee per founder imprint

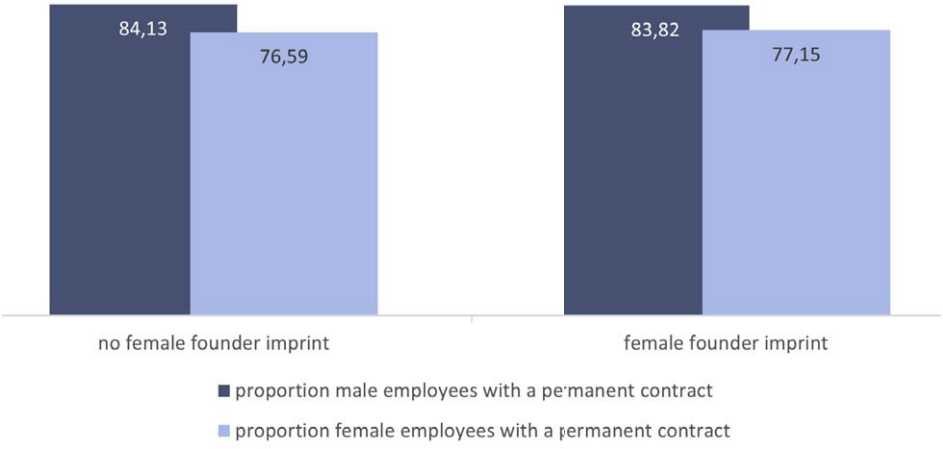

Figure 5.2: proportion of male and female employees with a permanent contract per founder imprint

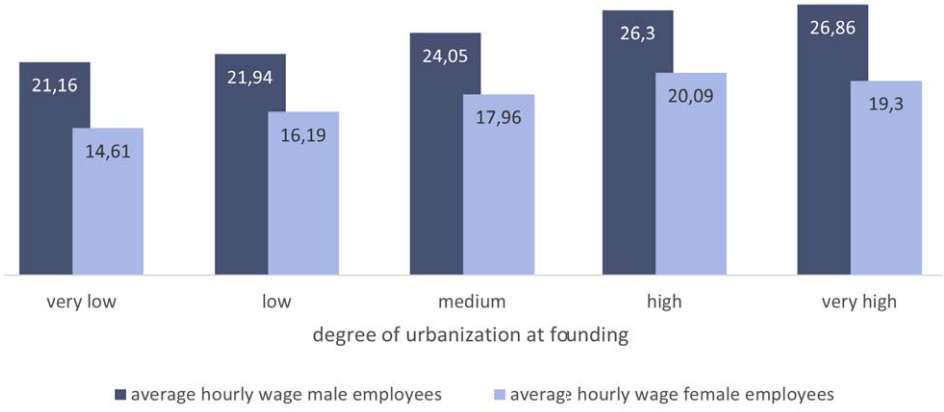

Figure 5.3: average hourly wage for male and female employee per urbanization imprint

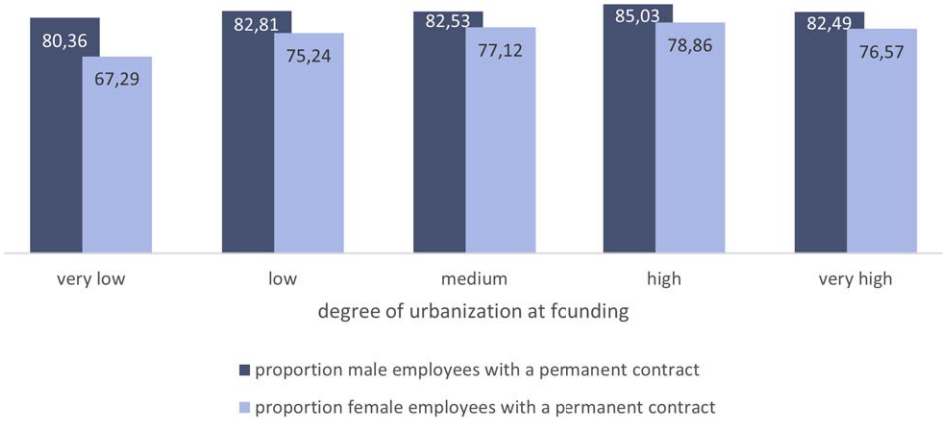

Figure 5.4: proportion of male and female employees with a permanent contract per urbanization imprint

Figure 5.5: average hourly wage for male and female employee per feminist wave imprint

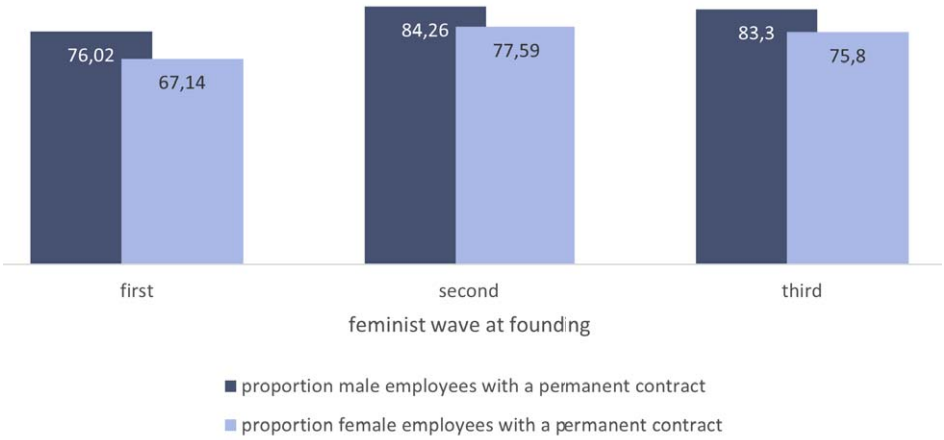

Figure 5.6: proportion of male and female employees with a permanent contract per feminist wave imprint

Analysis

We used fixed-effects regression models including employment spell and year fixed effects for our analyses (Wooldridge, 2015). We identified employment spells by observing the organizations from which employees received their salary. Employees tend to stay with an organization for multiple years, which generates job spells. During these employment spells, variables such as the ones pertaining to directorate composition can change (e.g., directorate changes), while others remain constant over time (e.g., the founding year and founding conditions of the organization you work at do not change). When an employee leaves an organization and starts receiving salary from another organization, a new job is created.

The employment spell fixed effects controlled for time-invariant heterogeneity among jobs that could impact wages or type of employment contract received (e.g., education level, industry/sector the employee works in). Thus, our analyses used within-job variation in predictors and outcomes that is specific to this job; not common trends that affect all jobs in our dataset. We did not include occupation information as this information is only available for a small sample of the CBS microdata. Year dummies are used to remove impact of common temporal shocks affecting all jobs in our dataset (e.g., changing economic conditions). This way, we are unable to model the gender wage or permanency gap itself. We do, however, model the changes in wage or contract *during* a job spell, and are able to compare these changes between male and female employees. Since not all individuals have observations for each year, our dataset was unbalanced. Fixed-effects methods are able to make the necessary adjustments to provide us with robust results despite de unbalanced nature of our data (Wooldridge, 2010, 2015). All standard errors in our analyses are clustered to include robust standard errors and test statistics, which reduces bias to heteroscedasticity and autocorrelation.

We used linear regression to test hypotheses 1.1 and 2.1, and 3.1, with log hourly wage as the outcome. Hypotheses 1.2, 2.2 and 3.2 had permanent employment (0 = no, 1 = yes) as the outcome. For binary outcomes, normally nonlinear models are required. For nonlinear models such as logit models, a key assumption is that binary responses are independent over time (Kwak et al., 2021), however, this is hardly ever the case in panel models. Thus, nonlinear models produce bias in the case of fixed-effects analysis (Beck, 2018; Freedman, 2008; Gomila, 2021), and therefore we opted for linear probability methods, which is shown to be an effective strategy (Gomila, 2021; Kwak et al., 2021).

We investigate the effect of female directors on employees' wages and type of contract. However, when a new directors enters an organization, they do not instantly change employees' wages or employment practices as executive changes take time to be implemented and enact change (Fitza, 2014). The variables containing information on female directors is therefore lagged by one year (T-1). We also needed to take into account that our control variables containing information on directorate composition (age, maximal tenure, directorate size) could influence the decision to hire or promote a female director. We lagged these composition variables by two years (T-2) to take such selection effects into account.

Our hypotheses all pertain to the relationship between a type of organizational imprint, the presence of female directors, and female employee's change in wage or type of contract. We thus build our way to three-way interaction effects. For each imprint, in the

first model we interacted the presence of a female directors with the employee being female to see whether female leaders reduce the gender wage gap or increase the chance on a permanent contract for female employees. Then, we include the three-way interaction between the presence of female directors, the imprint, and the employee being female. In this model, we can observe whether the influence of female directors on female employee's wages or type of employment contract differs per organizational imprint. As the organizational imprint and gender of the employee is a time-constant variable, the main effects of these variables will be omitted from the results, as fixed-effects analyses only allow inclusion of variables that change over time (Wooldridge, 2015). It remains possible to interact a time-constant variable with a variable that changes over time, which is the case with the proportion of female directors that can change during a job spell. We present average marginal effects (AME), to interpret the main and interaction effects. The AME shows the total effect of imprints and share of female directors on female employees' wages.

5.4 Results

Results for the founder imprint

Female leaders and gender differentials in wage progression and permanency

Table 5.3 presents the results of a fixed-effects linear regression with job and year effects, with log hourly wage as the dependent variable. Table 5.4 presents the results of panel linear probability models with job and year effects, with permanent employment as the dependent variable. The baseline models (Model 1) present the interaction between the presence of female directors and female employees to assess whether female leaders reduce gender differences in wage promotions or in the chance of switching to a permanent contract. We observed that the presence of female directors is associated with an increase in hourly wage for all employees (b=0.053, p<0.05). We find no significant differences between the effect of female directors on male and female employees. Looking at permanency, table 5.4 shows that a higher share of female directors is associated with a lower probability of receiving a permanent contract for employees (b=-0.072, p<0.01). The interaction between female directors and female employee is negative, indicating that the reduction in probability of receiving a permanent contract is even lower for female employees, but this result is statistically insignificant (b=-0.052, p>0.05).

Table 5.3: linear fixed-effects regression results with logwage as the dependent variable and female founder imprint as the predictor*

	(1) Baseline	(2) Female founder
Predictors		
Female directors	.053* (.021)	.097** (.026)
Female directors * female employee	.059 (.040)	.043 (.040)
Imprint * female directors		.076** (.010)
Imprint * female directors * female employee		.008 (.015)
Directorate characteristics		
Average age of directorate	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)
Maximum tenure of directorate	<.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)
Directorate size	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)
Employee characteristics		
Age^2	-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics		
Organization size (log)	.026** (.002)	.025** (.002)
Proportion of female employees	.032** (.010)	.030** (.010)
Proportion of female employees * female	-.091** (.016)	-.091** (.016)
Founding cohort * female directors	-.014** (.005)	-.021** (.005)
Founding cohort * female directors * female employee	-.004 (.009)	-.001 (.009)
Event - *birth*	.010** (.002)	.010** (.002)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	.011** (.002)	.010** (.002)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.012** (.001)	-.011** (.001)
Adjusted R^2	.923	.922
Observations	885,493	885,493
Number of jobs	202,117	202,117
Models include employment-spell and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses. *$p < 0,05$; **$p < 0,01$		

*The main effects for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes), imprint, and founding cohort, and effects from two-way interactions between these variables are omitted as they are time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time.

The moderating effect of imprints

We included a three-way interaction effect between the female founder imprint, female employee and the proportion of female directors in the second models of table 5.3 and 5.4. In regards to wage progression, table 5.3 shows a positive, but not statistically significant three-way interaction (b=0.008, p>0.05). We thus find no support for our first hypothesis, where we expected that in organizations with a female founder imprint, a higher proportion of women in directorates will be more likely to positively impact female employees' wage progress relative to men. We ran additional models (not shown in table) where we included the two-way interaction effects present in model 2 without the three-way interaction. These models showed a significant and positive two-way interaction between the female founder

imprint and the presence of female directors. We thus find evidence that directorates with female directors present have a positive effect on employees' wages in organizations with a female founder imprint, but that the wage benefits do not differ between male and female employees. For permanency, the three-way interaction is positive and statistically significant (b=0.068, p<0.01). This aligns with our hypothesis: organizations with female founders and female directors enable female leaders to be agents of change, and increase the chance of female employees receiving a permanent contract. The AME shows the total effect of female directors on women's probability of receiving a permanent contract in female founded organizations, which is positive with a value of 0.043.

Table 5.4: linear fixed-effects probability model results with permanent employment as the dependent variable and female founder imprint as the predictor *

	(1) Baseline	(2) Female founder
Predictors		
Female directors	-.072** (.017)	-.068** (.018)
Female directors * female employee	-.052 (.037)	-.053 (.037)
Imprint * female directors		.028* (.012)
Imprint * female directors * female employee		.068** (.019)
Directorate characteristics		
Average age of directorate	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Maximum tenure of directorate	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Directorate size	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)
Employee characteristics		
Age^2	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics		
Organization size (log)	.025** (.001)	.025** (.001)
Proportion of female employees	-.031* (.014)	-.031* (.014)
Proportion of female employees * female	.044 (.023)	.044 (.023)
Founding cohort * female directors	.015** (.004)	.015** (.004)
Founding cohort * female directors * female employee	.013 (.008)	.013 (.008)
Event - *birth*	-.006* (.002)	-.006* (.002)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	.009** (.002)	.009** (.002)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.002** (.001)	-.002** (.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.003** (.001)	-.003** (.001)
Adjusted R^2	.738	.738
Observations	885,493	885,493
Number of jobs	202,117	202,117
Models include employment-spell and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses. *$p < 0,05$; **$p < 0,01$		

*The main effects for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes), imprint, and founding cohort, and effects from two-way interactions between these variables are omitted as they are time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time.

Results for the urbanization and feminist wave imprint

Female leaders and gender differentials in wage progression and permanency

Table 5.5 and table 5.7 present the results of a fixed-effects linear regression with job and year effects, with log hourly wage as the dependent variable. Table 5.6 and table 5.8 present the results of panel linear probability models with job and year effects, with permanent employment as the dependent variable. The baseline models (Model 1) present the interaction between the presence of female directors and female employees to assess whether female leaders reduce gender differences in wage promotions or in the chance of obtaining a permanent contract. We observed in table 5.5 that female directors are associated with a reduction in hourly wage for employees (b=-0.015, p<0.01). This reduction is stronger for female employees (b=-0.054, p<0.01). Contrary to the agents of change hypothesis, we find that female directors perpetuate wage inequalities. The baseline model in table 5.6 shows that a higher share of female directors is associated with a higher probability that male employees receive a permanent contract (b=0.010, p<0.01), but a lower probability that female employees do (b=-0.028, p<0.01). Again, in our baseline model we find no evidence that female leaders act as change agents.

The moderating effect of the urbanization imprint

The second models included a three-way interaction effect between the urbanization imprint (a variable ranging from 0 through 4, where “no urban” is the reference category), female directors, and female employee. For wage progression, table 5.5 showed us that in organizations founded in a higher level of urbanization imprint, a higher proportion of female directors is associated with a reduction in hourly wage for female employees (b=-0.004, p<0.05). The AME shows a negative value of -0.054. We expected organizations founded in more urbanized contexts to set the stage for female leaders to become agents of change who increase women’s wages. We find the opposite: in organizations founded in higher urbanized contexts, female leaders lead to a wage reduction for all employees, and this reduction is stronger for female employees. In regards to permanency, the three-way interaction in table 5.6 is negative and statistically significant (b=-0.010, p<0.01), with a negative AME value of -0.003. Similar to wage progression outcomes, we find no support for our hypothesis that organizations founded in higher urbanized contexts set the stage for female leaders to become agents of change when looking at employment contract outcomes.

Table 5.5: linear fixed-effects regression results with logwage as the dependent variable and the urbanization imprint as predictor*

	(1) Baseline	(2) Urbanization
Predictors		
Female directors	-.015** (.002)	-.021** (.003)
Female directors * female employee	-.054** (.003)	-.037** (.005)
Imprint * female directors		-.013** (.001)
Imprint * female directors * female employee		-.004* (.002)
Directorate characteristics		
Average age of directorate	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)
Maximum tenure of directorate	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Directorate size	<.001* (<.001)	<.001* (<.001)
Employee characteristics		
Age^2	<-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics		
Organization size (log)	.022** (.001)	.022** (.001)
Proportion of female employees	.040** (.004)	.039** (.004)
Proportion of female employees * female	-.025** (.006)	-.024** (.006)
Founding cohort * female directors	-.003** (.001)	-.002** (.001)
Founding cohort * female directors * female employee	.017** (.001)	.015** (.001)
Event - *birth*	.004** (.001)	.004** (.001)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	.014** (.002)	.014** (.002)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.002** (<.001)	-.002** (<.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.008** (<.001)	-.008** (<.001)
Adjusted R^2	.906	.906
Observations	7,544,587	7,544,587
Number of jobs	1,623,238	1,623,238
Models include employment-spell and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses. *$p < 0,05$; **$p < 0,01$		

*The main effects for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes), imprint, and founding cohort, and effects from two-way interactions between these variables are omitted as they are time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time.

The moderating effect of the feminist wave imprint

We included a three-way interaction effect between the feminist wave imprints, proportion of female directors, and female employee. With regards to wage progression, the results in model 2 of table 5.7 show that in organizations founded during the first feminist wave, female directors' presence is associated with a reduction in hourly wage for female employees, but the result is not statistically significant (b=-0.018, p>0.05). For organizations founded during the second feminist wave, female directors are associated with an increase in hourly wage for female employees. Again, this result is not statistically significant (b=0.007, p>0.05). We ran additional models (not shown in table) where we included the two-way interaction effects present in model 2 without the three-way

interaction. The two-way interactions are both negative and significant in this case, showing evidence that female leaders in organizations with a first- and second-wave feminist imprint reduce employee wages, with no difference in wage reduction for male and female employees.

Table 5.6: linear fixed-effects probability model results with permanent employment as the dependent variable and the urbanization imprint as predictor*

	(1) Baseline	(2) Urbanization
Predictors		
Female directors	.010** (.002)	-.013** (.004)
Female directors * female employee	-.028** (.003)	-.001 (.003)
Imprint * female directors		.008** (.001)
Imprint * female directors * female employee		-.010** (.002)
Directorate characteristics		
Average age of directorate	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Maximum tenure of directorate	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Directorate size	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)
Employee characteristics		
Age^2	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics		
Organization size (log)	.015** (.001)	.015** (.001)
Proportion of female employees	.004 (.005)	.004 (.005)
Proportion of female employees * female	.030** (.008)	.030** (.008)
Founding cohort * female directors	-.002** (.001)	-.002** (.001)
Founding cohort * female directors * female employee	.017** (.001)	.017** (.001)
Event - *birth*	-.004** (.001)	-.004** (.001)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	-.004** (.001)	-.004** (.001)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.007** (<.001)	-.007** (<.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.005** (<.001)	-.005** (<.001)
Adjusted R^2	.732	.732
Observations	7,544,587	7,544,587
Number of jobs	1,623,238	1,623,238
Models include employment-spell and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses. *$p < 0,05$; **$p < 0,01$		

*The main effects for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes), imprint, and founding cohort, and effects from two-way interactions between these variables are omitted as they are time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time.

With regards to permanency, in table 5.8 we observed that in organizations founded during the first feminist wave, female directors are associated with a lower probability of receiving a permanent contract for female employees (b=-0.037, p<0.01). We find the same effect for female employees under female leaders in organizations founded during the second feminist wave (b=-0.027, p<0.01). However, we observed that the main effect

of female directors is positive in our baseline model, and negative in the second model. This flip in the sign of the coefficient suggests multicollinearity issues. We reran this model using fixed-effects on the organizational level instead of employment-spell level to allow for more variance, but the results remain the same.

Table 5.7: linear fixed-effects regression results with logwage as the dependent variable and feminist wave imprint as the predictor*

	(1) Baseline	(2) Feminist wave
Predictors		
Female directors	-.015** (.002)	-.030** (.004)
Female directors * female employee	-.054** (.003)	-.050** (.005)
First feminist wave * female directors		-.017 (.011)
First feminist wave * female directors * female employee		-.018 (.013)
Second feminist wave * female directors		.019** (.004)
Second feminist wave * female directors * female employee		.007 (.005)
Directorate characteristics		
Average age of directorate	<.001 (<.001)	<.001 (<.001)
Maximum tenure of directorate	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Directorate size	<.001* (<.001)	<.001** (<.001)
Employee characteristics		
Age^2	<-.001** (<.001)	-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics		
Organization size (log)	.022** (.001)	.022** (.001)
Proportion of female employees	.040** (.004)	.039** (.004)
Proportion of female employees * female	-.025** (.006)	-.025** (.006)
Founding cohort * female directors	-.003** (.001)	.001 (.001)
Founding cohort * female directors * female employee	.017** (.001)	.015** (.001)
Event - *birth*	.004** (.001)	.004** (.001)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	.014** (.002)	.014** (.002)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.002** (<.001)	-.002** (<.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.008** (<.001)	-.008** (<.001)
Adjusted R^2	.906	.906
Observations	7,544,587	7,544,587
Number of jobs	1,623,238	1,623,238
Models include employment-spell and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses. *$p < 0,05$; **$p < 0,01$		

*The main effects for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes), imprint, and founding cohort, and effects from two-way interactions between these variables are omitted as they are time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time.

Table 5.8: linear fixed-effects probability model results with permanent employment as the dependent variable and feminist wave imprint as the predictor*

	(1) Baseline	(2) Feminist wave
Predictors		
Female directors	.010** (.002)	-.008* (.003)
Female directors * female employee	-.028** (.003)	-.003 (.005)
First feminist wave * female directors		-.037** (.008)
First feminist wave * female directors * female employee		-.019 (.010)
Second feminist wave * female directors		.023** (.003)
Second feminist wave * female directors * female employee		-.027** (.005)
Directorate characteristics		
Average age of directorate	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Maximum tenure of directorate	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Directorate size	.001** (<.001)	.001** (<.001)
Employee characteristics		
Age^2	<-.001** (<.001)	<-.001** (<.001)
Organization characteristics		
Organization size (log)	.015** (.001)	.015** (.001)
Proportion of female employees	.004 (.005)	.002 (.005)
Proportion of female employees * female	.030** (.008)	.031** (.008)
Founding cohort * female directors	-.002** (.001)	.002* (.001)
Founding cohort * female directors * female employee	.017** (.001)	.011** (.001)
Event - *birth*	-.004** (.001)	-.004** (.001)
Event – *death/collapse/combination birth death*	-.004** (.001)	-.004** (.001)
Event – *split/merge/takeover*	-.007** (<.001)	-.007** (<.001)
Event – *varia/restructure*	-.005** (<.001)	-.005** (<.001)
Adjusted R^2	.732	.732
Observations	7,544,587	7,544,587
Number of jobs	1,623,238	1,623,238
Models include employment-spell and year (2010-2019) fixed effects. Fully-robust standard errors in parentheses. *$p < 0,05$; **$p < 0,01$		

*The main effects for female employee (0 = no, 1 = yes), imprint, and founding cohort, and effects from two-way interactions between these variables are omitted as they are time constant. The variable employee age is omitted due to the variable changing at a constant rate over time.

5.5 Conclusion and discussion

The presence of women in organizational leadership positions has mixed effects on gender equality in the organizations they manage (e.g., Abendroth et al., 2017; Srivastava & Sherman, 2015; Van Hek & Van Der Lippe, 2019). We offered a novel approach by including the constraining influences of historical context by focusing on organizational founding. We employed unique datasets consisting of linked employer-employee register micro data from the Netherlands, allowing us to link organization founding history with later employment and (in)equality outcomes in Dutch workplaces.

We found that organizations with female founders set the stage for future female leaders to become change agents in increasing all employees' wages, and women's chances of receiving a permanent contract. This finding supports earlier research on female executives' impact on gender equality which concentrates on less competitive, entry-level corporate ranks (Abendroth et al., 2017), where most employees start on temporary contracts.

We expected that organizations founded in higher urbanized environments to be imprinted with cultural values that set the stage for future female leaders to act as change agents. We found the opposite; in this type of organizations, female leaders reduce the probability of receiving a permanent contract for female employees, and they reduce wages of both male and female employees. This surprising finding might suggest a "glass cliff", the tendency of firms to appoint women (and other underrepresented minority groups) to leadership positions during organizational crisis (Morgenroth et al., 2020); this might inhibit the agency of and opportunity for female leaders to reduce gender inequality in the organizations they manage. We additionally expected organizations founded during the second feminist wave to set the stage female leaders to become agents of change. Our results, however, show no indication of female leaders acting as agents of change when looking at wage and employment outcomes, thus not supporting our hypotheses. An explanation could be that the feminist movement focused mainly on women's position in the labor market in regards to participating more and becoming financially independent. By doing so, the feminist movement was perhaps not able to challenge stereotypical societal expectations in regards to leadership (Acker, 1990) – this could be the case as we still see to this day that high corporate positions are dominated by men (Eurostat, 2023).

We propose avenues for future research that delve deeper into the influence of organizational history on workplace equality, that have the potential to address limitations in our study.

Organizational context

Our study offers insights on the influence of historical organizational influences stemming from the founding period. While our focus lies at the imprints developed during founding of an organization, organizations encounter more sensitive periods throughout their lifetime that opens them up to being imprinted by their environment again (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). We controlled for organizational events, such as merging that could lead to new imprints, but argue that a fruitful avenue for future research is to delve deeper in the distinct transition periods that an organization encounters. The question is how these early imprints influence how, and if, new ones are developed (Cowen et al., 2022). In particular interest to our expectations of the role of founding context imprints, an interesting transition period that might make an organization susceptible for contextual influences again is when a firm moves to a new, contextually different location (e.g., from rural to urban). Another interesting transition period is the merging of two firms with highly different internal gender hierarchy structures. With what type of "gender equality blueprint" does the new organizational form become imprinted, and what organizational factors determine which gender hierarchy structure will be replicated? Or, does this transition period open the organization up for being imprinted with new, current contextual influences that might determine the internal gender equality structures?

The complexity of the context

Our study may not have captured other processes at play through which the environmental founding context impact female leaders becoming agents of change. For the contradicting results of the urbanization imprint, we theorized that urbanized environments adopt more gender-equal values, and thus imprints organizations with gender-equal values that set the stage for future female change agents. However, we find that urbanization imprints do not enable female leaders to become agents of change. A reason might be that higher urbanization also comes with more competitive labor markets (Sato & Zenou, 2015). It was outside of the scope of our data to observe degrees of competition on the labor market. Perhaps this competitive context also becomes imprinted in the internal structure of the organization, which could lead to less favorable outcomes for women as studies suggest that competitive environments benefit men more (Flory et al., 2015). Additionally, studies show women to be less willing to engage in competitive job environments (Niederle & Vesterlund, 2007). Female leaders that still opt for an executive position in a competitive environment might lead them to adopt to the masculine traits prevalent in competitive environments that prevent their willingness to help other women in the organization, as experiences in masculine organizations often lead to female leaders inhibiting "queen bee" behavior (Derks et al., 2011).

We also did not find organizations founded during the second feminist wave to set the stage for female change agency. Imprinting theory indicates that the values of social movements can be imprinted on organizations at time of founding (Lounsbury & Ventresca, 2002; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013), and while the social feminist movement stressed gender equality in the workplace – they also faced much resistance (Tijsseling, 2015). During the second feminist movement, anti-feminist movements emerged (led by men) (Kaufman, 1994)). It may be that men among founders, the dominant gender in organizations' leadership during this period, experienced threat from the progressive second wave feminist movement that challenged their power and privileges, and resistance to gender equality has been built into organization founded during these phase. Future work could more closely investigate the interplay of the foundation environment and founders who select and incorporate elements during founding (Johnson, 2007).

In sum, our article contributed to efforts to understand how organizational founding history impact female leader's influence on gender equality in the organizations they manage. While our results are mixed and partly contradict our expectations, our findings do emphasize that organizational founding history indeed shapes present-day wage and employment equality outcomes. We found that, compared to founding context imprints, *founder* imprints matter more for setting the stage for future female leaders to act as change agents. This finding highlight the important role that founders play, supporting earlier research that emphasize leaders' entrepreneurial role in shaping the initial structure of an organizations (Johnson, 2007; Phillips, 2005), possibly dictating the development and outcomes of the organizations for years to come.

5

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This chapter benefitted greatly from discussions with and feedback from Zoltán Lippényi, Rafael Wittek, and Marco van Leeuwen.

6.1 Overarching findings

In this dissertation I aimed to understand how the pasts of organizations and leaders impact workplace precarity and inequality. To achieve this goal I built on imprinting theory, as this multilevel framework enabled me to study how persisting influences from the past - the imprints – of individual leaders and organizations relate to organizational outcomes in the present.

My main conclusion from the empirical chapters is that the pasts of leaders matter for how they influence precarity and inequality in organizations in the present. Both the broader organizational environment (e.g., early-career private sector experience) or the close relationships (e.g., exposure to peers in a directorate) have shown to be sources of impactful personal imprints. These findings support the theoretical notion that socialization of leaders during formative career experiences forms long-lasting imprints that shape their workplace assumptions, beliefs, and future decision-making. The findings are less equivocal regarding how organizational imprints matter for how leaders impact on inequality in the organizational present. Only the organization's founders (i.e., a female founder imprint) appear to have a lasting effect on future leader's impact on gender inequality at the workplace. In this final chapter, I provide a short summary of the main empirical findings, discuss the limitations of my dissertation, and provide suggestions for future research and policy implications.

6.2 Summary of empirical findings

Throughout the empirical chapters I used linked employer-employee register microdata from Statistics Netherlands to test the related hypotheses in my dissertation. In the first empirical chapter, **chapter 3**, I examined how early private-sector career experiences of directors in the public sector influence the adoption of contested temporary employment practices in Dutch public organizations. The results indicated that a higher share of public directors with early-career private experience leads to more use of temporary contracts in Dutch public organizations. While undoubtedly government austerity and New Public Management reforms already pressured public organizations (Drechsler, 2005; Farazmand, 2002; Filipovic, 2005) to adopt more "hard" HRM practices, this chapter shows that presence of directors with early private-sector experience leads to breaking with longstanding public sector employment traditions.

In **Chapter 4** I examined whether female organizational leaders' impact on workplace gender equality depends on their early career experiences. We identified female

leaders with exposure to female peers in directorate boards - *representation imprint* - and exposure to a female CEO - *empowerment imprint* - in their first managerial role, and found both types of exposure to contribute to female leaders becoming "agents of change" that further female employees' wage progression and chances of receiving a permanent contract. These results contribute to imprinting literature as it shows specific mechanisms why individual imprints matter: through representation and empowerment during formative career experiences.

Building on chapter 4, in **chapter 5** I examined how the organizational founding context affect female organizational leaders' impact on workplace gender equality. I expected that in organizations founded by women, organizations founded in urbanized environments, and organizations founded during the second feminist wave "enable" present-day female leaders to act as agents of change that improve gender equality. The results of this chapter do not lend strong support to the idea that organizational founding context matters for female organizational leaders' impact on workplace gender equality. Only in organizations with a "female founder imprint" do the results show that female leaders have a positive influence on female employees' wages and employment outcomes. Contrary to theorized expectations, however, in organizations founded in higher urbanized environments, female leaders' presence has a negative impact on wages of all employees - male and female. Female leaders' presence is also associated with reduced likelihood of women of receiving a permanent contract, while it improves for male employees. For organizations founded during the second feminist wave, results show no indication of female leaders increasing women's wages or likelihood of receiving a permanent contract. Taken together, the results of chapter 4 and chapter 5 provides more consistent support for the notion that personal history matters for female organizational leaders' impact on workplace gender equality than organizational history.

6.3 Limitations and future research

The findings of this dissertations are to be interpreted with limitations in mind. First, more complex patterns of imprinting exist than I was able to empirically investigate within the scope of my dissertation. My research focused on formative career experiences in a first managerial role for personal imprints, and the founding period for organizational imprints. Imprinting literature, however, points toward the notion that during an individual's career, or the life cycle of an organization, multiple sensitive periods occur (Higgins, 2005; Ibarra, 1999; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Rosenkopf & Almeida, 2003). Research in this perspective suggests that individuals and organizations are thus not formed by one specific imprint,

but carry with them a *layer of imprints* (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). I do not expect the existence of multiple imprints to undermine the finding of my dissertation that personal past matters. Research in the perspective of layered imprints emphasizes that imprints acquired at several stages are not fully replaced or overwritten, but layered atop older ones (Cooper et al., 1996; Higgins, 2005). With regard to the personal imprints that I examined in my dissertation, one promising avenue for future research would be to investigate the ways in which old and new career imprints interact with one another. Female leaders may, for example, encounter a highly masculine and male-dominated organizational environment prior to assuming managerial roles, which may render them less receptive to the empowerment influences of role models. A further avenue is to explore the role of imprints prior to professional careers, such as educational or social class backgrounds (Kish-Gephart & Campbell, 2015; Sanders & Tuschke, 2007). Particularly interesting is whether certain imprints acquired during education simply add to or alter (reinforce or weaken) early-career professional imprints We may expect that early-career imprints from the private sector are stronger among public managers who studied in business schools, as cognitive schemes, values, and knowledge in business schools and the private sector are congruent. For the organization imprints I studied, the founding context remains important to consider as the birth of an organization is a phase where an imprint *always* forms. However, some organizations face transitions that could open them up for the formation of new imprints: for example, mergers and acquisitions, change in ownership, or going public. The role these transitions play in shaping the original founding imprints is understudied. Some of the contradictory results of my dissertation on organizational imprints indicate that there might be more complex imprint patterns at play. Dissecting these layered imprints remains a promising research direction.

Second, this dissertation adopts a positivist view of the past, which understands personal and organizational histories as objective conditions that impact agency in the presence (Suddaby & Foster, 2017). In this dissertation, the historical past is linear, objective, and seen as observable. There are, however, other ways to approach history. Of particular interest in regards to this dissertation is the view of “rhetoric history”, where history as a narrative discourse is used strategically by actors to persuade others and enact change (Suddaby et al., 2010). In relationship to imprinting, such discursive processes may be an explanation for the inconsistent findings regarding how organizational founding environment matters for female organizational leaders’ impact on workplace gender equality. For example, the second wave feminists faced much resistance (Tijsseling, 2015) and lead to men creating an anti-feminist movement to oppose the threat to male power and privileges (Kaufman, 1994). In organizations founded in this period male

leaders may frame the feminist movement more negatively, counteracting female leaders' positive rhetoric. Johnson (2007) already established how entrepreneurs are the ones who select and incorporate specific elements from the environment during founding. The influence of organization-level imprints that stem from the founding context can therefore perhaps not only be identified through observing the objective conditions as I did in my dissertation, but also by investigating how these imprints are interpreted, reconstructed and utilized by leaders. Still, this framework of rhetoric history does not contest the point of departure of my dissertation that leaders matter when studying outcomes pertaining to inequality; yet it will not be their *personal past* that is the underlying mechanism, but how leaders interpret and utilize the *organizational past*.

Third, while the empirical chapters show that organizational and leaders' past shape workplace precarity and inequality, it was beyond the scope of my data to provide insight in the decision-making processes in the directorates and boardrooms of work organizations. Additionally, actors at the highest level interact with participants at several levels of the organization, and decision-making or negotiation processes involves multiple actors and stakeholders beyond the executive levels (Avent-Holt & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014). While the register panel data I used provided many benefits for the research question of my dissertation, supplementing and linking it with survey- or ethnographic data can provide more insight on how relationships between (levels of) actors shape workplace precarity and inequality. Obtaining this type of data, however, requires substantial effort as organizational leaders at the director level are a difficult group to reach for survey or interview data (Cycyota & Harrison, 2006).

Fourth, in regards to workplace precarity, the scope of our data only extended to studying temporary employment. Due to its prevalence, especially in the Dutch context, temporary employment is an important phenomenon to study in the context of growing workplace precarity. However, other forms of precarious work emerged over the past decades that are deserving of theoretical and empirical attention. A particularly interesting research avenue is studying organizational leadership decisions on *temporary agency workers.* Agency work is characterized by a triadic employment relation: the employee, the client organization, and the agency (Kalleberg et al., 2015). This shift from a dual to triadic employment relationship also causes a shift in power balances (Handy et al., 2020); not only the employer exerts power over the employee, the agency does as well. Personal imprints of leaders may be more complex in the case of triadic employment relationships where the authority over working conditions and wages is shared between the client and the agency organizations.

6.4 Policy implications

My research findings have implications for policies aimed at improving women's career opportunities in organizations. Many policies for gender equality are based on the idea that women and men are the same just because of their sex. Essentialism is present in recent national quotas aimed at reducing the gender imbalance in corporate top jobs (Mansbridge, 2005). However, the danger of essentialism is that it reproduces sex stereotypes and can contribute to sex segregation in organizations and society (Moskos, 2020; Skewes et al., 2018). It does so by reinforcing beliefs that men and women are essentially different. Often, such policies are legitimized by narratives that men and women bring complementary skills to the workplace (Løvgren & Orupabo, 2023). This, in turn, leads to persisting norms about "who belongs in what position" and ultimately to gendered organizations (Acker, 1990). My dissertation addresses this essentialism by demonstrating that the effectiveness of female leaders as change agents is contingent upon their early career experiences of female peer support and empowerment while advancing through the ranks of management. This suggests that, rather than simply "adding women and stir", we require policies that foster and sustain organizational environments that are conducive to and empowering for women (and other currently marginalized groups). Establishing such corporate socialization contexts may prove more effective in the long term than merely meeting diversity targets.

In conclusion, the findings of this dissertation emphasize the significance of examining past influences when examining organizational phenomena. Leaders exert a considerable influence on workplace precarity and inequality, and their past experiences play a pivotal role in shaping this impact.

6

Appendices

Summary in Dutch

References

Dankwoord (acknowledgments)

About the author

ICS Dissertation Series

Summary in Dutch

In hedendaagse Westerse economieën is ongelijkheid op de werkvloer zichtbaar in de vorm van onzekere banen: precair werk. Vroeger werd de “standaardarbeidsrelatie” gekenmerkt door stabiele, voltijdse en permanente posities met sociale bescherming (Bosch, 2004; Tomlinson et al., 2018). Tegenwoordig zien we echter een sterke toename in nieuwe precaire vormen van werk die afwijken van deze standaardarbeidsrelatie (Cappelli, 1998, 2000; Hatton, 2011; Kalleberg, 2011). Een belangrijk kenmerk van deze nieuwe arbeidsvormen is de grotere flexibiliteit die het werkgevers biedt om de arbeidsrelatie te beëindigen (Atkinson, 1984). Eén van de meest voorkomende vormen van precaire arbeid zijn de banen met contracten voor bepaalde tijd: tijdelijke contracten (OECD, 2023). Tijdelijke contracten geven de werkgever veel voordelen (Atkinson, 1984; Delsen, 1995; Giesecke & Groß, 2003; Houseman, 2001), maar de werknemer veel nadelen (Dekker, 2021). Bijzonder is de toename in tijdelijke contracten in sectoren die juist bekend stonden om de stabiliteit van banen, zoals de publieke sector (Conley, 2006; Knies et al., 2022). Hier leidt de toename van tijdelijke contracten tot negatieve reacties van veel maatschappelijke stakeholders (Leisink & Boxall, 2021; Shire & Van Jaarsveld, 2008).

Het toenemende gebruik van tijdelijke arbeidscontracten versterkt bestaande ongelijkheden op de arbeidsmarkt. Groepen zoals migranten, laagopgeleiden, en vrouwen komen vaker in precaire werksituaties terecht (Janietz et al., 2024; Kösters & Smits, 2013; Skriabikova & Smits, 2019). Vrouwen zijn oververtegenwoordigd in tijdelijke banen (van der Vliet et al., 2023); bijzonder opmerkelijk, gezien de vooruitgang op het gebied van onderwijs en arbeidsparticipatie van vrouwen in de laatste decennia (England, 2010; England et al., 2020). Uit onderzoek blijkt dat tijdelijke contracten vaak als opstap naar een vast contract dienen voor mannen; vrouwen blijven juist vaker vastzitten aan tijdelijke contracten of worden ontslagen (Bryson, 2004; Casey & Alach, 2004; Giesecke & Groß, 2004; Rubery et al., 1999). Deze verschillen in contractvormen tussen mannen en vrouwen weerspiegelt de aanhoudende loonverschillen tussen mannen en vrouwen op de werkvloer (Blau & Kahn, 2017; Penner et al., 2022).

Mijn proefschrift heeft als doel om te begrijpen hoe precaire arbeidsrelaties en genderongelijkheid vormgegeven wordt in werkorganisaties. Om dit doel te behalen focus ik op de rol van organisatieleiders. Deze leiders bekleden de hoogste posities in organisaties, waarmee ze de macht hebben om beleid vast te stellen dat invloed heeft op de verdeling van arbeidscontracten, toegang tot banen, functies, en lonen (Bills et al., 2017). Organisatieleiders opereren als een soort poortwachter voor de toegang

tot organisatiemiddelen zoals vaste contracten en hogere lonen. Daarnaast hebben organisatieleiders veel status en zichtbaarheid waarmee ze invloed kunnen uitoefenen op de normen en cultuur van de organisatie (Bills, 2003; Rivera, 2020). Uiteindelijk zijn leiders echter ook individuen, met een identiteit die verbonden is aan de sociale groepen waartoe zij behoren (bijvoorbeeld groepen op basis van geslacht), bepaalde overtuigingen en waardes. Net als andere mensen hebben leiders te maken met cognitieve beperkingen. Zo kunnen leiders niet over álle informatie en kennis beschikken.

De identiteit, overtuigingen, waardes en cognities van organisatieleiders zijn grotendeels afkomstig uit het persoonlijke verleden van de leiders (Dokko et al., 2009; Lee & Battilana, 2013; Phillips, 2005; Tilcsik, 2012), en beïnvloeden uiteindelijk de besluiten die ze maken wanneer ze een organisatie leiden. Daarnaast worden organisatieleiders ook beperkt door de organisatie zelf en de omgeving waarin ze opereren (Suddaby & Foster, 2017). Het verleden speelt ook hier een prominente rol: over verloop van tijd worden organisaties star en weerstaan ze verandering (Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Selznick, 1948; Suddaby & Foster, 2017). Dit beperkt de invloed van individuen (zoals: organisatieleiders) die verandering willen aanbrengen in de organisatie. Er is echter beperkt onderzoek naar de invloed van het persoonlijke en organisatorische verleden op onzekerheid en ongelijkheid in organisaties. Met mijn proefschrift wil ik daar verandering in aanbrengen. Mijn centrale onderzoeksvraag luidt dus:

Hoe speelt het verleden van organisatieleiders en hun organisaties een rol in het vormen van precariteit en ongelijkheid op de werkvloer?

Om de rol van het verleden (van zowel het individu als van de organisatie) mee te nemen in mijn onderzoek, bouw ik voort op imprinting theorie. Voor individuen geldt dat imprinting een proces is waarbij zij tijdens hun loopbaan gevoelige periodes doormaken. Tijdens deze periode zijn individuen vatbaar voor invloeden vanuit de omgeving. Het begin van een carrière is een voorbeeld van een gevoelige periode, maar ook wanneer individuen nieuwe rollen aannemen (bijvoorbeeld een promotie, of een nieuwe functie) ervaren ze een periode van onzekerheid en verhoogde gevoeligheid voor omgevingsinvloeden (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Dokko et al., 2009; Higgins, 2005). Individuen socialiseren in nieuwe rollen, en terwijl dit gebeurt laten de invloeden vanuit de omgeving een “stempel” achter (Dokko et al., 2009; Lee & Battilana, 2013; Phillips, 2005; Tilcsik, 2012). Deze stempels worden imprints genoemd. Deze imprints ontwikkelen zich tot blijvende cognitieve schema’s, scripts, en normatieve aannames over hoe werk eruit hoort te zien (DiMaggio, 1997). Individuen dragen deze imprints de rest van hun carrière mee, en deze imprints beïnvloeden hun latere gedragingen en keuzes.

Naast individuen kunnen organisaties ook imprints met zich meedragen (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013; Stinchcombe, 1965). Vooral wanneer een organisatie wordt opgericht is deze zeer beïnvloedbaar door de omgeving, die wederom als een stempel op de organisatie drukt. Zo kan gebeuren dat deze stempel, de imprint, de interne structuur en cultuur van een organisatie bepaalt, zodat de organisatie een reflectie is van de omgeving ten tijde van oprichting (Johnson, 2007; Kimberly, 1975; Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006; Marquis & Qiao, 2020; Stinchcombe, 1965). Deze imprints blijven bestaan over langere tijdsperiodes heen, ook wanneer de omgeving verandert.

Overzicht van hoofdstukken

Door voort te bouwen op imprinting theorie, volg ik een literatuurstroom die benadrukt dat het bestuderen van het verleden erg belangrijk is voor het begrijpen van hedendaagse organisaties (Ertman, 1997; Schreyögg & Sydow, 2011; Scott, 2013). In hoofdstuk 2 beschrijf en vergelijk ik daarom drie belangrijke theorieën over hoe het verleden doorwerkt in hedendaagse organisaties: de theorie over padafhankelijkheid (in Engels: *path dependencey*), theorie over escalatie van commitment (in Engels: *Escalation of Commitment*), en imprinting theorie. Hoofdstuk 2 legt de motivatie voor het verdere gebruik van imprinting-theorie in mijn proefschrift uit. In hoofdstuk 2 beschrijf ik namelijk hoe ik dankzij imprinting theorie meerdere niveaus van invloeden uit het verleden kan bestuderen: de persoonlijke imprints van leiders, maar ook de imprints op het niveau van de organisatie. Daarnaast kan ik theorieën ontwikkelen over de impact tussen verschillende analyseniveaus door te kijken naar hoe persoonlijke imprints invloed hebben op uitkomsten betreffende de gehele organisatie. In vergelijking met de andere theorieën biedt imprinting theorie ook het breedste perspectief op de rol van de externe omgeving van organisaties en de actoren in de organisaties, waarbij niet alleen economische invloeden (Kriauciunas & Kale, 2006) een rol spelen.

De empirische hoofdstukken (hoofdstuk 3, 4 en 5) bouwen allemaal voort op imprinting theorie. In het empirische hoofdstuk 3 onderzoek ik de rol van imprints van leiders' eerdere ervaringen met tijdelijke contracten op het latere gebruik ervan, door te kijken naar het toenemende aantal leiders in de publieke sector met eerdere ervaring in de privésector. Heeft hun eerdere privésector werkervaring, waar zij ervaring kregen met het gebruik van tijdelijke arbeid, invloed op latere invoering van tijdelijke contracten in publieke organisaties? Literatuur over sectorale imprinting laat namelijk zien dat sectoren sterke imprint omgevingen zijn die een langdurige stempel kunnen drukken op de waarden en normen waarmee leiders zich identificeren (Boardman et al., 2010). In hoofdstuk 3 onderzoek ik of deze "privésector-imprint" van directeuren ertoe leidt dat

ze, wanneer zij aan het werk gaan als directeur in de publieke sector, het gebruik van tijdelijke arbeidscontracten in de publieke sector doen toenemen.

In hoofdstuk 4 onderzoek ik de genderverschillen in de toegang tot vaste contracten en hogere lonen. Eerder onderzoek laat zien dat vrouwelijke leiders mogelijk een belangrijke rol spelen in het aanpakken van genderongelijkheid op de werkvloer, maar de bevindingen zijn gemengd (soms een positief effect van vrouwelijke leiders, soms geen, en soms een negatief effect) (Abendroth et al., 2017; Dwivedi & Paolella, 2024; Srivastava & Sherman, 2015; Van Hek & Van Der Lippe, 2019; van Hek & van der Lippe, 2022). Deze gemengde bevindingen kunnen komen door de verschillende persoonlijke werkervaringen van vrouwelijke leiders. De eerdere socialisatie van vrouwelijke leiders kan een bijzonder belangrijke rol spelen, aangezien eerder sociaalpsychologisch onderzoek suggereert dat de identificatie van vrouwelijke leiders met hun vrouwelijke werknemers beïnvloedt wordt door blootstelling aan masculiene normen en misogynie wanneer zij de door mannen gedomineerde managementladder beklimmen (Derks et al., 2016; Ellemers et al., 2012). Verschil in loopbaanervaringen van vrouwelijke leiders kan dus van invloed zijn op de mate waarin zij optreden als een veranderaar die genderongelijkheid op de werkvloer bestrijdt. In hoofdstuk 4 onderzoek ik die empirisch en focus ik op twee soorten vroege managementervaringen van vrouwelijke leiders (blootstelling aan vrouwelijke collega's in het bestuur, en blootstelling aan een vrouwelijke CEO). Ik onderzoek of deze eerdere ervaringen een rol spelen in de mate waarin vrouwelijke leiders gendergelijkheid bevorderen bij de toegang tot vaste banen en hogere lonen.

Tot slot houd ik ook rekening met de eerdergenoemde beperkende invloed van het organisatieverleden op de mogelijkheid van leiders om ongelijkheid binnen organisaties te veranderen. In hoofdstuk 5 onderzoek ik hoe kenmerken ten tijde van oprichting van de organisatie (de oprichtingscontext) van invloed zijn op het gedrag van vrouwelijke leiders: treden ze op als veranderaars die ongelijkheid op de werkvloer bestrijden, of niet? Voor de invloeden vanuit de omgeving kijk ik specifiek naar het niveau van verstedelijking van de omgeving waar de organisatie is opgericht, naar organisaties die opgericht zijn tijdens een feministische golf, en naar het geslacht van de oprichter(s) van de organisatie.

Context en data

De empirische hoofdstukken in dit proefschrift richten zich op de Nederlandse context. Nederland kent een percentage tijdelijke arbeidscontracten (27,70%) dat aanzienlijk hoger is dan het Europese gemiddelde (11,30%) (OECD, 2023). De meerderheid van Nederlandse werknemers (78%) met een tijdelijk contract geeft aan een vast contract

te willen, en bijna alle (97%) Nederlandse werknemers met een vast contract geven aan dat hun contract een belangrijk kenmerk is bij het verkrijgen van een nieuwe functie (Donker van Heel et al., 2013). Wat gendergelijkheid betreft verdienen Nederlandse vrouwen minder dan hun mannelijke collega's in vergelijkbare functies (Penner et al., 2022). Het aandeel vrouwen met een tijdelijk contract (23,55%) is hoger dan dat van mannen (16,95%) (gebaseerd op eigen berekeningen met gebruik van CBS microdata). Veel Nederlandse vrouwen werken parttime, waardoor de vrouwelijke arbeidsparticipatie onder het Europese gemiddelde ligt (van Doorne-Huiskes & Schippers, 2010; Visser, 2002). Nederland kent hardnekkige maatschappelijke normen die het huishouden en zorg voor kinderen voornamelijk als vrouwelijke taken zien. Het aandeel vrouwen in leidinggevende posities is de afgelopen decennia toegenomen, maar bijna driekwart van de managementposities in 2021 worden nog door mannen bekleedt (Eurostat, 2023).

Voor de empirische analyses maak ik gebruik van longitudinale register gegevens uit het Sociaal Statistisch Bestand (SSB) van het Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS). Met deze gegevens beschik ik over unieke informatie over alle bestuurders van Nederlandse bedrijven, evenals de demografische kenmerken, loon- en contractinformatie van alle Nederlandse werknemers.

Samenvatting van de resultaten

In hoofdstuk 3 onderzocht ik hoe eerdere carrière ervaringen in de privésector van publieke-sector directeuren invloed hebben op het gebruik van tijdelijke arbeidscontracten in de publieke sector. De resultaten laten zien dat een hoger aandeel van publieke directeuren met vroege ervaring in de privésector leidt tot meer gebruik van tijdelijke contracten in Nederlandse publieke organisaties. In hoofdstuk 4 onderzocht ik of de impact van vrouwelijke leiders op gendergelijkheid in hun organisatie afhangt van hun vroege carrière ervaringen. De resultaten lieten zien dat zowel vroege bestuurservaringen waarin vrouwen blootgesteld werden aan vrouwelijke collega's in het bestuur, als blootgesteld worden aan een vrouwelijke CEO, bijdragen aan de kans dat vrouwelijke leiders de toegang tot vaste contracten en hogere lonen voor vrouwelijke werknemers bevorderen. In hoofdstuk 5 onderzocht ik tot slot hoe de oprichtingscontext van de organisatie invloed heeft op de impact van vrouwelijke leiders op genderongelijkheid op de werkvloer. Hier verwachtte ik dat organisaties die waren opgericht door vrouwen, organisaties opgericht in verstedelijkte omgevingen, en organisaties opgericht tijdens de tweede feministische golf, de vrouwelijke leiders van de toekomst in staat zouden stellen om de veranderaars te worden die gendergelijkheid bevorderen. De resultaten lieten echter geen sterke ondersteuning zien dat oprichtingscontact hierbij van belang is. Alleen in organisaties

met een “vrouwelijke oprichting imprint” was zichtbaar dat dit een positieve invloed had op de bevordering van gendergelijkheid door vrouwelijke leiders. De aanwezigheid van vrouwelijke leiders in organisaties opgericht in verstedelijkte omgevingen liet juist een negatief effect zien op de lonen van alle werknemers, man en vrouw. Voor specifiek vrouwen was er bovendien een lagere kans op een vast contract, terwijl de kans voor mannen juist toenam. Voor organisaties opgericht tijdens de tweede feministische golf lieten de resultaten geen bewijs zien dat de vrouwelijke leiders het loon of de kans op een vast contract voor vrouwen vergroten.

Algemene conclusie en discussie

De belangrijkste conclusie van mijn proefschrift is dat het persoonlijke verleden van leiders absoluut een rol speelt in hoe zij precair werk en ongelijkheid in hedendaagse organisaties beïnvloeden. Zowel de bredere omgeving van de organisatie (bijvoorbeeld de ervaringen in de privésector) als de nauwe relaties (bijvoorbeeld blootstelling aan gelijke collega’s in een bestuur) zijn bronnen van invloedrijke persoonlijke imprints. Mijn bevindingen ondersteunen de theorie dat socialisatie van leiders tijdens gevoelige periodes in een carrière leidt tot aanhoudende imprints, die de aannames, overtuigingen, en toekomstige besluitvorming van leiders beïnvloeden. Voor het organisatieverleden wordt minder ondersteuning gevonden dat het een rol speelt. Alleen de oprichters van een organisatie (een imprint die ontstaat door aanwezigheid van een vrouwelijke oprichter) lijken een blijvend effect te hebben op de hedendaagse organisatie.

Mijn onderzoek heeft belangrijke implicaties voor beleid gericht op het verbeteren van de positie van vrouwen op de arbeidsmarkt. Mijn proefschrift laat zien dat de effectiviteit van vrouwelijke leiders in het bestrijden van gendergelijkheid afhangt van hun vroege carrière ervaringen. Simpelweg meer vrouwen toevoegen aan bestuursposities zal dus niet altijd effectief zijn. Er is beleid nodig dat organisaties omvormt tot omgevingen die vrouwen ondersteunen en versterken (en andere momenteel gemarginaliseerde groepen). Het creëren van dergelijke sociale omgevingen binnen organisaties kan effectiever zijn dan enkel diversiteitsdoelen halen zoals een genderquota.

Zoals elk onderzoek kent ook mijn proefschrift enkele beperkingen. Ten eerste bestaan er complexere patronen van imprinting dan ik empirisch heb kunnen onderzoeken. Met mijn onderzoek focuste ik specifiek op persoonlijke imprints die ontstonden tijdens gevoelige carrière ervaringen van leiders, en de oprichtingsperiode voor organisatie imprints. Maar imprinting literatuur stelt dat individuen en organisaties meerdere gevoelige periodes doorlopen waarbinnen imprints kunnen ontstaan (Higgins, 2005; Ibarra, 1999; Marquis

& Tilcsik, 2013; Rosenkopf & Almeida, 2003). Hiermee wordt gesuggereerd dat niet één imprint van belang is, maar eerder een laag van imprints. Dit onderzoek benadrukt wel dat imprints nooit volledig worden vervangen of overschreven; ze worden op elkaar gestapeld. Het concept van gelaagde imprints ondermijnt dus niet mijn bevindingen. Toekomstig onderzoek zou dit concept van gelaagde imprints verder kunnen uitwerken. Beïnvloeden eerdere imprints het vormen van latere?

Ten tweede hanteer ik een positivistisch beeld van het verleden: het verleden behandel ik in dit proefschrift als observeerbare, objectieve omstandigheden die invloed hebben op het hedendaagse. Maar er zijn andere manieren om naar de geschiedenis te kijken, bijvoorbeeld retorische geschiedenis (Suddaby et al., 2010), waar geschiedenis als een strategie door actoren gebruikt wordt om anderen te overtuigen en verandering teweeg te brengen. Voor imprinting is retorische geschiedenis een interessante onderzoeksrichting. Het kan verklaren waarom ik niet veel bewijs vond voor het idee dat oprichtingscontext van organisaties een rol speelt voor het heden. Leiders spelen namelijk een rol in het selecteren van specifieke elementen uit de omgeving om deze te integreren in hun organisatie (Johnson, 2007). De invloed van organisatie-imprints die voortkomen uit de oprichtingscontext kan daarom misschien niet alleen worden geïdentificeerd door de objectieve omstandigheden te observeren, zoals ik in mijn proefschrift heb gedaan, maar ook door te onderzoeken hoe deze imprints worden geïnterpreteerd en benut door leiders.

Ten derde kon ik met mijn data niet inzicht krijgen in de besluitvormingsprocessen die plaatsvond in de bestuurskamers van de organisaties die ik onderzocht. Leiders opereren niet alleen, ze onderhandelen met andere bestuursleden en met leden op andere niveaus van de organisatie (Avent-Holt & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014). De register data die ik gebruikte voor dit proefschrift biedt vele voordelen, maar het koppelen ervan aan enquêtedata of etnografische data kan meer inzicht bieden in de relaties tussen actoren, en hoe dit invloed heeft op precariteit en ongelijkheid. Het verkrijgen van dit soort data is echter lastig, aangezien leiders op directieniveau moeilijk te bereiken zijn voor enquêtes of interviewdata (Cycyota & Harrison, 2006).

Ten vierde kon ik met mijn data alleen tijdelijke arbeidscontracten bestuderen als vorm van precair werk. Er zijn andere vormen van precaire arbeid die de aandacht verdienen, zoals uitzendkrachten of gedetacheerde werkers. Hier ontstaat namelijk een driehoeksrelatie (Kalleberg et al., 2015): de werknemer, de opdrachtgever, en het uitzendbureau. Hiermee verschuiven de machtsverhoudingen, en beperkt dit de organisatieleider in de invloed die de leider kan uitoefenen.

Mijn proefschrift laat het belang van invloeden uit het verleden zien bij het bestuderen van organisatie uitkomsten. Organisatieleiders hebben aanzienlijke invloed op precariteit en ongelijkheid op de werkvloer; hun ervaringen uit het verleden spelen hierbij een cruciale rol.

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About the author

Sofie Wiersma was born on July 6th, 1996 in Drachten, the Netherlands. After graduating from VWO in 2014, Sofie pursued a bachelor's degree in Sociology at the University of Groningen. She specialized in Sociology of Labor and Organizations, and wrote her bachelor's thesis titled *"Competition in the Workplace: an attempt to further investigate the gap between actual and preferred working hours"*. After obtaining her bachelor's degree, Sofie continued her studies with a master in Sociology at the University of Groningen. She wrote her master's thesis titled *"Female labour supply and happiness: investigating peer influence"* at the research program Sustainable Cooperation – Roadmaps to Resilient Societies (SCOOP). After obtaining her master's degree in 2019, Sofie started her PhD at the Interuniversity Center for Social Sciences Theory and Methodology (ICS) at the Department of Sociology of the University of Groningen. Her PhD was under the supervision of Rafael Wittek, Zoltán Lippényi, and Marco van Leeuwen, and the project was part of the Sustainable Cooperation research program (SCOOP). SCOOP is an interdisciplinary research program, aimed at combining insights from sociology, psychology, history, and philosophy in order to develop roadmaps to more resilient societies. During her PhD project, Sofie was a research visitor with Prof. Dr. Anja Abendroth at the Faculty of Sociology at Bielefeld University in Germany. The work of this dissertation has been presented at several international conferences, such as the 2022 European Group for Organizational Studies Colloquium in Vienna, and the 2023 World Congress of the International Sociological Association in Melbourne. In addition to conducting scientific research, Sofie was a teacher of several courses in the bachelor of Sociology during her PhD, and co-coordinated three courses for one year. During her PhD, Sofie was a member of the Social Committee that organized social events for PhD students of the Department of Sociology. Finally, Sofie also contributed to the "Inclusion at Behavioral and Social Sciences" initiative in collaboration with the Dean of the faculty, resulting in the appointment of the faculty's first Diversity & Inclusion officer. Since January 2024, Sofie works as a postdoctoral researcher at the Lectorate Human Capital at the Hanze, Groningen.

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Job precarity is increasingly present in Western economies, even in sectors once known for stable careers, such as the public sector. Gender disparities also persist, as women are overrepresented in these temporary jobs and face wage gaps. This dissertation examines how organizational leaders play a key role in distributing organizational resources such as permanent jobs and wages. By identifying how history influences present-day organizations, the chapters explore how leaders' past career experiences and the founding conditions of organizations shape precarity and inequality in the workplace. Based on quantitative analyses of large-scale administrative data, the empirical chapters illustrate that early-career private-sector experience among public leaders contributes to growing precarity in the Dutch public sector. Additionally, the chapters show how specific early-career experiences and organizational founding conditions affect whether female leaders challenge gender inequalities, particularly in employment and wage outcomes for female employees.

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