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AN EMPIRICAL STUDY: HOW FEMALE TOP MANAGERS IN FINLAND HAS SUCCEEDED TO BREAK THE GLASS CEILING?

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality in corporation world is more topical theme today than ever, since we are living in a period of transition of age groups and societies. Even though there have been major changes regarding stereotypical gender roles and gender balance in labor markets, gender diversity rarely occurs in a board level of companies. Despite the fact that women are overrepresented in universities in Finland, they are still heavily underrepresented in companies' boards. Reasons for the exclusion are multidimensional, and invisible gender related barriers have suggested being one of them. However, even though women representation rates in companies' boards increase too slowly, some women manage to break the ceiling glass and get into the board level each year. What are the critical factors that combine these ladies and help women get on the top?

This study examined relevant factors of breaking the glass ceiling. It focused on revealing factors that may help women to break the glass ceiling and get into board rooms. The theme has not received much attention among scholars in Finland, since majority of the research has focused on searching implications and reasons for the phenomenon. Consequently, this research was important to conduct, since it provides new knowledge of the glass ceiling phenomenon and offers fresh perspective to the theme.

The research was conducted by interviewing four female top managers who have created successful careers in the Finnish corporate world. The interviews were conducted as a compilation of semi structured interview and unstructured interview. The collected data was analyzed by using a thematic analysis method. Results of the study indicate that social support and own attitude has a critical role regarding breaking the ceiling glass. Social support received from a spouse, family and different networks, affects positively to one's own attitude. Own attitude is consisted of work orientation, courage and active networking. These themes together had a major effect to the participant's career development, as they

enabled the participants' career progression in practice. Thus, the revealed themes helped the managers cross the gender based barriers that form the glass ceiling in women's career.

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is today more topical theme than ever, since traditional gender roles have changed and women have stepped into labor markets. Especially gender equality in corporation world has generated public debate, because of the women's low representation rates in board rooms of companies. Even though gender equality has been increased all around Europe, gender inequality still exists in majority of countries (Barnet-Verzad & Wolff 2008:486). Approximately over 80% of the big listed companies around the world have still male majority in their boards. Today women have even bigger representation rate than men among university students, and there are more women in the labor market than ever before. Nevertheless, women are still heavily underrepresented in the boards of directors and in operational management level of companies. (Keskuskauppakamari 2014.) More females are wanted to the board level, since several benefits of diversity in board rooms has been reported worldwide. Female presence has several positive impacts in board, firm and industry level, hence maintaining gender diversity is necessary. (Terjesen, Sealy & Singh 2009:321.) In order to add gender equality, governments has drawn up law initiates and regulations that obligates private companies to take concrete actions regarding women's representation in companies. However, despite the companies' actions towards gender equality, the amount of female top managers has not growth significantly (Kauppalehti 2014).

Based on Finnish listed companies' annual reports, one suggestion for female managers' slow career development is that there are only marginally number of women on the corporate management level of companies that are planning a stock exchange listing. (Ministry of Justice 2015: 3, 11-12.) Moreover, women's lack of interest to get on the board level has been argued to be the reason behind the low representation rates in board rooms. However, Finnish organization AKAVA (2014) conducted a research, based on Working Condition Survey by Statistics Finland. The research sample was large and represented the entire employee population in Finland. According to the results, men and women respect career advancement equally. 28 per cent of men and 26 per cent of women considered career progression extremely important regarding their careers. Despite willingness to career development, only 16 per cent of women agreed to have good career development possibilities, while the men's rate was 33 per cent. In addition, 63 per cent

of men argued that both genders have equal possibilities to career progression, while only 21 per cent of women agreed on that. (AKAVA 2015.)

Consequently, even though women are as educated, ambitious and interested in having promotions as men, their career ladders are steeper than men's. Women still earn only 80 per cent of men's wages, and they do more often temporary work. Further, under 35-year-olds and educated women are the biggest group of fixed-term employees. Employers discriminate especially young women because of the possibility of pregnancy and starting a family. (AKAVA 2015.) Barriers that are related to stereotypical gender roles and attitudes of society form a phenomenon called the glass ceiling. The phenomenon has suggested being the main reason for the women's low representation in the board level. The glass ceiling phenomenon refers to those invisible barriers in individual and institutional level that slow down female managers' career progression, and hence prevent women to get advance to the board level. Thus, it describes barriers between the middle management and the board level in female managers' career path.

The glass ceiling phenomenon has been searched worldwide, and existing literature distinguish the theme into several sub areas. The phenomenon is multidimensional and difficult to recognize. However, several academic studies have proved existence of the glass ceiling. (Kalpana & Vaidya 2009:106). For instance, Keloharju et al. (2016) studied the glass ceiling in Sweden with the broadest dataset in history. They found the existence of the glass ceiling among Swedish corporations. The study revealed differences between female and male managers' wages and career progress opportunities. The only causes for the differences that was found were gender based discrimination and attitudes towards genders, thus the glass ceiling was recognized. (Helsingin Sanomat 2016.) Furthermore, it has been argued that the glass ceiling is cracking among young women, since traditional gender roles has changed and women with higher education are starting to move from school to the labor markets. However, higher educational level and better career possibilities do not automatically remove gender related barriers. There are more young female managers than older female managers in the management levels of companies that are not stock listed, yet this does not apply large stock listed companies. In fact, amount of female managers over forty year olds is even higher than young female managers' in stock listed companies in Finland. (Pietiläinen, Keski-Petäjä & Katainen 2015: 20.) Therefore, better educational and career related possibilities alone are not enough to increase gender equality in the business world.

Despite the invisible gender related barriers, some women have succeeded to get on the board level and break the ceiling class between the middle management and the board level. Especially Finland can be considered as a forerunner regarding women's career development, since there are more women on the senior management level in Finland than in any other Nordic countries (Kauppalehti 2014). Furthermore, Finland is one of the leading countries in Europe regarding women's representation rates in boards of stock listed companies, since women's representation rate in stock listed companies' boards was 25 per cent this year (Pietiläinen, Keski-Petäjä & Katainen 2015: 8-9, Kauppakamari 2016). So how some women have succeeded to get through the glass ceiling and get advance to the board level? As stated earlier, high educational level and equal career development possibilities in labor markets does not provide comprehensive explanation for the success of female board members, since majority of business students are female, yet gender representation in corporation world, and especially on the boards level, is still heavily unbalanced.

1.1. Female leadership research

Female leadership research started to evolve in Finland 20 years ago. However, the research reached Finland approximately 10-15 years later compared to other countries. The amount of scientific research articles regarding female leadership is still low, since the amount of scholars in the field is low. Moreover, there are only little scientific articles that have been published internationally, since the theme has been a marginal topic such a long time. Nevertheless, according to Lämsä et al. (2007) the importance of research of female leadership has been recognized in Finland, and the amount of research has been slightly increased in the 20th century. In order to make the research field stronger, more studied should be published internationally. This poses challenges, because there are only few scholars in the field. (Lämsä, Vanhala, Kontoniemi, Hiillos & Hearn 2007:311-313.) Because gender equality is timely topic and there is need for additional research, this study aims to produce new information to the field of female leadership research. The context will be in Finland, since there is need for additional researches especially in domestic field.

The existing research has focused on female managers' career paths and leadership styles, work wellbeing and work-family conflicts. The most searched themes are gender equality and discrimination, career issues and women in work life. Previous studies have focused comparing male and female managers and recognizing special features of female leadership. However, during recent years the point of interest has moved towards women in the board and top management level, as well as the glass ceiling. Lämsä et al. (2007) argued that since the workforce is aging and educated women are moving to the labor markets, need for the research regarding work-family-private life conflicts in female managers' careers is growing. Further, the authors suggest that gender should be explored together with other factors. (Lämsä, Vanhala, Kontoniemi, Hiillos & Hearn 2007:296,310.) Consequently, since the existing research gap, this study will consider relevant factors in female managers' private life and draw attention to work-family conflicts.

Female leadership research has been characterized by feministic approach, though in general the research approaches have varied. Feministic female leadership research aims to recognize grievances in female managers' career paths, and hence it tries to change stereotypical gender roles and problematic gender based attitudes towards female managers. The feministic female leadership approach is relatively new, yet theoretical frameworks that combine the female approach and organizational research exist. (Lämsä,Vanhala,Kontoniemi,Hiillos & Hearn 2007:297.) Kark (2004) has divided feministic female leadership approach into three categories. *Feminism as reform* is the most common basis for the female leadership research. It starts from the idea that men and women are similar, and thus differences between genders are results of general socialization processes. The approach usually aims to compare male and female managers and their leadership styles and skills. The studies are typically quantitative survey studies that emphasize psychological view. In contrast, research of *feminism as rebellion* approach is usually qualitative. The approach questions gender categories, and understands gender as social process that evolves constantly. The approach focuses on unquestioned assumptions of language, and it aims to reveal relationship between language, power and use of information. Interest towards feminism as rebellion approach has been increased during past years. (Lämsä, Vanhala, Kontoniemi, Hiillos & Hearn 2007:298,300,302.)

Feminism as resistance approach emphasizes the importance of critics against women's weaker position and exploitation. It emphasizes differences between genders, and perceives those differences as valuable resources. Therefore, the approach emphasizes women's point of view and focuses on exploring females' experiences and thoughts. The approach aims to theorize leadership from women's perspective, since their experiences and interests differs from men. The research is usually focused on describing women's experiences and feelings. There is only a little research regarding feminism as resistance approach, yet existing study is qualitative and it aims to emphasize women's experiences and understanding. (Lämsä, Vanhala, Kontoniemi, Hiillos & Hearn 2007:299, 302.) Since there is only few researches where the feminism as resistance approach had been utilized, this study will adopt the approach. The aim is to produce new knowledge regarding the theme in a light of the approach.

1.2. Scope of the study

The purpose of this research is to produce new information regarding the glass ceiling phenomenon in Finland. There are lots of existing studies regarding the ceiling class phenomenon itself, its impacts to women's career path, and overall reasons for women slow career development. Hence, previous researches of the phenomenon have focused primarily on examining existing barriers in women's career path and describing gender equality in organizational context. However, this study will examine the theme from a fresh point of view. It will focus on exploring factors that may help women to break the ceiling glass. The aim is to search and identify underlying factors of success in female top managers' career paths in Finland, and find out how the glass ceiling barriers can be broken. Therefore, the theme will be explored from a new perspective, and the main focus will be on women that has already broken invisible gender related barriers in their career. Since majority of researches regarding the theme has focused on barriers that prevent females to get advancements to the board level, this research will examine similarities of female top managers' career path in a micro level.

The main goal of this study is to reduce current lack of knowledge regarding the theme in a context of Finland, and thus produce fresh information of the glass ceiling. The

research aim is reached by reviewing earlier researches and literature of the glass ceiling phenomenon, and implementing an empirical study. The theory part of the study will introduce the existing literature regarding the glass ceiling phenomenon, and hence form a theoretical framework around the theme. It will be consisted of domestic and international researches and theories that describe the phenomenon. The focus of the study's theory will be in theories of the glass ceiling effect and its streams. It aims to introduce the glass ceiling phenomenon in different levels; how it occurs and how it could be recognized. The glass ceiling phenomenon and its sub-themes will be described thoroughly and earlier studies will be introduced. The theory part aims to provide comprehensive view of the barriers that are suggested to be the foundation of the glass ceiling, and thus preventing women's career development.

In contrast, the empirical part of the study will involve an empirical study, which will provide information regarding the research question. It will be consisted of data that is based on Finnish top managers' interviews. The aim of the empirical study is to recognize factors that have helped these managers to break the glass ceiling barriers that are introduced in the theory part. The interviews have been conducted as a compilation of an unstructured interview and a semi-structured interview, which enables rich dataset. Furthermore, the empirical part will include analysis of the findings of the study. The data set will be analyzed by exploiting a thematic analysis method, and the conclusions will be introduced at the end of the empirical part. The empirical part will provide empirical information of how female top managers had succeeded to get through the glass ceiling related barriers. Consequently, the research question of the study is:

-        *How female top managers in Finland have succeeded to break the glass ceiling?*

Furthermore, the objectives of the study are:

-        *Recognize underlying factors that helps women to break the ceiling glass*

-        *Examine what are the similarities in female top managers' career path and career related choices*

1.3. Delimitations

Factors that affect women's promotions are work orientation and educational choices. Finnish women and men education choices and career paths differ, which affects wages and promotions causing differences. (Confederation of Finnish Industries, 2013.) These factors will be introduced in the theory part as well and taken into account when planning a data collection. However, since the thesis focus on especially female top managers that has already broke the ceiling glass, the theme will be studied more from a female point of view.

1.4. Structure of the study

The study is divided into five head chapters and their sub categories. This chapter will be followed by the theory part of the study. The second chapter aims to provide broad view of theoretical aspect of the glass ceiling phenomenon. Previous studies, theories and other academicals literature will be used in order to form comprehensive theoretical framework regarding the research theme. The second chapter is followed by methodological part, where the research design will be introduced. Thus, methodological choices and data analysis process of the research will be describes. The last part of the thesis will introduce findings of the empirical study and provide discussion regarding the findings. Finally, the conclusion chapter will bind the whole research together and sum up the main contributions of the study. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research will be provided as well.

2. THEORY

The glass ceiling effect was mentioned first time in Wall Street Journal in the year 1986 by Hymowitz and Schellhard (Kauppinen 2006: 15). The effect can be defined as unseen obstacles in women's career path that prevents educated women's career progression. It is easy for women to achieve mid managers positions, however it is more challenging for women than men to get promoted even higher levels. (AKAVA 2014.) The phenomenon consists of varied form of gender based discrimination and is very recognizable for those whose career it has affected (Oakley 2000: 321.). The effect occurs as women's lower wages, less demanding tasks, sexual harassment, isolation and punishments. It refers to gender based bias in labor markets, and the concept helps to understand the factors that prevents women to get to the top in working life. (Kauppinen 2006: 15-16.)

The glass ceiling can be divided into three categories: biological explanations, socialization explanations and structural/cultural explanations. Biological explanations refer to stable biological differences between men and women, which have evolved over time. However, biological models are not used to offer an explanation for the glass ceiling today, instead socialization and structural models have received more attention. Social constructions models are based on believe that societal expectations rather than biological factors create inequality between genders, whereas structural/cultural models argue that gender differences regarding leadership are caused by social systems, arrangements and structures. (Weyer 2007:483-484.)

Cotter *et al.* (2001) has introduced four criteria to characterize the glass ceiling effect, since not all gender inequalities in labor market refer to the effect itself. The scholars aimed to define the concept of the glass ceiling and dissociate it from other discrimination in labor market (Kalpana & Vaidya 2009:106). These four criterion are developed to help recognize and measure the glass ceiling effect. However, since the definitions of the ceiling glass various in the existing literature, it is challenging to recognize if women have faced the glass ceiling or not. (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, Vanneman 2001: 626.)

According to the study by Cotter et al. (2001), the first criterion is that the glass ceiling means racial or gender based discrimination in labor market, which cannot be explained

by job characteristics of a person. It refers to existing race and gender based differences, after job characteristics differences etc. education and work experience are excluded. The inequality of labor market doesn't refer to the glass ceiling effect directly, but the discrimination of the labor market does. (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, Vanneman 2001: 656-658.)

The second criterion of the glass ceiling is that the phenomenon occurs stronger in higher positions of work hierarchy. Gender based discrimination increases after reaching higher positions and earning higher outcomes. Promotion changes decrease in higher levels. However, the glass ceiling can still occur even if advancement changes don't decrease in the top level. In turn, the decline of advancement changes in higher level of hierarchy is a sign of existing glass ceiling. In addition, if the gender based inequality concerns a company in every hierarchical level, it refers to gender inequality in general, not to the glass ceiling effect particularly. (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, Vanneman 2001: 656-658.)

The third criterion refers to promotion and changes, whereas according to the fourth criterion the inequality of the ceiling glass grows over the course of a career. When measuring the glass ceiling effect, an entry and exit levels affects to results. If there are more men than women applying to higher positions, there will be more men in the top positions, despite an equal recruitment process. In turn, if women will more likely leave from the higher level, there will be majority of men in the top positions. This third criterion is connected to the second criterion which emphasized the rareness of advancement changes in higher levels. It is typical for the glass ceiling that the more higher you go in the hierarchy, the more gender affects to a level of outcomes, earnings and promotions. The gender gap will continuing to grow, become stronger and accelerates in each level. The fourth criterion implies that the gender based discrimination relates to career trajectories. Studies have defined the glass ceiling effect as a disadvantage in career, where the ceiling refers to movement of career trajectories. There could have been several promotion changes in one's career path, however serious discrimination that prevents further career progression has emerged there. (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, Vanneman 2001: 656-626.)

Next chapters will introduce main research areas of the glass ceiling effect, and provide explanations for women's exclusion from the board level in labor markets.

2.1. Human capital

Human capital can be defined as an investment that people make for themselves in order to achieve higher productivity. A human capital paradigm explains gender and racial based discrimination in labor markets. It suggest that people's human capital, etc. education and job training, defines their success in working life. According to the paradigm, women have lower human capital than men, since they invest to family responsibilities instead of education or work-specific training. Hence, inequalities in career success exist. Men tend to invest more on education, skills development, job training and work experience, and therefore their human capital is greater than women. (Igbaria & Chidambaram 1997.)

Igbaria & Chidambaram (1997), studied gender's impact for career success of information system managers, from the view of human perspective. They founde significant gender related differences among IS managers. The results supported the human capital perspective, indicating that female managers have less working experience and younger age than their male colleagues, therefore having lower human capital. Moreover, female managers were more often lower-level position, mainly because of their lack of experience. However, even after controlling experience factor, gender differences remained the same level. Therefore females' lack of experience alone didn't offered holistic explanation for gender differences. Further, less interaction opportunities outside women work departments and organizational boundaries in women's career were reported. Since interaction with other groups is a part of management responsibility, the lack of females' boundary spanning activities offers an explanation for gender differences in organizational level. (Igbaria & Chidambaram 1997:63-86.)

A human capital theory is a theoretical framework that describes development policies and education, based on an assumption that education has an impact to productivity of people. According to the theory, education adds the productivity of population and therefore it can be seen as an investment for human capital. Education can be seen as a valuable capital good, which can be utilized as a human resource for economics. Scholars

agreed that education improves general standard of living among people. (Olaniyan & Okemakinde 2008:479.) In addition, a resource based theory suggests that the human capital is one of the most valuable resources of a firm, which helps the firm achieve competitive advantage (Shrader, Blackburn & Iles 1997:356). Each board member has its own special human capital. Therefore when forming a board, selectors tend to choose individuals that have complementing human capital towards board's existing capital. Investment in education helps to develop independent thinking of individuals, and can be seen as an important factor especially in minority groups' career progression. Moreover, investment in human capital helps minority groups, etc. women, to prevent discrimination in promotion and selection processes. (Singh, Terjesen and Vinnicombe 2008:50-51.)

Traditionally women have been seen less capable than their male counterparts, and therefore they encounter stronger needs to prove their ability than men. It has been a common assumption that women have a lack of human capital, and therefore they are not as qualified as males. In order to cross that barrier, females should educate themselves and try to gain broader human capital. However, this may be challenging, since women should educate themselves and keep a career path unbroken at the same time. Therefore women may end up having a lack of management experience and job opportunities. (Singh, Terjesen & Vinnicombe 2008:49.) Furthermore, Ragins et al.'s (1998) survey revealed that female executives have to work harder than their male peers in order to prove their abilities. Regarding barriers that prevent women's career development, majority of male CEOs argued that the main reasons for the exclusion are a lack of management experience and skills. However, majority of female executives didn't perceive that as the main reason, instead they argued that the biggest barrier in their career was CEOs perceptions towards females, and male stereotypes. (Ragins, Townsend & Mattis 1998: 34-35.)

Several studies have proven that women have as strong human capital as men. A study by Singh et al. (2008) revealed that female leaders are highly educated, and number of women among MBA students is even higher than men. Results showed that female board members had more likely than men studied in one of the Ivy League Universities. (Singh, Terjesen & Vinnicombe 2008:49.) Peterson & Philpot (2007) received similar results, showing that regarding directors' professional backgrounds, female directors were as qualified as men directors in Fortune 500 companies (Peterson & Philpot 2007:193). Furthermore, in the year 2014 women represented 54 per cent of all university students

in Finland (Statistics Finland 2014). Also Hillman et al. (2002) found that female directors hold more often advanced degree than their male counterparts. Moreover, women have traditionally had an "outsider" status in a business world. The advanced degree together with the proven accomplishments and expertise helps women to break through the outsider status. With the degree women substantiate their ability to be professional board members. (Hillman, Cannella & Harris 2002:751.)

Executive committees tend to choose more likely female candidates with previous board experience. In a study by Peterson & Philpot (2007), a female executive with previous committee experience was significantly more often to be appointed to a board compared to females without previous committee memberships. However, there were no differences between men with previous experience appointed to a board and men without previous board experience. (Peterson & Philpot 2007: 192.) Sight et al. (2000) found that a quarter of females who had appointed into boards between years 2001-2004 already had experience of FTSE 100 boards, thus these women had several directorships. (Singh, Terjesen & Vinnicombe 2008:53.) Consequently, women with multiple directorships have a strong experience of being director. However, it may lead to recycle of a small experienced group of women from boards to another, which limits a number of potential women candidates. (Terjesen, Sealy, Singh 2009: 325.) Nevertheless, against general belief, the "Golden skirt" phenomenon where board seats are cumulated for small group of people is not detectable in Finland. Regardless the gender, Finnish board members have approximately 1, 2 board seat for each member. (Chamber of Commerce 2014:16.) Moreover, previous experience of directorship may also influence negatively for women's career. According to traditional gender roles women are expected to be less professional than men, consequently women who gain board positions may be disliked because of breaking gender roles. Traditional core values of leadership are masculine, so values of female leader may be in conflict with that. (Terjesen, Sealy, Singh 2009: 325.)

Female directors have more often international working experience, but less previous board experience compared to men. However, new female leaders have less experience of CEO / COO positions compared to men (Singh, Terjesen and Vinnicombe 2008:53-54). Chamber of Commerce (2014) received similar results, noting that male board members had almost twice as much previous CEO experience than females in Finnish listed companies, thus the difference between genders is significant. Women had more experience of areas in which are selected at least board members. (Chamber of Commerce

2014:19-20.) Consequently, the lack of women's experience in corporate management level has been suggested prevent women to get top positions (Ministry of Justice 2015: 11-12.). 79 per cent of all board members of Finnish listed companies have worked in a business management position. However, only 10 of female directors have that experience, hence it has been stated to be the main reason for women poor representation in board rooms. 62 per cent of all board members in Finnish listed companies have a previous working experience in CEO position. The difference between genders is notable, since men have the CEO experience twice as often as women. In addition to the business management experience, a working background that is the most common among board members is financial management. (Chamber of Committee 2014:20-21.) In order to reach the CEO position, the candidates have to have gain experience of e.g. marketing or different operations already in halfway of their career. In the year 1995 Glass Ceiling Commission predicted that it will take decades before there are any radical increases in the rate of women in CEO positions, even though the representation rate of women in corporate management level has been increased annually (Oakley 2000: 323).

2.2. Status characteristic

Status characteristic theory describes how certain type of attitudes or evaluations regarding stereotypical information impacts people's behavior. (Terjesen, Sealy & Singh 2009:322.) According to the theory, in a situation where status characteristics, etc. gender, are major, double standards regarding evaluation of performance emerge. Consequently, people from lower status groups have to prove their ability harder than people from higher status groups. Therefore, in a content of a workplace, women face higher requirements of competence compared to their men colleagues. (Ridgeway 2001:642-645.) Based on the study of Berge et al. (1980), several inequalities of status characteristics exist. Men are evaluated more positively than women, and they are associated with more favorable traits. Moreover, the stereotypical traits differ between genders. When these inequalities, caused by gender based status characteristic, affects to individuals in micro level, they further influences to the whole society or group at the macro level, and therefore creates the glass ceiling. (Weyer 2007:484-485.)

Status beliefs refer to common cultural beliefs about status groups' position in society. They are based on etc. race, gender or education, and evaluation of people's competence is based on memberships of those groups. Status beliefs are key elements forming social hierarchies. Therefore, expectation states theory argues that barriers in women's career path are caused by the status element of the sex based stereotypes. Status characteristic contains stereotypical traits that are constructed on status beliefs. Women's status is lower than men, thus it causes gender related bias in evaluation processes. Stereotypes include status elements that connect higher competence, more valued skills and social significance to the group that has higher status, rather than the lower-status group. Therefore, since men represent the high status group in work life, they are attached with better overall competence. Even though gender stereotypes have changed during years, there are still gender based biases regarding evaluation of relevant competence. Status beliefs may be especially strong regarding gender stereotypes, since men and women forms two equally sizes groups that interact frequently. Interaction between those groups will increase interdependence. Consequently, the groups' interdependence will shape their shared gender stereotypes. Since gender stereotypes are based on assumptions of people's behavior in interpersonal hierarchies, they also affect to authority and leadership. (Ridgeway 2001:638-642.)

An expectation states theory explains how individuals' behavioral hierarchies are constructed and how status beliefs affect to that process. Based on the theory, in addition to peoples' institutional roles in workplaces, people compare their own performance to others' based on several assumptions of other people. Those assumptions are called self-other performance expectations, and they affect peoples' performance. Since performing expectations are based on assumptions of peoples' own behavior compared to others', also sex-categorizing emerge from there automatically, and therefore activate gender stereotypes. (Ridgeway 2001:642-645.)

2.3. Gender stereotypes & roles

The term self-schema means human's own understanding of its self, based on several different aspects of themselves. Gender is one of the most central themes of self-schemas and it starts to develop at early age. Gender self-schemas begin to form in childhood, and children internalize gender stereotypes already in kindergarten. They recognize at early

age what is acceptable behavior of both genders and those roles also affects to adulthood. Gender self-schemas can be divided on male gender schemas and female gender schemas. Traditionally male roles are based on masculine values like aggressiveness, independence and dominance, while female roles are based on feminine values etc. warmth, compassion and understanding. Female gender self-schemas include family role saliency and feminine, whereas career role saliency and masculinity are typical for male gender self-schemas. Gender self-schemas lay on norms that emphasize traditional gender roles, where a woman is seen as a housekeeper or affiliation to others and a man is the one who goes to work. Even though there have been radical changes in gender roles since women have entered to labor market, traditional expectations about genders behavior still exist. Men are supposed to support family financially and women are expected to take bigger responsibility of house care. Moreover, Eddleston et al. (2006) found that male directors tend to favor status- based career satisfies, whilst female directors prefer socioemotional career satisfies. Female self-schemas correlated positively with directors' gender and preferences for socioemotional career satisfy. However, there were no similar correlation between male self-schemas and managers' gender. (Eddleston, Powell & Veiga 2006:437-439.)

Gender stereotypes we learn at early age can be seen as a barrier that prevents women career progression. In addition, gender based stereotypes affects board selectors' decisions when choosing executives. Stereotypical feminine roles and values are a signal of person's incompetence in business world. Despite gender, managers that have succeeded to get the top position usually are associated with the male roles and stereotypes. Stereotypical male leadership style defines norms that are desirable in corporate world, such as tone of voice, mode of dress and psychical appearance. Low, masculine sounding voice is the signal of credibility, and researches have shown that emphasizing femininity by dressing, decreased credibility as a manager. (Oakley 2000: 325-327.)

The physical appearance and look affects to valuation of being the manager. Studies have suggested that masculine features are respected in corporation world, thus majority of female managers in top positions has adopted this style by hiding their feminine style, in order to increase their credibility. Because of these stereotypes, women are disadvantageous position compared to men. Women try to fit in either hiding their feminine characters or copying a masculine style. If a woman chooses a style that

combines these both, there is a risk that she will not stand out from the crowd, hence may not get a place in promotion process. (Oakley 2000: 325-327.)

The backlash effect is a dilemma, where women are punished after trying to behave more masculine way in order to achieve reliability. Since stereotypical male leadership style is required in a corporation world, women hide their feminine side and present themselves in a more masculine way. However, this may lead to economic and social reprisals. Females who adopt masculine behavior style and behave against traditional gender roles are perceived socially deficient (Rudman & Phelan 2008: 64), less popular and therefore more likely to not be promoted (O'Neill & O'Reilly 2011: 826). If a woman adopts masculine behavior style, she is viewed as a selfish, hostile and devious person, whilst a feminine behavior style refers to an incompetent leader. Consequently this dilemma affects negatively to gender equality and forms unseen barrier in women's career path. (Rudman & Phelan 2008: 64,74.) Women can prevent the backlash effect by self-monitoring their behavior. This means that women who succeed to adjust their behavior style to correspond to a social situation will more likely to get promotions. Successful women emphasize both masculine and feminine style, and they know which role to play in which situation. (O'Neill & O'Reilly 2011: 826,830.)

There are gender based differences in people's socialization, which also starts already in childhood. Boys are more likely playing with games that teach values such as rules and fairness, while girls are dealing with plays that emphasize importance of acknowledgement of feelings and inclusion. This affects genders way of thinking in adulthood. When women have to deal with moral issues they make decision considering the impacts that outcomes have on relationships, whereas men considers rules, individual rights and justice related issues. Women and men ethical values differ, which offers another explanation for lack of women in corporate boards. Females more feminine and sensitive way of thinking and consideration of impacts on relationships can be seen as a sign of weakness when reaching the top positions. In addition, girls often learn that emphasizing their status and seeking attention is not acceptable behavior, instead it will make them unpopular among their friends. Girls learn to take account others feelings when expressing themselves. In turn, among boys sounding sure, increasing their status and challenging others face to face is acceptable. The same socialization is recognizable also in adulthood, thus it is more natural for men to promote themselves. Since it is required to have negotiation authority skills in promotion processes, women feminine

linguistic style may work as disadvantage in a hierarchical system. Men usually engaged in behavior that makes them recognizable, while for women it's more challenging to get attention. This reflects to promotion process and women may not be chosen because they are less recognizable. Stereotypical feminine linguistic style is perceived as failure or lack of confidence by men. Consequently, female managers in high position have often changed their linguistic style to more masculine, in order to give a strong and decisive image. (Oakley 2000:325-327.)

Gender roles make women looks unfit for the top positions. For instance, men prefer to have a male mentor rather than a female mentor. Men usually don't want to be mentored by females, since women are seen weaker, less powerful and unprofessional. Women are expected to behave selfless, modesty and calm way, thus it is difficult for women to be self-assured without violating traditional gender roles. (Nelson & Levesque 2007:212.) Further, in a study by Singh (2008), senior female managers felt that a board culture was masculine and political, while men board members didn't recognize that. Women argued the masculinity of the culture made them feel like they needed to shut down their own personality in order to fit in. Moreover, the political atmosphere didn't appeal to women, consequently it created the barrier in their career path. (Singh 2008b: 44.)

2.4. Social theories

According to a social identity theory, people define themselves and others based on their membership in a group. The group can be based on for instance age, gender, background or experience. Individuals tend to give better evaluations for those who include the same group than themselves. Thereby it makes it difficult for people from outside the group enter into that group. Based on the theory, women can be seen as an outside group in the top management level, since boards are male dominated. Women who are applying to a board do not usually behave according to the traditional gender roles, which cause a conflict between traditional gender role and candidate's roles. One avoidance strategy for that by men may be to appoint more males instead of women. Therefore it is challenging for women enter into top positions. (Singh & Vinnicombe 2004:484-485.)

A social network theory offers an explanation for women exclusion from relevant networks. Senior managers can be seen as nodes in the networks of economic elite, who have power in the organization they represents and also to others in the network. Thus, accesses to the social networks are controlled by the elite group. This leads to maintaining hegemonic power by the dominant elite. Boards can be seen as closed elite groups dominated by men, whereas managers can be seen as an important part of corporations, where they provide valuable resources to the company. A study by Singh & Vinnicombe (2004) supports the social network theory. According to the results, male members of those elite groups tend to choose individuals similar than themselves to the board. (Singh & Vinnicombe 2004:479). Individuals who are already in the top positions recommend people like themselves to join other boards, because they know those would likely to fit in to the group. Especially CEO experience is attractive to the network, since it is a sign of contacts and experience. (Terjesen, Sealy & Singh 2009: 323.)

Lastly, according to a social cohesion theory, board members are expected to bring indirect benefits and other appointments to the board. Furthermore, they are expected to provide broader network to the third parties. Therefore there are several players in this scenario that affects to the interlocking of a board membership. Non-executive directors who also hold the CEO position are the most influential actors in the network. Thus, the conclusion which can be drawn is that females who are seeking a board membership but don't have the CEO experience, are applying the position with less capital to offer than their male competitors, which makes them look less potential candidates than men. Moreover, supervisors tend to assess subordinates who are demographically different from themselves more critically, even if performance is identical. Consequently, that affects the amount of women in boards negatively. Nevertheless, women who have succeeded get to a board regardless the lack of career capital, offers social capital to the network. Women with access to the elite groups have to prove that they can influence also to the wider networks. (Singh & Vinnicombe 2004:485.)

2.5. Tokenism

Kanter (1977) has identified four groups based on the amount of representation of its members. Uniform group is consisted of individuals who all represent the same social type. This type may be based on etc. gender, ethnicity or race, and the group's typological ratio is 100:0. If the ratio changes and there is one social type that is larger than another one, the group is called screwed. The larger social type in the screwed group is called dominants, which controls the whole group. Tokens are the smaller group inside the screwed group, and they are seen rather only representing their social type than being an equal part of the group. Since tokens represent the special category inside the group, they will always be hyphenated members. However, in the tilted group tokens represent the minority but the group starts to move towards more neutral typological ratio, etc. 65:35. Minorities in the tilted group have more power in the group and they can affect the group's culture. When the typological ration of the group is about 50:50, the group is called balanced. Interaction and culture in this group is balanced, and outcomes of the group are based on personal and structural factors. (Kanter 1977: 966.)

In a skewed population, dominants usually adopt a boundary heightening behavior in order to exclude tokens. As a result, tokens tries to accept the isolation by either trying to show that they not represent the stereotypic of their gender or by trying to become insiders. Dominants don't feel comfortable to deal with issues that are sensitive for them when tokens are presence, because they don't trust tokens since they represent the special social category. Hence they isolate tokens by moving a focus from formal settings to private settings, which may occur as a use of special expressions that are not familiar to tokens or focusing certain informal activities to which tokens has no access. (Kanter 1977:978.) Furthermore, the boundary heightening behavior by men may increase after a woman have entered into the board, because of men feel fear towards the fact that women have lower payments, which may influence their earning too. This explains men behavior also in situations where after women started to penetrate into male dominated inner circles, men starts to use e.g. sport metaphors or discuss about other male associated subjects. (Oakley 2000: 329-330.) Since token individuals represent the minority, they have to use more energy in order to find the right way to fit into the group (Singh &Vinnicombe 2004:481).

Stereotypical assumptions and expectations regarding traditional roles of tokens, limits tokens behavior. Dominants expect a token to act the way a typical token of his/her represented category would act. Consequently, females are expected to act according to traditional gender roles, which make females limiting their behavior and trying to internalize caricature roles. Since proving that she doesn't represent the typical type of token at her category is challenging and time wasting, tokens usually respond for these expectations by accepting these roles. It is easier to accept the given roles because it minimize the change and prevent strange situations in the workplace. As a result, this may lead to a token's self-distortion. (Kanter 1977: 980,984.) However, there has been some progress regarding women's role as tokens. Female director's roles have been shifted from tokens to minorities and full members of corporate boards. Women, who have succeeded get into a board, have strong corporate experience and they haven't been recruited as tokens. (Singh &Vinnicombe 2004:481-482.)

Negative dynamic of tokenism can be overcome when the representation rate of the minority group is 35-40 per cent (Oakley 2000: 330). In the year 2014 women representation rate in Finnish listed companies were 23 per cent (Chamber of Commerce 2014), which suggest that tokenism impacts negatively in Finnish corporate boards. Adding more women into boards may reduce the negative dynamic. Being the token has long-term impacts for individual's attitudes and feelings. Moreover, it creates challenges in minorities' career path. Women who are reaching top positions has difficulties to get information required for promotion from informal networks and sources. Women exclusion from social networks is usually explained by executives respect toward the CEO, since women and men behavior have a different signal. Men often have a strong respect for the CEO, and they include themselves into the social network of top level. This kind of behavior by men is valued by the CEO. However, similar behavior by women is a signal of weakness. Deferential behavior by a woman associates with wife, daughter, secretary or other female roles among male executives, which makes difficult for women to get close to the CEO without reminding of those sex roles. (Oakley 2000: 330.)

Since women represent the minority group in boards, it poses challenges for women to be heard and seen as equal board members. A study by Konrad, Kramer & Erkut (2008) revealed that a dynamic of the board vary depending of the number of women in a board. They suggest that one or two female members affects positively to the board. However, they defined three of more women in the board as a critical mass, in which positive

impacts of gender diversity are notably stronger. When there are three or more women on a board gender is not a barrier anymore, thus women are rather be seen as individuals not just as representatives of minority gender. Women also feel more comfortable and active when there is the critical mass of women in the group. They feel that when there are more women in the room it is easier to raise subjects that are critical for the business especially in longer term but are considered as "soft" issues by men. Since women starts to raise broader issues on the table and actively ask questions, it also change behaviour of men, and thereby becomes a norm of the croup. In addition, three or more women on the board change atmosphere and dynamic of the group. Three or more women shifts the dynamic of the group from a contest of status towards collaborative and inclusiveness atmosphere. (Konrad, Kramer & Erkut 2008: 147-156.)

2.6. Informal networks

Informal networks consist of more discretionary interactions than formal networks. Formal networks are consisted of formal relationships among individuals and groups that work to accomplish different task of organization, whereas relationships in the informal networks are usually based on more discretionary interactions. Informal networks have a major impact considering career development and promotions, and limited access into them will produce several disadvantages. Females and minority groups biggest challenge regarding organizational setting is exclusion from relevant informal networks. There are several constraints that limit managers' possibility to form a network with relevant connections. However, structurally determined constraints form a barrier especially for females and minorities career path. (Ibarra 1993: 56-58.)

Organizational groups are consisted of hierarchical levels and different subunits that include identity groups, etc. gender and race. Spontaneous ties of interpersonal attraction are formed based on similarity of identity characteristics. Interpersonal similarity, which is common between people who work in a same department, makes communication easier between parties and improves reciprocity and trust of relationship. These network ties can be strength or weak, depending on a balance of personal relationships and the level of emotional intensity it includes. A strong tie refers to a stable and strong relationship, whilst a weak tie suffers the lack of emotional investment. In the organizational context strong and weak ties exist between co-workers and they both are valuable. Strong ties are

more valuable in crisis and uncertain situations, since when a relationship is strong and close, persuasion and influence are more likely to be exercised within it. (Ibarra 1993: 59-73.) In contrast, weaker ties affect negatively to career sponsorships and access to relevant information. (Seibert, Kraimer, Liden 2001: 232.) Females and minority groups' networks tend to be sparser, and consisted of weaker heterogeneous ties. Personal networks are affected by stereotypes, biases and attributions that limit women and minority groups' possibility to form strong and homogeneous ties in networks. (Ibarra 1993: 59-73.) Network consisted of strong ties benefits especially women, since strong ties balance women's lower status and legitimacy in a business world. Further, strong ties help to decrease resistance and provide support in uncertain situations. (Ibarra 1997:99). Moreover, existence of tokens causes boundary-heightening processes by emphasizing differences between minorities and majorities, and thereby reinforces ties between dominants. (Ibarra 1993: 59-73.)

Ties that include both genders are less stable and weaker than ties consisted of people with same sex or race. Universal preference to form homogeneous ties with similar people restricts women's and minorities possibility for networking with people with same sex/race. Women need homogeneous ties, since those ties are source of gaining advises and help from people who have experiences the same issues and problems they have. Minorities and females have less same sex/same race networks available because organizations are usually male dominated, and therefore women faces difficulties to form homogeneous ties. In order to form homogeneous ties female managers have to network with women outside their department or a company. Since women and minorities are more likely to form same sex/same race ties with people from different unit than themselves, these relationships suffer lack of the most relevant network contacts from their own unit or department. Therefore organizational setting affects to availability of homogeneous ties of women, hence excluding women from the most critical networks. Further, there are empirical evidences that ties including both, men and women in organizations, are harder to develop and they benefit fewer women and racial minorities. (Ibarra 1993: 59-73, Ibarra 2007:100.)

There are usually fewer females in top management level who could serve as a mentor, and thus mentor relationships between two women are rarer. (Ibarra 1993: 71). This may affect negatively to women's career development, since it has been found that having multiple mentors will offer better career benefits. The more contacts are maintained in a

higher level of an organization, the more career sponsorships are offered. (Seibert, Kraimer, Liden 2001:233.) According to Sealy and Singh (2006), if role models are masculine, there is a risk that women's own managerial capital will not be appreciated by the organization or themselves. Therefore, advantages of gender diversity will be wasted. Visible female role models could increase ambition of women, since their presence in the board changes the gender schemas and vision of power and status. Hence, female role models will help both genders to change their understanding about what is possible to do, since role models have proven that crossing boundaries is possible. (Sealy & Singh 2006:1, 7.) Further, a study by Singh (2008) reveals that having female role models and women in executive teams as well as in boards makes women feel more optimistic, since female board members are a signal of an equal corporation culture where all have same opportunities. Consequently, having no women in the board makes women feel pessimistic regarding their career. In the study, female board members who didn't had any family were a signal of challenges to combine a career and family responsibilities in the company. However, women's responses varied. Having no women on the board was a motivator for some women to be the first female in the top, whilst others saw their gender more as a barrier in their way to the top. (Singh 2008b: 74.)

Females and minorities' strategy to avoid exclusion from informal networks is to choose functionally differentiated networks, by including themselves into two different networks. Differentiated networks provide connection to the majorities' network and alternative channels to receive information for women and minorities, and help them to receive relevant information of companies. However, there are multiple challenges regarding this strategy. A membership of two different social networks is time consuming and stressful, since different information received may be in conflict and the loss of support or resources from the other group may exist. Moreover, differentiated network strategy reduces females and minorities centralization in companies' most relevant networks. Two different social networks are also challenging to maintain, since there may be some overlapping. A member of two different networks has to balance between two groups, and decide to which group the person wants so show loyalty. This may result to a situation, in which the member is not fully included either group. (Ibarra 1993:75-76.)

An informal network consisted of men in the top level is called the old boy network. The network affects through the whole organization, excluding all women and less powerful men from it. In the old boy network power advantages and competition is built onto

friendship in formal environment. Women are included from the network with competency testing, which is a process in which a person has to prove his/her competency over and over again. Female executives in the top level have to go the process through often than men. With this behavior male executives signal that women are not welcome to the network and if women want to get in they have to fight for that membership. Female cultural norms are seen as a threat by the CEO and managers of the old boy network. When new entrants enter into the network, it has to change. The change threats existing norms of masculine culture, hence use of sport terms and other male associated terms by men signals that the culture of the old boy network has been challenged. (Oakley 2000: 328- 329.)

An access to the informal networks is valuable especially regarding recruitment to a board level. Strong ties offer information about work opportunities, however, since weak ties are based on different social circles, they offer an access to different information about work opportunities. Therefore, structures of social networks determine the use of connections of individuals for professional benefit. Even though gender differences regarding the theme has been investigated in literatures, there is no common agreement among scholars whether the structures of societal networks of men and women differ or not. However, it has been found that women rely on small social networks of strong relationships, whilst men prefer weaker types of relationship in a larger group. (Lalanne & Seabright 2011:2-3.)

Networking is a crucial factor in individual's career progression. In many organizations it is understood as the old boy network, and it has been proposed to be main factor that prevents women get access to the informal networks. Female managers without networking experience suffer from the lack of networking during their career path. Linehal & Scullio (2008) found that since access to the male dominated networks is difficult for women, they are disadvantages from networking. Moreover, based on the results, there is a lack of networking regarding females in senior management level. The most valuable contacts are made and businesses are discussed in informal networks formed by men, of which women are excluded. Hence, females' exclusion from male's networking creates a barrier to women's career path. Another barrier that the study revealed relates to women domestic commitments. According to the results, female managers felt that they didn't have the same opportunities to participate to informal bonding, because of their family responsibilities and therefore lack of time. (Linehal &

Scullio 2008:34-36.) Linehal's study (2001) received similar results. Unofficial bonding happens outside of working hours, and in places where women don't feel have access to in, for instance sporting events or bars and clubs. Moreover, responders of the study stated that family responsibilities take all their time after work; consequently they don't have time for bonding outside of work. Female managers argued that relevant contacts are tied inside informal networks, in which women are excluded. Since the exclusion, women feel they don't receive same opportunities than men for bonding and expressing their skills to powerful people who may decide the selection of promotion. (Linehal 2001:824-826.)

Social capital can be defined as "norms and social relations embedded in social structures that enable people to coordinate action and to achieve desired goals". It refers to social networks and people's social relationships. Social capital has an important role in organizations, since it is a source of information and networks, and it enables communication between people, as well as sharing the knowledge in organizations. The relationship of social capital and gender in a context of work place has been searched and existing inequalities has been tracked. First, Brush (1985) found that women had a smaller role in networks consisted of men, and it was difficult for women to get access to those networks since the access was based on the influence within the company. Females who were members of networks consisted of females only were seen less influential than females who worked with men. Moreover, informal networking inside the company benefited more men than women. Secondly, Burt (1992) found that men and women ways to build networks while entering to the top differs. Men create social capital by knowing how to success in environment where the flow of information and connections may break, whereas women's social capital is based on indestructible constraints and smaller networks. Lastly, according to Ibarra (2007), it is challenging for women to bond and create networks with men in the executive level, since male's socialization is based on male associated themes and the bonding usually happens outside the working place. Hence, women should exploit different resources in order to increase their social capital. (Timberlake 2005:35, 41-42.)

Singh et al. (2002) studied use of impression management among male and female managers. Impression management refers to a process where an individual manage perception of how other people see the person. It means unwritten rules of informal processes of promotion. Singh et al. (2002) explored how gender affects the use of impression management, and what are strategies for promotion among both genders.

Their study revealed that even though both gender are aware of importance of impression management, men uses it more often than women and it feels natural for them. Also females do recognize the effectiveness of impression management, however they don't prefer to use it. According to the results, both genders emphasize the importance of networking and gaining reputation regarding promotion. These issues are seen as key factors and necessary actions for career development. However, males tend to adapt themselves and their strategies to required career success model easier than females. Female managers understand what is required for promotion and career development, but they don't feel comfortable to adapt their own strategies to that. Male managers use more often manager-focused impression management strategies, and therefore they had significantly higher use of networking. Women instead prefer self-focused strategy, thus they believe that high work performance, great preparation for meetings, visibility and professional demeanor will be enough for advancement. (Singh, Kumra & Vinnicombe 2002: 81-82.)

According to the study by Singh et al. (2002), females do not self-monitoring themselves as aggressively as men, and they do not feel comfortable with the culture and dynamics of senior management level. Moreover, male managers were significantly more often interacting with their managers, therefore gaining as equal respect as their manager easier than females. According to the results, female managers aimed to appear totally work oriented by limiting discussion about family related issues. This behavior may be typical for females in male dominated organizations. In male dominated groups women have to decide whether they choose to blend into crowd and respect the culture of informal conversations, or accept the risk being seen unprofessional and stand out the crowd. Only totally work orientated individuals are able to make career progression, thus it is not necessary to promote the whole identity. This forms an obstacle for females with children, since they have to position themselves as others. (Singh, Kumra & Vinnicombe 2002: 81-83.)

2.7. Institutional environment

An institutional environment affects women representation in corporate boards, thus the gender perspective can be seen in broader level than just in individual level. There are situation centered and interaction centered explanations for the lack of women in corporate boards. Family reasons are one example of situation centered explanation. Women are not able to involve in relevant networks with access to the top, hence their commitment to the company may up being weak, since the maternity leave. Other institutional related barriers refer to a gendered social system, which is designed in gender-bias way and thereby causes challenges for women. Regarding career development, managers' career paths are expected to be unbroken. However, women may not meet this requirement because of a part-time work, the maternity leave, or because of constant moving since their partner's job location changes. (Terjesen & Sign 2008: 56.)

Interaction centered explanation refers to the total effect of interaction process. Women are not promoting their own career as strongly as men and they do not manage their career as actively in corporations where the promotion process is based on the informal system. Men are willing to express their ambition and career success more strongly to board selectors. This may create an assumption that women are satisfied to be in positions they are at present. Moreover, if leaders would not take account gender based differences and provide some actions to support females, women may self- limit their own promotions. (Terjesen & Sign 2008: 56.)

Finland and other Nordic countries can be considered as a forerunner regarding family policies and women equal opportunities to participate in labor markets. Even though generous Nordic model, which enables long maternity leaves, has increased women participation in labor market, it also has affected negatively especially to educated females' career progression. Since the maternity leave, women are away from the labor market a long time period, which may affect negatively to their human capital. (Gupta, Smith, Verner 2008: 66.) Nielsen et al. (2004) found that women returning from a long time period maternity leaves are temporary penalized after returning to a work, since the decrease of their human capital. Hence, the decrease of human capital may explain the reason why women may be seen less capable than men. (Nielsen, Simonsen & Verner 2004:732-733,743.) A welfare system and long maternity leaves have added women in

the labor market. However, at the same time long maternity leaves broke women's career path, which decreases their labor supply, since career paths are expected to be unbroken. (Gupta, Smith, Verner 2008: 66, 78-79, 85-86.)

The generous family friendly system may have created "welfare state-based glass ceiling". This refers to a system in which women are applying to positions in a public sector, because it is easier to combine family and work related issues in there, than in private sector. This leads to a situation in which women works more often in a public sector earning lower wages, whilst men works in a better paid positions in a private sector, and therefore supports a bigger part of a household financially. (Gupta, Smith, Verner 2008: 66, 78-79, 85-86.) In addition, it is assumed that successful women have to give up childcare responsibilities, and therefore companies are reluctant to change or remove stable norms of the company that forms a barrier women career path. Hence, women have to balance between starting a family and creating a career. (Nelson & Levesque 2007:220.)

Terjesen and Singh's (2008) research showed three institutional and environmental characteristics of countries where women have succeeded in breaking the ceiling glass and entered into boards. According to the study, countries where women representation rate in corporate boards is high, also the number of women in senior management level is high. Secondly, women and men have an equal wage level in countries with women in corporate boards. In countries where the wage gab is small between women and men, women gain the board seats more often. Finally, countries where tradition of women political representation is short, the representation of women in corporate boards is high. Surprisingly, countries with the parliament in which women have recently had high representation rate, have fewer women in boards of directors in private sector. There are different explanations why history of women representation in politics correlates with the women representation in boards. It has suggested that one explanation may be "The Queen bee syndrome", which refers to a phenomenon where older women in senior executive seats may purposely prevent younger women get promotions, since they may resent their younger peers. (Terjesen & Singh 2008:60-61.)

The term glass cliff refers to a phenomenon in which women are placed more likely than men in uncertain situations e.g. nominated to as CEO during economic decline or when a firm performs badly. Ryan and Haslam (2005) found that companies tend to place women in managerial position during financial downturn, thereby making women leadership appointments more precarious. Women placed in the glass cliff are in difficult position. Evaluation of company's outcomes is based on leaders' individual capabilities and personalities rather than a situational context of the firm. Since women in executive positions are highly visible, failing may lead to tarnished reputation even though the situational context of the leadership has been challenging. (Ryan & Haslam 2005:85-87.) However, according to Adam, Gupta & Leeth (2008), women are more likely to be appointed to CEO positions during relatively good financial performance. Stock price performance preceding CEO appointment favors women or has no difference between females and males, providing no support to the assumption that women are placed more likely than men in the glass cliff. (Adam, Gupta & Leeth 2008:6, 10.) Nevertheless, women are more likely to be in boards of companies which perform better. A lack of women candidates allows women self-select firms, and these companies are able to emphasize diversity goals more effective way. (Farrel & Herch 2005: 104.)

The table 1. Summaries the main findings of the existing literature of the glass ceiling, in a context of career development.

Subtopic	Main findings
Human capital	"The gender differences in work and life experiences do not account for the substantial gender differences in organizational level" (Igbaria et al. 1997); "Traditional perceptions of women having lack of management experience and skills exist" (Ragins et al.1998) ; "Women directors have fairly similar and sometimes additional human capital to their male peers." (Singh et al. 2008)´; "Deeply held stereotypes are still prevalent" (Hillman et al. 2002); "Requirement of previous board experience applies mainly women, not men" (Peterson & Philpot 2007)

Gender stereotypes / Status characteristics	"Gender differences will result in evaluation bias against women" (Weyer 2007); "Traditional expectations towards genders behavior still exist" (Eddleston, Powell & Veiga 2006); "Stereotypical male leadership style defines norms that are desirable in corporate world" (Oakley 2000); "The backlash effect"(Rudman & Phelan 2008) "Unacknowledged network of constraining expectations and interpersonal reactions is the principal cause of the glass ceiling" (Ridgeway 2001);
Tokenism / Social theories	"The elite male director group prefer candidates similar to themselves" (Singh & Vinnicombe 2004) "The boundary heightening behavior by men increase after a woman have get in to the board" (Oakley 2000) "Visibility generates performance pressures, polarization generates group boundary heightening, and assimilation generates role entrapment" (Kanter 1977) "Three or more women in the board is the critical mass, in which positive impacts of gender diversity are notably stronger" (Konrad et al. 2008)
The old boy network / Informal networks	"The inequality of social capital provides fewer opportunities for women to mobilize their social resources, contacts and networks" (Timberlake 2005); "Female cultural norms are seen as a threat by the old boy network" (Oakley 2000); "Unofficial bonding happens in places where women don't have access to in" (Linehal 2001); "Two significant obstacles for female managers regarding networking are (i) access to male networks and (ii) having less time available for networking due to domestic commitments" (Linehal & Scullio 2008); "Women are aware of the potential of IM but choose not to use it." (Singh et al. 2002); "Women face unique structurally determined constraints" (Ibarra 1993) ; "Requirement for more relevant and attractive role models" (Sealy & Singh 2006); "Strong ties may help women to counteract effects of bias, gender-typed expectations, and contested legitimacy" (Ibarra 2007);
Institutional environment	"Recruitment and promotion processes are designed in gender-bias way" (Terjesen & Sign 2008); "Welfare state-based glass ceiling"(Gupta et al. 2008) ; "Stable norms of the company may form obstacles to women's career"(Nelson & Levesque 2007); "The glass cliff" (Ryan & Haslam 2005);

Table 1. Summing up the research areas in the glass-ceiling phenomenon.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter will introduce and justify methodological choices for the empirical study. The data collection method and the choice of key informants will be described. Further, the data analysis process will be introduced.

3.1. Choice of research method: Qualitative method

There are two methods for conducting a research: Quantitative and qualitative method. The quantitative method is interested in numerical and statistical variables, and it is suitable for measuring objective theories. The collected numerical data is analyzed by using statistical procedures. The quantitative approach is suitable research method when the study aims to test theories and hypothesis deductively. It is also justified to use when the data sample is large, and the study is interested in information that can be measured easily by numbers. (Creswell 2013.)

In contrast to the quantitative research, a qualitative research is suitable when a research focuses on anew field of study, or it aims to theorize social issues. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2015). It produces descriptive data that explains how people understand and experience existing reality. Whereas the quantitative method draws attention to the numerical data, the qualitative approach focuses on languages, experiences and opinions of people. The qualitative research is often inductive, thus it builds theories, hypothesis or models based on the collected data. Data is usually collected in the participant's own settings, and the gathered data is used as the first source of knowledge. (Creswell 2013.)

Social and cultural construction are seen as independent variables in the qualitative research, hence the approach enables examination of reality through cultural and social meanings. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2015). People and the setting are viewed holistically as a whole, and the main point of interest is the context of peoples past and their current situation. The qualitative method enables examination of humanity of social life, which may get lost with other research methods. It offers a window to people's inner sides and

thoughts, and describes how they think and act on daily bases. (Taylor, Bogdan & De Vault 2016: 9-10).

The choice of research method is dependent on the nature of the research problem and the objectives. Therefore the qualitative research approach was adopted for this study. Since the research purpose of the study was to examine underlying factors in a micro level and form holistic understanding of the topic that has not been searched in Finnish context before, the qualitative approach was justified. Furthermore, the research question aimed to study how small group of individuals act, feel and think on their daily basis, thus the qualitative method was ideal. Moreover, the data collection and the analysis of the research are characterized by sensitiveness of the cultural and social context, which is a typical feature for the qualitative research (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2015).

3.2. Interview

The research method that was used in the data collection process was an interview, which is the most commonly used method in a qualitative research. The interview is suitable research method especially when a study focuses on people's attitudes, feelings, perceptions and experiences of reality. The qualitative interview aims to produce new theoretical and conceptual knowledge that is based on life experiences of interviewees. In an interview, the informant gives a rich description of the studied phenomenon, and the interviewer conducts an analysis based on the description. The analysis focuses on meanings of observations and interactions occurring in the collected data. (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006:314, Zhang & Wildemuth 2009.)

There are three different forms of an interview: structured, unstructured and semi-structured interview. The structured interview is commonly used in quantitative research, and it includes standardized questions that are asked in the same order in each interview. Free conversation is limited, and the interview is leaded by the researcher. In contrast, the unstructured interview involves a lightly controlled conversation, which does not involve

pre designed questions or theoretical framework regarding the research problem. (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006:315, Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009.)

The unstructured interview has roots in the ethnographic tradition of anthropology, and it gathers data through observations and record field notes. The aim of the method is to recognize unexpected themes and factors regarding informant's social reality. Therefore, it can provide in-depth understanding and detailed knowledge of the phenomenon. In the unstructured interview, the interviewer generates questions during the conversation, hence different patterns and themes arise from each interview. However, even though there are no pre planned questions involved, the unstructured interview requires detailed knowledge of the topic, as well as preparation before the interview. Despite the free conversation, the researcher has to keep in mind the research question and the scope, thus draw attention to the themes that are relevant for the research problem. This requires great interpersonal skills from the researcher, since finding a balance between controlling the interview and let it flow free is challenging. The method requires ability to listen carefully and formulate questions smoothly and quickly. The interviewer has to be able to guidance the conversation in a direction where the topics of interests are, yet not leave any valuable themes noticed. When new topics emerge, the decision whether to follow them or stay on the major themes can be difficult for the researcher with no previous interviewing experience. (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006:315, Zhang & Wildemuth 2009.)

The semi-structured interview is an in-depth interview method, which is the most commonly used method in the qualitative research. The semi-structured interviews are flexible, and hence the method is suitable when studying people's experiences, and how they feel and think about certain issues. The semi-structured interview can be conducted as an individual or a group interview that lasts normally from 30 minutes to over an hour. The method involves pre planned set of questions that are based on the themes around the research problem. These pre designed questions are complemented with spontaneous questions that arise during the interview. Though the themes and the questions are pre planned, the conversation is based on free discussion. Therefore, the level of how structured the interview is may vary tremendously. The structure is depending on the research problem, however usually more complex themes require less structured formats. (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006:315, Miles & Gilbert 2005:65-69 .)

A structured interview often produces quantitative data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006:315), thus it would not have been ideal method for this research. Consequently, the interviews were conducted as a compilation of an unstructured interview and a semi-structured interview. Because of the nature of the research question, the unstructured interview would have been the most ideal method. However, collecting data for the unstructured interview requires a significant amount of time. The unstructured interview is highly individualized, and therefore each interview session requires more time than structured or semi-structured interviews. Further, gaining mutual trust between participants is requirement for successful unstructured interview, yet it takes a lot of time. (Zhang & Wildemuth 2009.) The research problem of the study focuses on top managers in Finland, and hence all interviewees were managers that worked on the top management level in busy environments. Therefore their schedules were extremely limited, and conducting pure unstructured interviews was impossible at this context. Further, all informants agreed to give an interview lasting from 45 minutes to a one hour, which significantly limited the possibility to form a close relationship with deep trust between the interviewer and the interviewee. Creating a close and personal relationship between participants in that period of time is unlikely. Therefore, conducting purely unstructured interviews would not have been ideal.

Because of the limitations of conducting the unstructured interview, the data was collected by applying features of the unstructured interview and the semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview is suitable for complicated research problems. The method is ideal dealing with sensitive topics, since it provides appropriate tool to discuss about themes that the informant may consider private and personal. (Miles & Gilbert 2005:67.)The research problem of the study is extremely personal and sensitive. Moreover, the research topic can be considered complicated, because recognizing underlying factors that are not visible or unambiguous, is challenging. Consequently, applying features of the semi-structured interview was justified.

3.3. Target group

The data was collected by interviewing four Finnish female top managers who has successful career records in the Finnish corporation world. Four informants were selected because the small sample enables more detailed data collection, which is essential regarding the research topic. However, since the sample was small, the quality of the informants was emphasized when the target group was assembled. The choice of informants should be based on their positions and knowledge, as well as ability and willingness to participate to the study (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006:315). Thus, the interviewees were selected based on their positions in the business world. Since the glass ceiling phenomenon refers to obstacles that prevent women get on the board level, the board experience was a critical factor that affected the choice of the informants. All participants have broad experience of working in boards of directions of several domestic and international companies. Moreover, interviewees were purposely selected from different industries in Finland. Their backgrounds and industries where they have built their careers varied. This gave broader perspective for the glass ceiling, and offered richer view of how female managers experience the phenomenon. Further, all interviewees were middle aged or over middle aged, married and they had children. Their husbands had built successful careers as well. The husbands had worked either in the private or the public sector. One interviewee's spouse had created career as a public servant at the service of the Finnish government, whilst other interviewees' spouses had created careers as business men in the private corporation world.

3.4. Data collection

The informants were first contacted by an email, in which the author of the research explained the purpose and justification for the research, as well as the background of the research theme. Interviewees did not receive any pre questions, because of the chosen research method. The aim was to recognize themes that the interviewees would stress themselves, and ask questions regarding those themes. Consequently, there was no need for pre questions. After all interviewee has accepted the interview request, face to face interviews were conducted.

Environment where the interview is conducted may affect quality of the data, and it should be considered when planning an interview (Saunders 2007:329). Hence places where the interviews were conducted varied, and possible distractions were eliminated. Three interviews were conducted in the interviewees' work places, while one interview was conducted in the interviewee's home. However, all interviews were conducted in quiet and private places, where there were no other people around. A quiet and private place was important especially in this research, since the topic and issues regarding the theme are extremely private.

All interviews started from an introduction by the author, where the author described the aim of the research and how the interview would be implemented. Also permission for recording the interview was asked. Three informants allowed recording, whilst one prohibited it. The author started the interviews by asking the interviewee memorizing the most relevant themes and happenings in her career path. Hence, the interviewee decided from which point of her life the career path has begun, and which the most relevant themes were. The aim was to let the informant bring up themes that were important from her perspective and let her lead the conversation. The author asked spontaneous questions regarding the themes that were brought up, and steered the discussion. However, the author also controlled the interview by asking questions that the informant didn't brought up but which were critical regarding the research problem. This was done in order to ensure that relevant data regarding the research problem was produced, since there was a risk that relevant themes would have not been discussed otherwise. Questions the author asked were based on the theoretical framework of the glass ceiling phenomenon. Each interview was different, and content of the conversation varied. Some interviews included more free discussion and were leaded by the informant, whilst others were dominated by the questions asked by the author. Therefore, the interviews involved features of the unstructured interview as well as the semi-structured interview.

The duration of the interviews varied, lasting from forty minutes to over an hour. Three interviews were recorded by the author's mobile phone. Since one informant prohibited recording, the author took notes to her computer during the interview. All recorded data was saved and later transcribed to the author's computer. The transcription was utilized later in the data analysis process

3.5. Thematic analysis

The data was analyzed by applying a thematic analysis method, which is commonly used analysis method in a qualitative research. The thematic analysis method was chosen, because it enables detailed and rich examination of data It provides a tool for describing and organizing collected data, and helps to recognize several underlying factors of the research theme. The main aim of the analysis is to identify and analyze different themes and repeated patterns of meanings across the data set. The thematic analysis differs from other qualitative methods, since it does not require technological and theoretical knowledge of approaches. It can be used with different theoretical frameworks, and hence it is not linked any pre-existing theory frameworks. The thematic analysis method can both reflect reality itself, and reveal the different layers of reality. (Braun & Clarke 2006.)

The most fundamental phase of the thematic analysis is to recognize emerged themes across the data, by coding them as groups. Themes represent meanings in the data set, and they involve important information regarding the research question. The number and sizes of the emerged themes varies, and there are no rules for the ideal amount of themes. Because of the flexibility, the amount of themes varies and they are based on the researcher's own judgment. The purpose of the themes is to reveal meaningful aspects regarding the research problem. Consequently, quality of the analysis is more important than quantity. (Braun & Clarke 2006.)

The thematic analysis can be conducted in an inductive way or a thematic way. The inductive way refers to an approach where emerged themes are strongly linked to existing theory. The data that has been collected may not have link to the researcher's topic or area of interest, and hence the themes are not driven by the researcher's theoretical framework. Instead, the collected data is the researcher's first source of knowledge. Consequently, the analysis is data driven and does not try to fit those emerged themes under the pre-existing coding frame. In contrast, the theoretical approach is theory driven and flows "top down" way. The theoretical analysis is therefore more explicitly analyst-driven. It is driven by the researcher's theoretical framework, and thus it usually provides less rich description of the data set. (Braun & Clarke 2006:10-12). In this analysis the inductive approach was adopted. The data set was re-read several times and emerged themes were identified. Consequently, the analysis was not driven by the existing

theoretical framework. Instead, the collected data set was used as the first source of knowledge and the theory was applied afterwards.

3.6. Data analysis process

The analysis process started from translating recorded interviews to a written format by transcribing. Transcribing helps the researcher to become familiar with the data, and to recognize interpretative act (Braun & Clarke 2006). The data was re-read through several times, since the thematic analysis requires constant moving across the data set. An important part of the analysis is to recognize codes across the data. Coding is a process where the data is organized into relevant groups that form a base to the themes of the analysis. Codes points out the most essential elements of the raw data, and they outline relevant aspects of the data set. In order to form codes, reading and writing the data through several times is necessary (Braun & Clarke 2006). Therefore, multiple notes were taken during the reading process, and ideas for possible codes were formed. In this research, the coding process was conducted manually by using a computer. The whole data set was processed, and meaningful aspects and potential patterns were marked by different colors and terms.

After the whole data set was handled, multiple codes were marked. Each code was analyzed individually. The codes were divided into relevant themes, based on the meaning of the each code. Similar codes or codes that were related formed one theme. After all codes were analyzed, a collection of themes and their sub-themes were formed. Each theme and their codes were analyzed again. Some codes were re-organized again, until all codes were in the right themes. The validity of the themes was considered, and thus the re-organizing process continued until the thematic map reflected the whole data set. Finally, the thematic map was ready, as it offered a coherent view of the relationship of the themes and illustrated the contribution of the analysis.

3.7. Credibility

In order to ensure credibility of this research, two elements of the research methods were considered: validity and reliability of the study.

3.7.1. Validity

The most important prerequisite of the research is validity. Validity refers to coherency of conclusions of a study, and it involves three criterions. First, measurement validity concerns does the applied measurement truly reflects the concept that it supposed to. If not, the results cannot be considered credible. Since the measurement validity focuses on a relationship between measurements and results, it is usually applied to the quantitative research. Therefore, emphasizing measurement validity is not needful in this study. Secondly, internal validity focuses on a relationship between conclusions and variables, and hence it stress issues of causality. It concerns whether a found relationship between two or more variables is trustful or not. It can be used when a study examines a relationship between e.g. a program and test results. In such case, internal validity aims to measure did implemented changes in the program really caused chances of the test results. (Bryman & Bell 2015:49-50.) Since internal validity focuses on credibility of the relationship of compared variables, it is not relevant to take into account in this study.

Lastly, external validity refers to generalizability of research findings (Bryman & Bell 2015:49-50). It concerns whether results of a study are equally useful in another research setting or not. External validity applies especially studies with small sample and a case study. If the data sample is small, the purpose is to describe what is happening in the certain research setting, instead of forming theories that are generalizable. In such cases, the research aim is to present findings and reveal their possible connections to earlier studies in the field. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2008: 158.) This study examined how female managers have succeeded get through the glass ceiling. Since the data sample is small, the study does not claim that findings are generalizable in other settings. Hence, the study does not produce theories how the glass ceiling can be broken. However, the findings provide new information regarding the factors that have helped some women get

through the glass ceiling. Moreover, the results are supported by other researches in the field, and empirical findings are linked to a theoretical view.

3.7.2. Reliability

Reliability measures repeatability of results of a study. It focuses on examining whether results of a study are consistent or not. Reliability is relevant issue especially in quantitative studies, since it is interested in used measurements and consistency of them. (Bryman & Bell 2015:49.) According to Saunders et al. (2009), reliability measures credibility of a data collection and analysis processes. It measures whether the results would be the same or not if the study would be conducted under other occasion.

Further, Saunders et al (2009) has defined three threats that threat reliability and should be considered. First, subject or participant error refers to time when the interview is conducted. Informants' answers may depend on their feelings at the moment the interview is on, and hence the interview should be implemented during "neutral" time. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009:156.) This threat has been taken account, since the interviewees had opportunity to choose time that was the most suitable for them. Each interview time was agreed a month before the interview, so the managers had possibility to choose time that was the most ideal for them. No interview was conducted under the rush, or in hectic environment, and hence the results can be considered trustful.

Secondly, subject or participant bias refers to external factors that may limit truthfulness of responders' answers. Interviewees may not give honest answers because of the external pressure, or consequences that they may lead. Threat usually concerns companies that are led by authorial management style, or where employee insecurity exists. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009:156.) Responders of this study were managers that work in the top management levels within companies, so therefore threat towards management or employee insecurity did not exist. Consequently, answers were truthful and represented managers' own thoughts. However, the topic of the study is extremely sensitive and it reveals personal data regarding managers' careers, including relationships with colleagues and thoughts about previous employers. Therefore, the managers were informed at the beginning of the interviews that the study will be published anonymously.

Consequently, threat of subject or participant bias was eliminated, hence the results can be considered reliable.

The last threat to reliability is observer error. It refers to interviewer's own feelings and opinions that may affect to understanding of received answers and knowledge. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009:157. The author of this study had collected theoretical framework and got herself familiar with the theoretical view of the topic before the interviews. However, since the topic is fresh and there are no previous studies especially in the context of Finland, the author had neutral mindset when conducting the interviews. In addition, the aim of the research was to produce new information regarding the topic, which supports the neutrality of the interview setting. Thus the results can be considered trustful.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

"When there are plenty of more capable women around but a man with less qualification is chosen. It is not that difficult to notice."

All female managers had faced the glass ceiling during their careers, and it had appeared more strongly at the beginning of the career path. It had occurred as an exclusion from certain groups, gender based understatements and unappropriated comments about female appearance. The discrimination was happened either on the interviewees' own career path, or they had seen it happen to their female colleagues. Two participants had experienced strong discrimination that had occurred as sexist comments, physical intimacies or gender related underestimation. In contrast, two other participants had not faced any serious discrimination. Instead, the observed discrimination had been more subtle. It had occurred as prejudices or comments regarding female appearance and the discrimination were rather targeted to other women. However, all participants had experienced discrimination that had crossed the line of appropriate behavior, and had stepped in the situation. Overall, all participants strongly agreed that the glass ceiling exist, though it has already started to crack among younger men and females. No participants had experienced or seen visible discrimination by young men. Instead it had caused solely by men of their generation or the older ones.

This study aims to find out how some female managers had succeeded to break the glass ceiling in, and get to the board level despite the discrimination. The aim of this chapter is therefore to introduce findings of the empirical study with support of current literature, and hence provide an answer to the research question. The theme that emerge from the data and had helped the women to break the glass ceiling was social support. Scholars have defined social support as "multidimensional phenomenon based on a range of interpersonal behavior". Relationships with other people provide social provisions that are claimed to be necessary for a human's well-being. This multidimensional construct is consisted of several factors, including emotional support, network support, esteem support, information support and tangible assistant. These kinds of supportive interactions may help a person to handle stressful situations, e.g. work issues. Moreover, supportive interactions affect positively to person's self-esteem, anxiety, faith to the assistance, and social control. (Schultheiss et al. 2001:217-218.)

The participants had received support from several different actors during their careers, and it had occurred in different forms. Social support was enabled their career development, and thus it was considered as an inevitable factor regarding their achieved success. It has had several positive impacts to the managers' careers, and it had been received from spouses, parents, and networks. Moreover, other main theme that emerge was own attitude. It was consisted of work orientation, courage and active networking. The two main themes and their sub-themes will be introduced next on a deepen level. Discussion related to the findings together with theoretical view will be provided as well.

4.1. Spousal support

One of the main themes that arose in every interview was received support from the spouse, and it was considered as one of the most important form of social support. Received support from spouses was consisted of empathy, general understanding of what the participants go through in work places, flexibility and practical help with family responsibilities. The literature has defined multiple different forms for spousal support and the theme has been searched in previous studied. Friedman and Greenhouse (2000) examined partners support among business men and women, and they divided spousal support to behavioral and emotional support. Behavioral support referred to practical help, while emotional support to emotional encouragement and understanding. (Huse et al. 2012:77-79).

Two form of spousal support was occurred in the study: Psycho-emotional support and practical support. *Psycho-emotional support* is similar to emotional support by Fireman and Greenhouse (2000), and hence it refers to a spouse's supportive emotional behavior towards his wife and her career. It involves listening, flexibility and problem-solving attitude, and it occurs as a team work between a woman and her spouse. Given support is targeted to a woman as an individual, and it affects indirectly to a woman's career. (Huse et al. 2012:77-79). Emotional support was helped the managers to handle negative work issues, and it was consisted of empathy, encouragements, trust and general understanding and support regarding woman's career goals.

"...he said "for sure, it is your turn now to accept the job offer". So of course these things have to be discussed in home before making decisions..."

"Choose an understanding spouse! This is almost the most important thing in career development..."

"...and after that understanding husband who supports a woman and her career. That is the next prerequisite for development."

Received psycho-emotional support was explicit and implicit. Explicit support refers to an active partner, who encourages his partner to develop her career, and visibly supports wife's career. It means that both partners are ready to support each other in their career development in emotional level. In contrast, implicit support refers to non-verbally and quiet support, which involves understanding and passive support from a spouse. (Husu et al. 2012:78.) The managers felt that the spouse had offered emotional support that had helped them to cope with negative things, as well as affected positively to their self-confidence. Understanding of what is it like to work in a manager position and built career in highly competition environment, as well as understanding of what creating a career requires in a personal and a family level, was considered critical. Furthermore, empathy and comfort that the spouse had offered during difficult times in work had helped one manager to get over negative happenings in the work place.

" ...Sometimes when I have come back to home from work crying ...my husband's support, like when he had comforted me by saying that "don't worry, don't care about them", or by telling examples of how he, as a man, had reacted in the similar situation in his work place, and intervened in that kind of situation... That has had extremely powerful affect to me."

In addition to psycho-emotional support, all interviewees had received practical help with family responsibilities from their spouses.

*"…If you are going to invest a lot to your private life, you have to be able to
organize things in a way that if you have children who have several hobbies
and everything else going on…and you have to take them at 3 pm and pick
them up at 10 pm... so there must be a husband or other partner who helps
you, because as a manager your work day is longer than from 9 am to 5 pm."*

*"I and my husband always covered for each other. My husband took them
at the morning, and I picked them up at 5 pm as agreed, no matter what was
going on at the work place…he has helped me a lot."*

Practical support of spouses refers to practical help with children care and household
work. Received practical support that the spouses had offered was considered significant
factor regarding career development. Practical support received from spouses had helped
the managers handle family responsibilities, as it had included spouses' active
participation to a childcare and housework. The managers felt that it would have been
impossible to combine family responsibilities and career development without the helping
husband. Family responsibilities was shared, hence both partners were able to maintain
their careers. Since their spouses practical help, the women were able to develop their
careers and accept offered positions in the work life. Although daily routines and
household chores had shared equally, it had been challenging from time to time. Since
the spouses were also career oriented people and built their careers, fitting two career
orientated person's lives together was considered difficult.

4.1.1. Work orientation

One of the themes that emerge from three interviews was the participants own attitude
towards work life. The managers considered themselves as work orientated persons with
high professional qualifications and knowledge. Three managers argued that their own
attitude towards work and the fact that they prefer work issues over stereotypical female
issues in work places had affected positively to their career development. All managers
mentioned that women and men networks differ. With the exception of one participant,
all managers argued that male networks were more work focused, whilst female networks

involved more discussion regarding issues that were not work related. The managers announced that they prefer male networks over women, since male networks were perceived to be more work orientated, and hence fitting better to their personal preferences.

>"...since I am work orientated, I don't care so much about women's stuff...I mean it is nice to talk about your life, but... if there is a men's group and a women's group and I listen their conversations, I choose the men's group because they are talking about subjects that I am interested in...And in female groups there is more this...well, a really fresh example...female managers suggested that meaby we could have a shared photograph session, so that we could update our LinkedIn profiles pics. I mean I am just dying! Can you imagine that any guy would ever suggest that?!"

>"...In male networks, there isn't necessarily talk about children's...so much about children's dressing or hobbies or school, but that is...they are much more focused on...you know, work. It's a bit different in men's world...it is more businesslike...I can't say that it is more factual...but I do argue that we have different challenges..."

>"It has been more interesting to go to chat with men and big bosses, because I have never been interested in typical women subjects. Of course those hunting stories are a different story, but it rely exist anymore...I have never been interested in female networks either, because I think they label women. "

Furthermore, work orientation also referred to courage to take the offered job. Courage and its impacts for career development will be discussed later as an own chapter. The participants emphasized the importance of accepting the offered position even though the current life situation would perhaps posit challenges. The managers felt that women are much more careful with that than men, and hence courage and accepting the job offers were suggested to be one of the most important factors in their career development.

Finally, gender equality and untraditional gender roles that the participants had adopted in their marriage and daily life were connected to the participants' childhood and roles that they were perceived at early age in home. The childhood's implications to the managers' career development will be described next.

4.2. Family support and role models

Support received in childhood was considered important form of social support. When the interviewees were asked to describe in chronologic order the most relevant factors that has affected to their success, they all determined their childhood as the starting point. Childhood was considered as time when they had formed their first understanding of themselves, their possibilities in work life, and gender roles. The managers had adopted certain values and gender roles already at the early age. These values and roles had shaped managers' view of life, and thus impacted to their careers as well.

Childhood's support and spousal support were linked to each other. The managers had not accepted traditional gender roles, instead the family responsibilities were shared equally between spouses. As noted earlier, this was enabled their career development, since they had more time to maintain their careers. Each manager's marriage was based on equal thinking, and they had copied almost the same roles as they had seen in their childhood.

Each participant had assimilated equal gender roles of women and men from their parents already in childhood. They all had grown in homes where gender equality had realized. Since the equal gender roles in a childhood home, their perception of female role was work-orientated person who is equal to men. Consequently, gender equality and a female creating a career felt natural for them also later in work life. Overall, gender roles were assumed to be inherited from people's childhood. Three participants have had mother and father who both worked, and were equal in the home. One manager had a father that had died when she was 7 years old. Hence, her mother was financial supporter of the family, and took care of family responsibilities as well as created a successful career.

"...Not important, but natural...that women are in the work life and built careers. I never experienced that setting where a woman takes care of housework and only a man builds a career, I didn't see that in my home. Therefore it has never felt weird to me that women create careers...And if I look at my own son who has been raised in our family...he doesn't understand these discrimination or equality issues at all because he has learned equal roles."

Further, one other participant announced that in their home women had always earned more money than men, and hence she had learned gender equality already at young age.

"Underestimation and prejudices against women have always felt ridiculous rather than threatening to me, because I have been taught completely different roles and values in my home. I think the biases against women are results of male managers' childhood. Many of their mothers has been housewives, so it has been unnatural for them that a woman success and built a career. "

In addition to adopted gender roles, social support received from their parents in their childhood had also affected positively to the managers' own perception of themselves. Parents support had shaped their view of their own abilities and opportunities in the business world. The managers had been taught that they are as equal as boys, and thus they have same opportunities in labor markets as boys do. This had later impacted to their views of themselves as a manager, and hence boosted their self-efficacy.

"I didn't realize until the school that girls don't have same opportunities than boys do...until then only thing that affected was my parent's upbringing..."

"You have to be humble and polite…and that is again linked to your childhood. This is how I have been raised, if you take other people account, you will be okay."

One participant considered especially support from her father and spouse one of the most important factors regarding her success. Her father had encourages her by teaching that she can do anything in life and success.

"At the beginning of my career there were a lot of bias against me and my education, but received support and encouragement from home has helped me to deal with them. E.g. when I was a little and all presidents were men, I asked to my father that is there some other jobs where a woman cannot be instead the president. My father answered that he believes that I will be the first female president. He always supported me and taught me that I can achieve anything."

Moreover, one manager announced that her parents had taught her to be active and search information of her own, which had affected her as a person and therefore help her with her career.

"Upbringing has played a really important role…support and push that you have received from home. I think that has been extremely vital. I have been taught to search information and answers, not believing other people, being active, and that I have capacity for anything. So the atmosphere in home and the home's way to encourage…it has been really important for me… That you give a right amount of push to your child without forcing her."

Consequently, support, push and encouragement had affected to construction of their self-esteem positively. It had boosted their self-confidence and gave them courage to accept offered advancements. Thus, courage and childhood support that they had received from their parents in childhood had affected directly to their career development.

4.2.1. Courage

Supportive parents have impacted to the managers' self-esteem and created courage, which was considered important regarding career development. Three managers emphasized the importance of taking an offered job regarding career development. They announced that in order to succeed, you cannot say no to the job that you are offered without an urgent reason. The managers had accepted offered opportunities, even though timing was bad considering the family situation. Accepting the offered job was considered to be connected to courage. All managers agreed that women are usually too unconfident to take risks and accept the offered advancement.

> *"You just cannot say no. It is really bad…and women and men are different with this. You can sense that in those networks…"*

> *"…and in addition to capability, you need courage. You have to be able to accept challenges…And this is something I have done a lot... you would not be offered that job unless you would not be good at it. And this is where women are usually too careful or unconfident…"*

> *"I have always taken the opportunity when it has been offered to me. And it has been extremely uncomfortable…but it never comes at the right time. My husband has got a job from abroad, or I have left and he has stayed… but you have to be ready for this. You have to have that courage to take the job! "*

Men were perceived to be more active and accepting offered jobs easier than women. Men were seen to be more ambitions, and they were said to have more courage to accept the offered position. In contrast, women were perceived to be more careful and thinking too much whether they have required knowledge or not.

"…perhaps I usually choose male networks because there is more ambition in there…they are like 'Yes, I take that job!', and 'For sure, I will jump on that immediately' etc. "

"Women wants that their capabilities are noticed and that they are asked… in contrast, men push themselves confidently towards jobs to which they may not have skills at all…"

"I know a lot of women who wants to get on the top, so I don't get it how it could depend just oneself…meaby women think too much do they have required capabilities or not ."

Own attitude towards career related barriers and own career development were considering critical. Some managers argued that women are not often ready to give up certain things, or give what it takes to get on the board level. Overall, the managers saw career development and dealing with barriers to be individual's own responsibility.

"Don't be too harsh to yourself. You don't have to be perfect at everything. If you are unsure about something, get assistance! It is not a shame to have a mentor or a coach…if you built a career, you have to be ready to give up something, for example the fact that you are not perfect at everything.

"I have worked hard in order to get in to those networks…it is important…and this is where women have… I mean creating a career is not only fun and it doesn't happen by itself…I have sat many nights, and sometimes there would have been better things to do and nicer to go home…so of course it also requires that you make an effort for it."

"…Women may say that this is what they want, but you can sense that most of them is not ready to give up things…You have to be ready to give up things and work hard for it."

"...in a way, it is your own responsibility to show that you are equal compared to men...If something has felt wrong, I have went to see a manager and demand background information...You can get far with your attitude. If you are different than rest of the group, of course you have to make an effort to fit in. It is your own responsibility."

4.3. Network support

In addition to spouses and childhood support, social support was received from different networks. First, networks had involved contacts that had offered professional support and helped managers with references and additional contacts. The managers had had some special person in their life who had acted as unofficial mentor or confidant for them. They were persons that the participants were able to call and ask professional help regarding work issues. Offered support by mentors was informational and emotional. The mentors had offered help with professional issues, but they had also provided understanding, since they had been in the same position than the manager. They were able to relate to the manager's feelings better than people who had not experienced same things. Further, all managers announced that they also have had several other male contacts and friends during their career.

"I have had these men contacts back in the days to whom I have been able to call and ask help...You can open up to them about things that nobody else would understand, and they will give you an honest answer."

"...I have not used mentors in my career, but I have had some confidants...

"...I have always have lot of male friends and male contacts..."

In addition, friends and other people outside their work environment had offered support, and helped to take a distance from work issues. Friends and other family friends were perceived precious, since they offered impartial support, and helped to forget work stress.

> *"...and good girlfriends from totally different fields. They also give distance to work problems, which is relieving."*

> *"...But you are not alone with it...if you don't have a family, you have some other people around. You have your own personal network and that is the most important."*

All managers had positioned family responsibilities before career ones. Even so, help and support from nannies and mother in lows had been used during the maternity time and when the kids were young. However the managers were been in different situations, since some of them had help closer than other ones.

> *"..My mother in low always came to help when my son was sick..."*

> *"Neither of us parents lived in the same town as us, and my husband travelled 200 days per a year and I travelled 100 days...so you can just imagine what it was like."*

4.3.1. Networking

All participants emphasized importance of networking regarding their career development. Networking was perceived one of the most important factor in their careers, since different networks were offered support and new career related opportunities. Moreover, active networking had increased their visibility in business life, which in turn had affected positively to their career advancement.

"Visibility has played a big role in my career. Visibility can mean that e.g. I have been a member of different Committees, and thus I have toured in different places and met new people there…"

"…I have been present a quite lot …"

"Networking already in school is extremely valuable…so that you have later some people to call and ask help, references etc."

All managers had networked actively during their careers. However, the participants' attitudes towards networking during the time kids were young varied. Two participants had reduced networking when the kids were young.

"When children are little older, 12-16 years…there is the maternity leave, the autumn holiday, or some other short pause… I think support from mom and dad is so important for a kid at that age that networking stays in the second place."

"…and when the kids were small, we didn't network then. We agreed with my husband that if we would do something it would be only our hobbies…But there was a time when we didn't have time for even that."

One manager had networked actively even during her pregnancy time.

"…I have networked actively, even during my maternity time when the kids were small. But I had nannies and other help then of course…"

Overall, networking was perceived as crucial factor for success. All participants emphasized importance of building a large network that offers valuable contacts regarding career. Networking had included participation to different events and happenings in the business field, as well as e.g. a lunch meetings or hobbies together with colleague. Two participants announced that they had also utilized their free time, and networked in fields that were not necessarily related to their work environment. The other one had joined in different committees, and increased the network, whilst the other one had joined to the school board when her children were little.

> *"I always have better clothes with me in work, in case I have to go to some event after work, and I don't have time to visit home. But I don't network only because it benefits me, I do it because I am genuinely interested in meeting new people."*

> *"... I was on the board of my children's school when they were little, which was a great bonus to my CV..."*

4.4. Summary and discussion

The empirical part of the study aimed to recognize similarities in four Finnish female top managers' career paths. The purpose was to reveal relevant factors that may help women to cross barriers that were introduced in the theory part. Based on the results of the empirical study, two main themes were identified: social support and own attitude.

SOCIAL SUPPORT	OWN ATTITUDE
1) Spouse support	1) Work orientation
2) Family support & role models	2) Courage
3) Network support	2) Networking

Table 2. Summing up the identified themes of the empirical part.

Social support and own attitude were consisted of different sub-themes. Social support was composed of spousal support, family support and role models, as well as network support. Own attitude was composed of work orientation, courage and active networking. The two main themes were connected to each other, as spousal support enabled maintaining work orientation in practice, family support increased courage, and active networking provided larger networks and network support. Relationships of the themes are complex, since they affect to each other different ways.

Spousal support was argued to be one of the most important factors that had enabled the managers' career progression. Received support from the spouses was practical and emotional. All participants were in relationships were family responsibilities and housework were shared equally. Since the participants did not shared traditional gender roles where a woman alone is responsible for family responsibilities and childcare, they had time to maintain their careers. Hence, practical support was critical for them. Furthermore, understanding spouse provided emotional support. Emotional support from a spouse helped some managers to deal with gender based discrimination mentally.

According to previous literature, women do approximately nine hours more homework in a week than men. Especially after having children, the burden gets even heavier. The reconciliation of family responsibilities and work breeds time challenges. Control of time is still mainly a woman's responsibility in families where two people built their own careers. Even though traditional gender roles have changed and men take more responsibility for housework than earlier, the main responsibility is still considered to belong to a woman. Therefore, a general debate usually suggests that organizations should offer flexible practices and strategies in order to help women to combine a work and a family. However, several studies have confirmed that companies' family-friendly policies do not add gender equality in work places, instead they reduce it. They enabled women to combine family responsibilities and a career, however they don't solve gender inequality problems in work places. (Hakim 2007:284.) Therefore, spousal support seems to have a bigger role than organizational practices in solving family-work conflicts. Results of this study confirm that since none of the participants did not emphasized importance of companies' family policies regarding their career development.

Interestingly, the participants did not share the common view of family roles that are usually assumed. Instead, their family roles were equal, since both parents in the family built their careers. Practical support and received psycho-emotional support from spouses enabled their career development, and hence the lack of flexible practices or strategies offered by companies has not stopped them to get advancements. They organized and planned the integration of work and family together with their spouses at home, as independent of organizational matters. Therefore, spousal support and both partner's participation to family responsibilities may replace organizational lacks regarding support of female managers' career development. Consequently, a supportive partner may help women to across one barrier and broke the glass ceiling.

The results are consistent with previous researches. Emotional and practical support from spouses has occurred in earlier studies. Heikkinen, Lämsä & Hiillos (2012) examined how a spouse can support a woman's career development, and what are different forms of that support. They found that emotional support and practical support from a spouse impacts positively to female managers' success. The authors suggest that spousal support could replace organizational lacks. Thus, in order to promote female managers' career development and help them to combine a family and a career, organizations should pay more attention to general wellbeing of their workers. Spousal support can help to achieve that goal. (Husu et al. 2012:80-81.) Further, since the integration of family and work is considered as women's responsibility, the problem should be searched from men's perspective as well. The role of men's participation to family obligations should be more visible, since it would be important to examine also in terms of leadership in a general level. (Huse et al. 2000:56.) In addition, it is problematic that the general debate regarding integration of work and family rarely concerns men. Men are not perceived to be responsible for family issues, because they are assumed to have a wife who takes care of the family while the man focuses on career. (Husu et al. 2012:75-76.)

Each participant's spouses have built careers as well in the business world. Having a marriage in which both spouses maintained their careers had been challenging. Literature has defined this kind of relationship as a dual-career marriage, and it refers to a marriage where both partners are maintaining their careers equally. The relationship between a career and family roles tend to be tangible in dual-career relationships, since both partners are committed to family obligations and careers. However, role expectations are intangible and they may cause conflicts between a family and a work. High family

demands may have negative impacts to work life, and in contrast, work demands may affect negatively to a family. Marriage of two highly work orientated person with several role expectations in home and work requires high negotiation skills and ability to handle conflicts. (Ochsner 2012:8.)

Previous studies have shown that work-family conflicts are connected to marital satisfaction and work stress. Studies have shown that effective communication have a major impact on marital satisfaction. It consists of empathy, frequent communication and self-disclosure. Effective communication in marriage helps spouses to fulfill each other's needs in a marriage. Therefore, the more effective communication is between spouses the higher the marital satisfaction. Effective communication also includes love and underlying social support, which affects directly to marital satisfaction. Social support determines how a couple address conflicts in home and work. Further, social support can be considered important especially for women, since mothers are more likely to face lower life satisfaction and mental health issues than fathers. Hence, social support from a spouse is essential. (Ochsner 2012:8.)

According to Social exchange theory, rewards of the marriage should be bigger than costs of the marriage. Rewards of the marriage can involve e.g. money, friendship, affection or love. Consequently, marital satisfaction is based on values like love, conflict management, respect, happiness, effective communication and trust. In addition, according to Equity theory, members of a marriage perceive higher marital satisfaction when they feel that they are treated equally regarding family and work roles and responsibilities. (Ochsner 2012:8.) Since the greater marital satisfaction correlates with work-conflicts, values that create greater marital satisfaction may help to deal with work-family conflicts. Hence, the participants' supportive spouses, and communication and negotiation between partners, may have helped the couples to handle work-family conflicts. It can be deduced from this that spousal support has enabled control over work-family conflicts, and therefore helped to overcome the glass ceiling barrier. Consequently, spousal support and communication skills in marriage have helped the managers to fit family and work demands together.

Furthermore, spousal support and work orientation were connected. All participants considered themselves as professional, capable workers who had passion for their job. They argued to be work orientated and factual persons. The exception of one manager, all other managers argued to be more similar with men regarding attitude towards career and work behavior. They suggested to be more interested in stereotypical men issues in work places, since men was perceived to be more work focused. Singh et al. (2002) found that some women avoid talking about stereotypical female issues in work places, since it is not socially acceptable for managers in some organizations. In order to have career progression, a manager should be work centered and avoid emphasizing the whole identity. According to the scholars, this will be challenging for female managers with children, since they have to use more energy in order to make them seem as others. (Singh, Kumra & Vinnicombe 2002: 83.) Against the study of Sign et al. (2002), women in this study were willing to talk about male associated issues in work places. The participants agreed that women were more likely to discuss about family issues, children and other soft themes in work places. This did not appeal to them, instead the managers were more interested in talking about issues that are usually male associated, like work. They agreed to be more work centered and therefore naturally enjoyed talking about work and other stereotypically male associated subjects. Thus, they did not have need to discuss about their children or families in work places, or at least they did not perceive that as a barrier. This was argued to be due to work oriented personality and work centered attitude. Consequently, in a light of this study, work centered attitude and natural work orientation help women to break the glass ceiling.

Furthermore, all managers were engaged to their work and career maintaining, even though it had required sacrifices in life. The managers had taken risks and accepted the offered jobs even though it had been sometimes challenging considering their life situation at the time. Moreover, informal networking after work hours had been time consuming, which had sometimes required managers to give up their free time and personal hobbies. They agreed that becoming a board member, women should have more courage to accept offered positions. They argued that women think their own suitability for the job or the current life situation too much, and hence they are not ready to give what it takes to get on the board level. The participants argued that their own investments for work and preparedness to give up things for career development had had major impacts on their career advancements. Further, giving what it takes also referred to courage to ask help with family responsibilities and admit own imperfection.

Results are similar to previous studies. Lipponen (2006) examined female managers' careers by interviewing nine Finnish female directors. The themes that the interviewees brought up among other themes regarding breaking the glass ceiling were courage to fail and commitment to the work. The interviewees agreed that as a manager you have to be ready to take risks and accept possibility to fail. Moreover, they considered themselves to be work orientated and having true passion for their work. (Lipponen 2006:248.)

Earlier research confirms stereotypical gender assumptions regarding work orientation, thus supports findings of this study by indicating that in general women's and men's work attitudes differ. Women and men have different work attitude and they behave differently in labor markets. Hakim (2006) introduced Preference theory, which focus on explaining women's work preferences and life choices between a family and a career. Based on the theory, women's own preferences affect to their life choices in modern societies. It argues that even though economic and social structures limit women's behavior for some extent, it is still women's own choice whether to emphasize family or work activities in their life. Preference theory illustrates diversity of life choices that are based on people's core values of life. It suggests that women's life preferences can be divided into three classes based on their personal values: home-centered, work-centered and adaptive. These three classes are represented in every social class, and thus motivation, personal goals, values and attitudes play bigger a role than societal status. (Hakim 2006:286-288.)

Home-centered women represent minority of all women, and they prefer family activities over work. Women in this group appreciate caring, non-competitive environment, sharing and cohesion. They respect family life over work after marriage, and hence they are usually housewives with large families. Work-centered people are also minority group in society. Unlike the home-centered group, this group includes women whose main priorities are career and other activities in the public arena. This group has the highest rate of childless women, and also majority of men fall within the work-centered group. Women in this group prefer competitive environment, excellence and achievement orientation, and the group is not responsive to companies' family policies. In contrast, adaptive women are the most common group in societies, as it includes 60 per cent of all females. This group of women aims to combine family and work, but they are not totally committed to their work. They are extremely sensitive to organizational family policies and practices, and they try to balance between home-centered and work-centered values. (Hakim 2006:288-289.)

According to preference theory, since majority of women represents the adaptive group, a wage gap and career development is depending on individual preferences rather than gender issues. The theory proposes that unlike majority of men who represents the work-centered group, majority of women are not ready to give what it takes to achieve top positions. Furthermore, preference theory suggests that long term ambition and career patterns distinguish people in these three groups, not occupational choices. (Hakim 2006:291.) The findings of this study support preference theory, since all participants described themselves as work-orientated people who had had to give up other things in life for their careers. Moreover, although all participants stressed importance of their education, none of them suggested some specific position in their past to be a key factor in their career development. In fact, some managers argued that their career development had been unplanned, as fortune had played a big role in many events in their careers. Consequently, peoples own personal preferences and attitudes towards career seem to have a bigger role than specific occupational choices in career development.

In a light of this study, work orientation and work-centered attitude are relevant factors in women's career advancement. According to previous research this does not apply only women but all genders. This finding is extremely valuable, since it forces us to look the glass ceiling effect from a different perspective. If work-centered attitude is the key to the board level, it questions the whole existence of the glass ceiling. Are women not able to get on the board level because there is gender based discrimination or because of the fact that majority of women do not have work-centered attitude which is required in order to get on the top? In other words, majority of women are not ready to give up other things in life for their careers. This argument is commonly used in debates by the business elite of Finland. Secondly, several studies have showed that there are much more men in the business management level than women (Kauppalehti 2016, Keskuskauppakamari 2012). However, business management experience is required on the board level. Therefore, this study supports the argument that the lack of women in the boards rooms is due to the lack of women in operational management level. In turn, the lack of women in operational management level may be caused by the fact that majority of women do not represent the work-centered group. This would explain why there have not been any radical increases in the amount of women in the business management level either.

Kan (2007) examined preference theory, and found that women in the work-centered group with children were more likely to engage full-time job than women in other groups. In

addition, dependent children did not affect negatively to work-centered women's full-time employment, as it did to women in other groups. Based on the study, since childcare is still one of the biggest constrains in women's employment, and women have to balance between family responsibilities and a career, many work-centered women choose to be childless. However, women who have succeeded to combine motherhood and career advancement have strong work-centered attitude towards life. (Kan 2007:259.) Accordingly, work orientation and strong commitment to work help women with children to overcome the childcare barrier. This study is consisted with the previous, since all managers of this study had children and strong commitment to work.

As noted, work orientation and work-centered attitude towards work life affect positively to women's career development. Especially women with children benefit from work-centered preferences. Interestingly, this research found that spousal support affects indirectly to work orientation. The participants argued that equal family roles and received practical help from spouses had enabled their career maintenance. All managers announced that they would not have been able to build their careers without practical help from a spouse. In other words, even though they had work centered attitude and they wanted to maintain their careers, it would have not been possible without help and support from a spouse. Therefore, the conclusion we can draw is that even though female managers would have work-centered attitude, attitude alone is not enough to explain how some managers broke the glass ceiling, at least if these women have children. It seems to that if women want to have children and a career, received support from a spouse impacts positively to career progress because it enables women to maintain their work-centered attitude in practice.

Lastly, as stated in the theory part, expectation states theory suggests that the status element of the sex based stereotypes causes barriers in women's career path. Male self-schemas associate with values that are more suitable to business world than female ones, etc. career role saliency and masculinity. Corporate world prefers traditional male gender roles over female roles. Traditional gender roles and expectations towards genders behavior cause inequalities in labor market, since leaders are also tied to those gender roles. Females who have succeeded to gain a board position have usually either adopted masculine behavior or tuned down their feminine side. (Oakley 2000:325.) Empirical part of this study confirmed the expectation theory for some extent. The managers considered themselves strongly work-centered persons, which is more typical feature for men than for women. Moreover, they preferred male associated subjects over typical female subjects. However, only one

manager agreed that she had changed her voice and shuttled down her femininity in the past, while other managers denied doing so. The findings suggest that work-centered attitude that includes preferring issues that are usually attached to male self-schemas, may help women to overcome the glass ceiling. Nevertheless, this applies only self-schemas, not for example outside appearance.

In addition to spousal support and work orientation, family support and childhood role models had affected participants' career progression. Gender roles and gender equality that they had experienced in childhood influenced to the participants' own marriages later in their life. None of the participants had adopted traditional gender roles. The participants argued that gender equality in their relationships and work life had always felt natural for them, since they had perceived it already in their childhood homes. Consequently, observed gender equality in childhood and equal gender roles in a marriage seem to have a connection.

Received support from family in childhood affected also to the participants' courage, which was considered important factor regarding the glass ceiling. Supportive parents had affected positively to the participants' self-confidence, increased their self-efficacy and therefore created courage. The managers felt that courage to take risks and accept offered opportunities were critical factors in women's careers. They emphasized importance of accepting the job when it is offered, even though the current life situation would not be ideal for that. The lack of courage was proposed to be one of the biggest reasons why women are not able to get on the board level.

The results are consisted with previous studies. Schultneiss et al. (2001) found that emotional support and esteem support, as well as encouragement and emotional closeness received from family were considered critical regarding career progression. Received support from mother and father affected positively to individuals' confidence and their thoughts about their abilities and potential. This leaded to increased self-confidence and motivation, which in turn, leaded to higher achievements. Further, they found that especially esteem support received from a father was considered important. Father's support helped them to have encourage to make their own decision, learn from mistakes and take responsibility of actions. (Schultneiss et al. 2001.) McWhirter et al. (1998) had

similar findings, as their study revealed that father's support impacted positively to career expatiations and educational choices of young Mexican American high school girls (Lent, Brown & Hackett 2000:42). Findings of this study are interesting in relation to research question, since one manager emphasized importance of her father's support in childhood whilst one manager had grown up without a dad and still managed to get through the glass ceiling. Moreover, other two managers did not bring up support received especially from the father, instead support from both parents was emphasized. Based on the findings, father's support alone did not have major impact to career progression. As other researches has pointed out, father's support may influence to career choices and educational plans, yet this study did not found connection between father's support and getting on the board level.

A connection between family support and career related self-efficacy has been found in earlier studies. According to previous research, it provides supportive atmosphere where a person is able to examine surrounding environment and possible opportunities, which in turn leads to master experiences, and finally, to higher self-efficacy expectations. Furthermore, a supportive family and stable environment in home build a health identity structure, which affects positively to one's career decision making. Consequently, supportive family affects positively to career decision making and self-efficacy expectations. Nota et al. (2007) examined how family support affects to high-school aged Italian youth's career choices and indecision. They found that even though there was no connection between female students' career indecision and family support, family support affected positively to female students' career related self-efficacy. Based on the study, students with stronger family support had higher self- efficacy beliefs. Family support affected to career decision making through self-efficacy. (Nota, Ferrari, Solberg & Soresi 2007.)

This study replicates earlier studies by indicating that family support affects to career development. Based on the results, received support in childhood had shaped the participants' self-confidence and self-efficacy, which had created courage. Courage had enabled participants to take risks in their careers, which was considered inevitable regarding career progression. Thus, supportive family may help women cross the glass ceiling barrier.

In addition to spousal support and family support, participants received support from different networks. All managers had networked actively during their careers, even though it had been challenging time after time. Networking and visibility were seen so important regarding career advancement that all managers had done it actively even outside the working hours. Networking was composed of formal and informal networking, and they both were perceived important since they had provided different kind of support. First, work related networks had offered professional support and emotional support, as they were involved professional tips and understanding of stressful work related issues. Secondly, networks had provided practical help with childcare and housework. Three managers agreed that practical help with childcare had been important. They also argued that women should have more courage to ask help and admit that they cannot do everything alone. Network support that had involved help with childcare had enabled managers to participate informal networking after work. It was considered important factor regarding visibility and career advancement.

Scholars have found that women have challenges to join relevant informal networks, because of the lack of time and family responsibilities. Women feel that they do not have time or possibilities to bond with colleagues outside the working hours. Since informal networks are formed partly outside the work place, women are excluded from them. (Linehal & Scullio 2008:34-36.) However, results of this study indicate that network support may help women to cross this barrier. Use of nannies and other practical help offered by networks has enabled the managers to joint informal networks and bond outside the work place. Findings are interesting since domestic commitments and family responsibilities are suggested to be one of the biggest factors preventing women's career development. Against to general belief, family did not seem to be a barrier in the participants' careers. Instead, a family was considered a positive resource that had offered support to the managers. Surprisingly, family responsibilities did not prevent women to participate informal networking. Instead, large networks provided practical support that helped the women to bond after the working hours. In a light of this study, crossing the most common glass ceiling barrier requires large networks and courage to ask help, which in turn roots from childhood support. This finding is important, since it declaims general belief that family responsibilities prevent women to get on the board level. The results show that even though a family and children may possess challenges in female managers' careers paths, own attitude and exploitation of social support help get through that.

The relationship of social support and career development has been searched broadly. Previous studies have confirmed that social support and attachment correlate positively with career planning, self-efficacy, career orientation and career goals. Schultness et al. (2001) examined how relationships impact to one's career development. The results revealed that social support impacts positively to mental health, unemployment, burnouts, and young people's perception of their career opportunities. Support that relationships provided was considered the most valuable factor regarding career development. (Schultheiss et al. 2001:217-218.) Moreover, Fisher & Stafford (1999) found that parents, teachers, and friends support impacted positively to high school students' academic experiences. Consequently, the findings of this research are consisted with previous studies. Support received from different relationships had occurred as professional, practical and emotional forms. Thus, it had formed a multidimensional safety network and helped the managers with their career advancement.

Social cognitive career theory explains a relationship between cognitive-person variables and people's environment. It explains how the relationship shapes one's career development, and how different variables e.g. self-efficacy and career goals interact with environmental aspects, e.g. gender. Based on the theory, objective factors and environmental factors shape one's career development. Objective factors mean factors that shape career development even though the person does not realize their influence, for instance quality of educational background. In order to affect one's career, objective factors require that the person corresponds for them. (Lent, Brown & Hackett 2000:36-38,40.)

Perceived environmental factors refer to barriers, opportunities, affordances and resources that are offered by one's environment. Environmental factors can be divided into two broad categories: distal and proximal. Distal factors mean contextual background factors that shape learning experience in which career related self-efficacy develops. They are background influences that shape people's self-cognitions and interests. Distal factors can involve e.g. range of available role models or emotional support regarding gender socialization processes. In contrast, proximal factors are critical during active career decision making process, as they involve e.g. adequacy of informal career network contacts. According to the theory, people are more likely to turn their career related goals into action if these distal and proximal environmental factors support their goals. Perceived positive environmental factors help people turn their career interests into goals,

and again into action. (Lent, Brown & Hackett 2000:36-38,40.) Empirical findings of this study support the theory of distal and proximal environmental factors in female managers' career progression. Perceived support from parents in childhood had shaped participants believes about themselves and possible career opportunities, and therefore affected positively to their self-efficacy. Further, received support gave them courage, which was considered critical in career progression. Therefore, the study confirms the link between parental support and courage, which in turn affects to career progression.

Another model that describes the relationship of environment and career behavior is Concentric Model of Environmental Influences. The model is based on two layers: the innermost circle and societal context. A person is surrounded by friends, family and other close related people that form the innermost circle. The innermost circle is surrounded by societal context, in other words objective factors and perceived environmental factors. Even though individuals are affected by the societal context where career barriers locate, they perceive existing barriers as they had experienced them for themselves. Hence, the inner circle may serve as a source of knowledge regarding how the barriers are able to overcome, or as a filter that shapes one's perception of existing barriers in environmental context. Lent et al. (1998) found that participants of their study emphasized the inner layers, e.g. friends and families, who contributed to their preferred career choices. (Lent, Brown & Hackett 2000:36-45-46.) This study supports Lens et al's. (1998) findings. The participants considered support of their inner circle as a relevant factor regarding their success. Support that was received in childhood had shaped their view of environmental context. The inner circle, more specifically family, had shaped their view of how to overcome existing gender related barriers. Thus, upbringing and emotional tools the managers had received in childhood was served as a source of knowledge of how to overcome those barriers. Consequently, support from friends, family and other close relationships may help to deal with barriers regarding the glass ceiling phenomenon.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will introduce the conclusions of the research, based on the theoretical framework and the findings of the empirical part. The theoretical contribution of the study will be presented along with limitations and suggestions for future research.

5.1. Theoretical implications

The research regarding relationship between perceived support and career barriers has received only little attention in current literature (Lent, Brown & Hackett 2000:42). This study contributes to the research of the glass ceiling effect in a context of Finland, by producing new information of the phenomenon. The purpose of this study was to examine factors that have helped some female managers to break the glass ceiling barriers in their careers. The objectives of the study were to reveal similarities in female top managers' career paths in a micro level and identify factors that had affected positively to the managers' career advancement. Empirical part of the study focused on examines factors that have helped four female top managers to overcome exiting glass ceiling barriers that were introduced in the theory part. The empirical data was collected by interviewing Finnish top managers and the data was later analyzed by exploiting thematic analysis method.

Based on the results, two main themes were identified regarding the research question. The analysis shows that social support and one's own attitude seems to help women get on the boards lever and break the glass ceiling barriers. Social support that helps women to break the glass ceiling was provided by several different sources. This study found a link between career progression and spousal support, family support and network support. These three forms of social support together shaped career development. The other main theme that arose was own attitude towards work life and a career. Own attitude was composed of work orientation, courage and networking. The findings revealed a positive connection between the sub-themes and career progression, since they enabled new job opportunities and helped women to get higher in their career ladders.

The results show that work-centered attitude plays the key role in breaking the class ceiling. However, work-centered attitude alone does not explain career progression of women with children. Even though women would have work centered attitude and a career would be their first priority in life, family responsibilities restrict informal networking and take time away from maintaining a career. Therefore, work-centered attitude together with a supportive spouse affect positively to career progression of women with children. Spousal support enables women to maintain their work orientation in practice, since family responsibilities are shared equally in the family and women have more time to develop their careers and network actively.

As noted earlier, family support and role models in childhood increase courage and one's self-confidence. This has major impacts to career development, since accepting a job offer and taking risks were considered important factors regarding getting on the board level. Moreover, support received from different networks and active networking was considered important. Networks had provided professional support and opened new job opportunities in the participants' careers. Therefore, large networks may help women to cross one of the biggest glass ceiling barrier: family responsibilities. However, in order to get the best benefit from large networks, women need courage to utilize them actively. Courage roots from childhood support, hence childhood environment affects to career development as well.

In a light of this study, it seems to that breaking the glass ceiling is a sum of different factors. Both main themes and their sub-themes form a complex pattern in which the themes are linked to each other. Development of factors that is required in order to create a successful career starts already in childhood. This is interesting knowledge since we are living in times where traditional gender roles are changing and limits between genders are getting smaller constantly.

5.2. Limitations and future research

The glass ceiling phenomenon itself has been searched for years, while factors that help women to get through the ceiling glass have not received that much attention This study produced fresh information about the glass ceiling phenomenon in Finland by studying factors that has helped female managers to break the glass ceiling. However, since the data set was small, more research with larger data set would be needed so that the results would be generalized. The theme is extremely important for all young females, since it would provide knowledge how to combine two big elements of life, family and a career. Moreover, future research could focus on examine how men's and women's networks differ. As noted earlier, there is no common agreement does women's and men's networks differ or not (Lalanne & Seabright 2011). However, all participants in this study agreed that nature of men's and women's networks differ, yet they could not justify how they were different. Therefore, it would be interesting to know what are the differences, and how do they influence to the glass ceiling and women's career progression.

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