lenged what was being said. This was done in order to gain even deeper access into the thought patterns that existed in each group.

The method of the group interview allowed the identification of "some of the ontological hierarchies (what is valued within inner circles) that manifested within the focus groups" (Fox, 2014, p. 148). Climate change was habitually processed by means of these connections (ibid.). Apart from the industrial enterprise, recruitment of the groups proved unproblematic. This may again be attributed to the time of the research which was carried out in the year that the *Fridays for Future* protests were gaining considerable momentum in Germany and therefore climate change became the public issue that was by far most discussed. As with the expert interviews, it again appeared that where there was thematic overlap with the topic, people were eager to contribute to the research, whilst otherwise there was noticeable hesitation. The corporate entities approached for an interview on *responsibility for climate action* may therefore have feared that they would have to justify themselves. Two of the focus group discussions (teachers and craftsmen) unfolded in a somewhat unstructured way, since participants joint or left the interview at different stages, which could not however have been prevented by the researcher. Overall, each of the focus group discussions yielded an intensive and fruitful debate.

A commonly raised critique of the use of focus groups as empirical method lies in the fear that "the results obtained in a focus group may be biased by a very dominant or opinionated member. More reserved group members may be hesitant to talk" (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1998, p. 509, cited in Fox, 2004, p. 87). As Fox discusses, "these criticisms overlook the social basis of human existence and how conversations in daily life often feature dominant voices. Such voices can be indicative of the levels of interest in the issues under discussion and/or the differences in embodied capital which reflect power relations in a group setting, and in wider society" (2014, p. 87). Considering whether there were particularly dominant voices and if and how they were reacted to by the rest of the group thus served as an important way of gaining insight to the operating power relations in these social spheres.

3.7 Conclusion

The present pragmatic multi-method approach was chosen to gain as broad a picture of (collective) societal positions on climate change and –action as possible. Since the three separate empirical steps built upon each other, the findings could be integrated particularly well and therefore yielded coherent insights into the constitution of societal hierarchies. The application of two different relational methods ensured that collective stances were captured. The concept of climate cultures developed through the media analysis was subsequently tested by being applied in the context of the focus groups, which to a very large extent confirmed the findings

gained up to that point. From this follows that the methodological triad chosen for this study was uniquely equipped to answer the key research questions asked in this study. Thus, this innovative research design delivered new and particularly telling insights into the collective stances on climate action and responsibility, efficacy and knowing that the different social spheres endorsed respectively.