



**Management and
Business
Administration
Doctoral School**

THESIS SUMMARY

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Reasons for the Low Female Representation in Senior Management

What do senior decision makers say about it?

Supervisor:

Henriett Primecz, PhD

Associate Professor, Corvinus University of Budapest

Budapest, 2016

**Institute of Management
Department of Organizational Behaviour**

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Table of Content

I.	Previous Research and Choice of Topic.....	4
I.1	The Reason for the Choice of Topic	4
I.2	Conceptual framework and previous research	6
II.	Methodology	10
II.1	Philosophy of science assumption	10
II.2	Research questions and methods	10
III.	Results and conclusions	13
III.1	Research questions and answers.....	13
III.2	Answers beyond the research questions.....	20
IV.	Relevance of the Theoretical and Empirical Results	25
V.	Publications.....	26
VI.	References	28

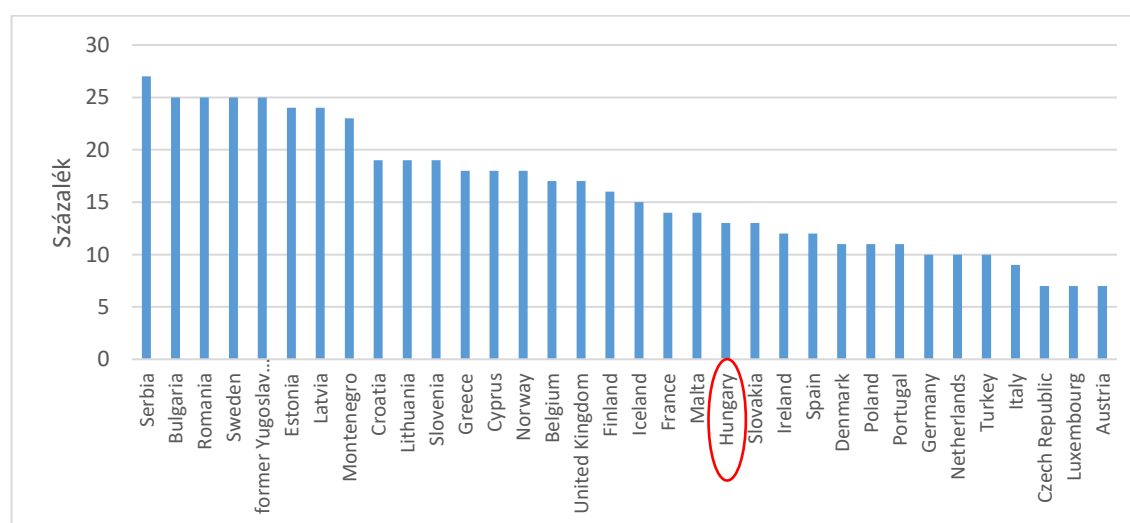
I. Previous Research and Choice of Topic

I acquired many years of experience both in corporate leadership and research. My goal is to show academic insights in a field that has been part of my personal and professional development, and therefore, based on my experiences, I could add unique value to my research in line with the benefits of personal experiences in academic studies claimed by several authors (Strauss, 1987), (Putnam, 1990), (Glense & Peshkin, 1992), (Maxwell, 2013).

I.1 The Reason for the Choice of Topic

My vision is a world where men and women mutually acknowledge each other's strengths and human qualities free of prejudices, where people with leadership skills, regardless of their gender identities have equal chances for promotion and appointment, and management teams work together for mutual benefits. Female representation in senior management, however, is only 13 per cent in Hungary (Figure 1.). Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the topic a number of scientific research deal with different aspects of the issue. My approach focuses on leadership aspects while building on gender studies as well. Unfortunately, researchers of leadership and management do not really show dedication to the subject of female minority in senior management, so I am trying to build a bridge that covers the gap between these sides.

Figure 1.: Female representation in senior management



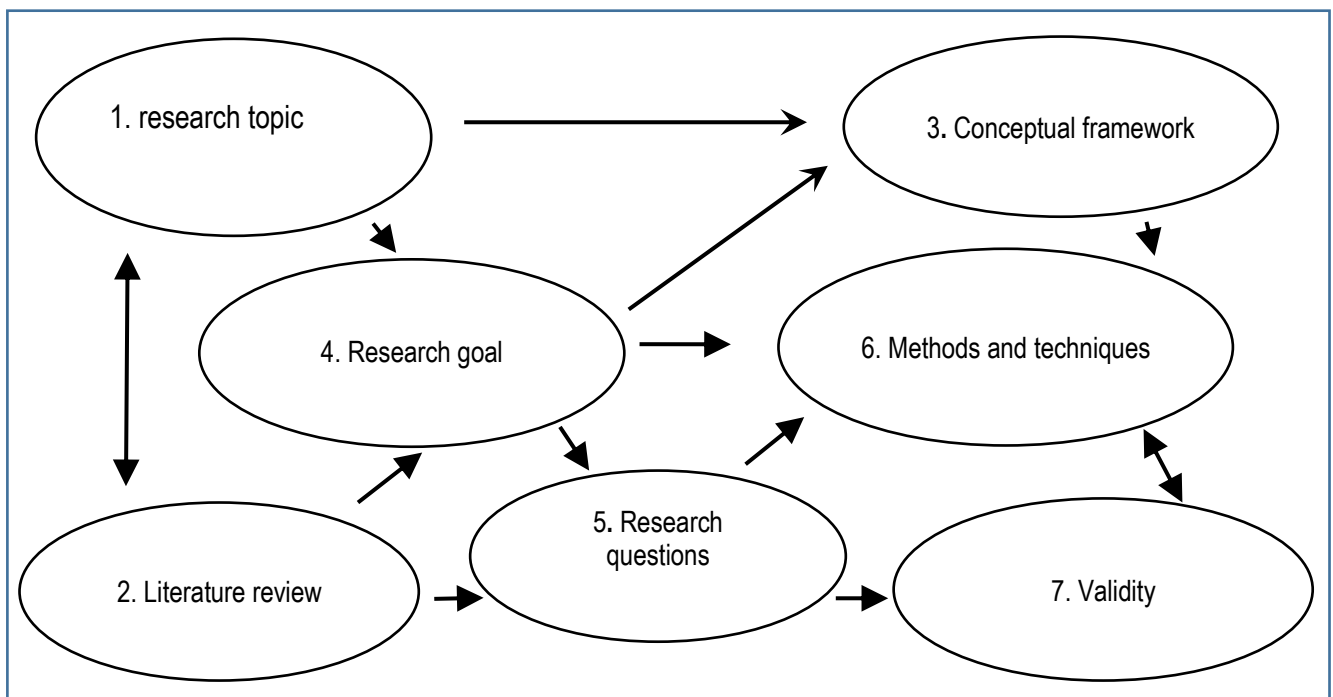
Source: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/business-finance/executives-non-executives/index_en.htm (chart constructed by the author)

The tone of this thesis is personal and self-reflexive. According to this tone, I am planning to reveal not only the outcomes of my decisions but also the decision-making dilemmas throughout the research. Kvale (1996, old.: 259.) says, that an interview report should ideally be able to live up to artistic demands of expression as well as to the cross-examination of the court room. In line with his words I also attempted to create a thesis that is both a good read and professional at the same time.

With my research, I am wishing to enrich the dialogue on men and women's roles in senior management. My aim is to make it easier to reach mutually beneficial win-win situations where women get more chances to become parts of senior management teams.

I developed my research design (see Figure 2.) using Maxwell's (2013) guidelines, and Gelei's (2013) model.

Figure 2.: Research design



Source: Maxwell (2013) reviewed and revised by Gelei (unpublished draft, reference with the permission of the author)

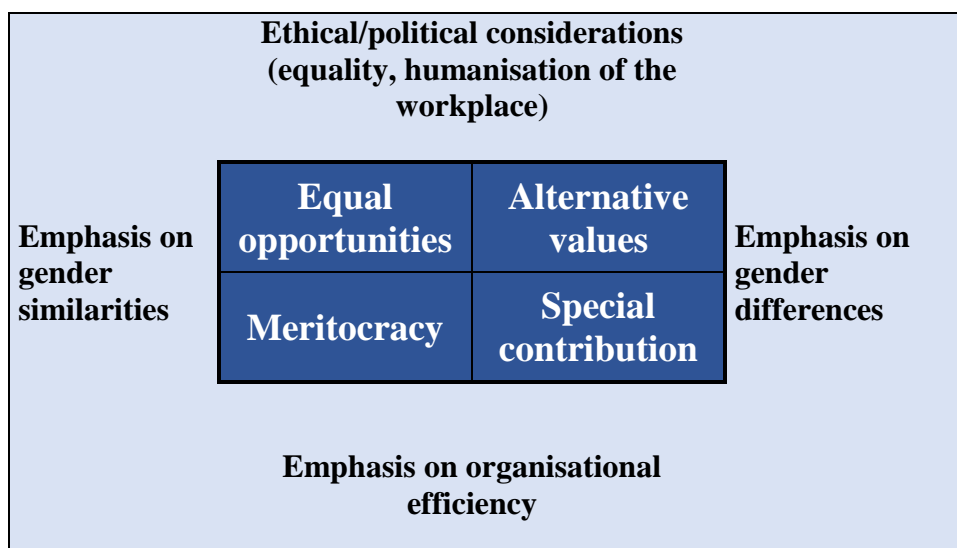
Research results call the attention to the difference in evaluation of women and men. It was mostly the field of gender studies and not leadership theories that addressed the issues. I spent the majority of my professional life in the profit-oriented, competitive private sector, mainly in senior management positions. In order to achieve my vision, my mission is to reveal senior managers' experiences on their cooperation with female colleagues and managers. My goal is to understand how leaders responsible for appointing senior staff view their female colleagues of management capabilities. As they are responsible

for the performance of whole corporations, it is worth examining how they encounter female talents. Do they rely on female leadership skills, do they appoint and promote women? What kind of beliefs, constructions and feelings do they develop on women? I believe that a deeper understanding of these issues could contribute to success of dialogs between men and women.

I.2 Conceptual framework and previous research

The structure of the review of previous research follows the analytical framework developed by Alvesson & Billing (1997) which summarizes some dimensions of the complex relations between women and management (*Figure 3.*). Although the title does not refer to men, because of the comparative perspective of the framework good opportunities are provided to involve men, too, in the analysis. The four key concepts that guided me in the review are located in the intersections of the four principle dimensions and marked dark blue.

Figure 3.: Approaches to analysing the relationship between women and management.



Source: (Alvesson & Billing, 1997, p. 171.)

In order to provide clear distinctions between the everyday meanings and terminological interpretations of terms, definitions were defined for the concepts of leadership, management, leadership roles and leader stereotypes as well as sex, gender, gender stereotypes and gender roles.

The ‘special contributions’ approach (Figure 3. lower right corner) indicates that ‘femininity’ is an asset that holds potential advantage in the workplace inverting the value given to difference in the management context. This kind of ‘feminization of management’ (Fondas, 1997) highlights a style that is oriented towards participation, power sharing and information exchange while it emphasises the

differences as compared to other styles. Figure 4. summarises the similarities between stereotypical traits of each gender and some of the most important leadership styles revealed throughout the decades by leadership studies. Successful organisations are shifting away from an authoritarian model of leadership and towards a more transformational and democratic model. The trend highlights the growing importance of female characteristics (Powell, 2012).

Figure 4.: Similarities of leadership styles and gender stereotypes

Leadership style	Main tools, culture	Gender stereotype
1.1. Autocratic	Exclusion of employees from decision, information is monopolised	Masculine
1.2. Democratic	Involvement of employees in decision, information sharing	Feminine
2.1. Task oriented	Stress is on execution: the leader sets the goal and monitors production	Masculine
2.2. Relationship oriented	Execution of tasks is based on good relationship, employees are generally involved in processes	Feminine
3.1. Transactional	Business transaction: contingent rewards, correction of mistakes	Masculine
3.2. Transformational	Focus on harmonisation of interests, support, offering opportunities to develop	Feminine

Sources: prepared by the author based on the following articles: (Lewin, 1947), (Likert, 1960), (Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1973), (Vroom & Yetton, 1973), (Blake & Mouton, 1978), (Fiedler, 1978), (Hersey & Blanchard, 2008), (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003)

Under current circumstances, individuals who are able to articulate clear and inspiring vision to gain support from followers are the successful leaders. Survival of companies within rapid changes and continuous challenges depends on their ability for innovation and fast reaction on consumers' needs (Hitt, Harrison, Ireland, & Best, 1998). Management approaches that emphasize open communication and delegation are most conducive to the rapid innovation and response to customers that organisations need to survive in such environments. Components of creativity are mostly feminine personality traits,

for example intuitiveness, non-linear thinking and the propensity to explore. In fields of technology with a strong male dominance, however, it is vice versa: creativity is identified with convergent thinking, logics and optimisation (Hanappi-Egger, 2011). A warning, however, was formulated by Judy Wajcman saying: "It is naive to believe that the revaluing of women's 'difference' will succeed where 'equal' opportunities have failed" (2011, p. 347). In other words, the recognition of female talent is valuable only if it manifests in promotions.

Turning to "Alternative values" (Figure 3. upper right corner), not only communal traits and team building abilities but also risk sensitivity belong here. Women are supposed to be more risk averse than men (Croson & Gneezy, 2009). Women tend to be less aggressive in their choice of strategy and more likely to invest in a sustainable way (Charness & Gneezy, 2012). Research finds that states with more women involved in government are also less prone to corruption (Swami et al, 2001). In democratic regimes, where corruption is typically stigmatized by law and custom, corruption is a risky behaviour, women are much less involved in such deals.

Quantitative analyses on link between performance and gender diversity in decision making bodies hint a U shape relation. This U shape assumption is built on Kanter's influential work (1977a) and (1977b), concerning gender diversity in groups i.e., the critical mass theory. In her analysis she sets up the following four different categories of groups according to their composition: uniform, skewed, tilted, and balanced groups. Several empirical evidences support the critical mass theory. In their qualitative research, Konrad, and Kramer (2006) found that a clear shift in culture occurs when boards have three or more women. Joecks and Vetter (2012) found that skewed supervisory boards were outperformed by tilted supervisory boards.

Meritocracy (Figure 3. lower left corner) issues cover challenges related to hidden discrimination though masculine values involved. Neutral criteria on which meritocracy are based in several cases do contain a gender bias (Lewis & Simpson, 2010). Historically most organisations have been founded by and are still dominated by men, especially in the higher management ranks (Terjesen & Singh, 2008). As a result, organisational cultures have been created which, intentionally or not, consider male preferences and life patterns as the norm and which value male attributes more than female ones (Meyerson, 2000).

The barriers of equal opportunities (Figure 3.) suggest that the playing field that constitutes the managerial ranks continues to be tilted in favour of men and behaviours associated with the masculine gender stereotype, a phenomenon that occurs despite what leadership theories and field evidence would

suggest. One of the most important factors is that men are still believed to be better managers and better managers are still believed to be masculine (Schein et al, 1996), (Butterfield & Powell, 2003).

An explanation is the 'lack of fit' model (Heilman, 1983) (1995) (2001) (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). It suggests that even in cases when the female and male managers being evaluated are exhibiting exactly the same behaviour, individuals who believe that men possess the characteristics that are best suited for the managerial role more than women are likely to evaluate male managers more favourably than female ones. Another aspect of this issue is highlighted by the role congruity theory where leader and gender stereotypes put female leaders at a distinct disadvantage by forcing them to deal with the perceived incongruity between the leader role and their gender role (Eagly & Karau, 2002). According to the 'similarity-attraction' paradigm, people make the most positive evaluations of and decisions about those whom they see as being similar to themselves (Byrne & Neuman, 1992). Kanter (1977a) characterized the results of such a preference in management ranks as "homosocial reproduction."

Vertical segregation (Eagly & Carli, 2007) (Nagy B. , 2007) (Nagy & Primecz, 2010) is a trap for women, that means that women are typically taken into middle-management positions only in support functions such as HR, PR, marketing, accounting and finance, i.e. behind the 'glass wall'. A further disadvantage for women is the exclusion from male networks. Influential men often form social networks dominated by their own gender, and women often experience exclusion from informal "old boys' networks" (e.g. (Katila & Meriläinen, 1999), (Miller G. , 2002), (Featherstone B. , 2004). Due to the pervasiveness of stereotypical competition and aggressiveness, women in highly masculine domains often have to contend with criticisms that they lack the toughness and competitiveness needed to succeed. In such settings, it is difficult for women to build relationships and gain acceptance in influential networks (Timberlake, 2005)

I reviewed some relevant chapters of masculinity studies. The first thought of marked importance appeared in an article published in 1985 titled "Towards a new sociology of masculinity" (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985), and contained an early version of the theory of hegemonic masculinity. They argued that unlike dictatorship, hegemony is power exercised through "common sense" which, conveyed by education and mass communication, builds into subconscious structures of perception, and embeds deeply into culture without anyone noticing it. When Connell uses the concept of hegemony, he grasps one of the mechanism of reality construction. Collinson and Hearn (1994) identified the following five competing concepts around the issue of masculinity in management: authoritarianism, paternalism, entrepreneurialism, Informalism and careerism.

II. Methodology

II.1 Philosophical Standpoint

After defining my research topic and my goal, I had to find philosophical standpoints to start my work. I found the subjectivist approach more suitable than the objectivist paradigms for my research. Within that framework my research is exploratory, however, so it is not only descriptive but also aiming to support some change. As I aimed to understand the constructions related to my research topic I implemented the interpretative approach and consequently, I decided to apply semi-structured interviews.

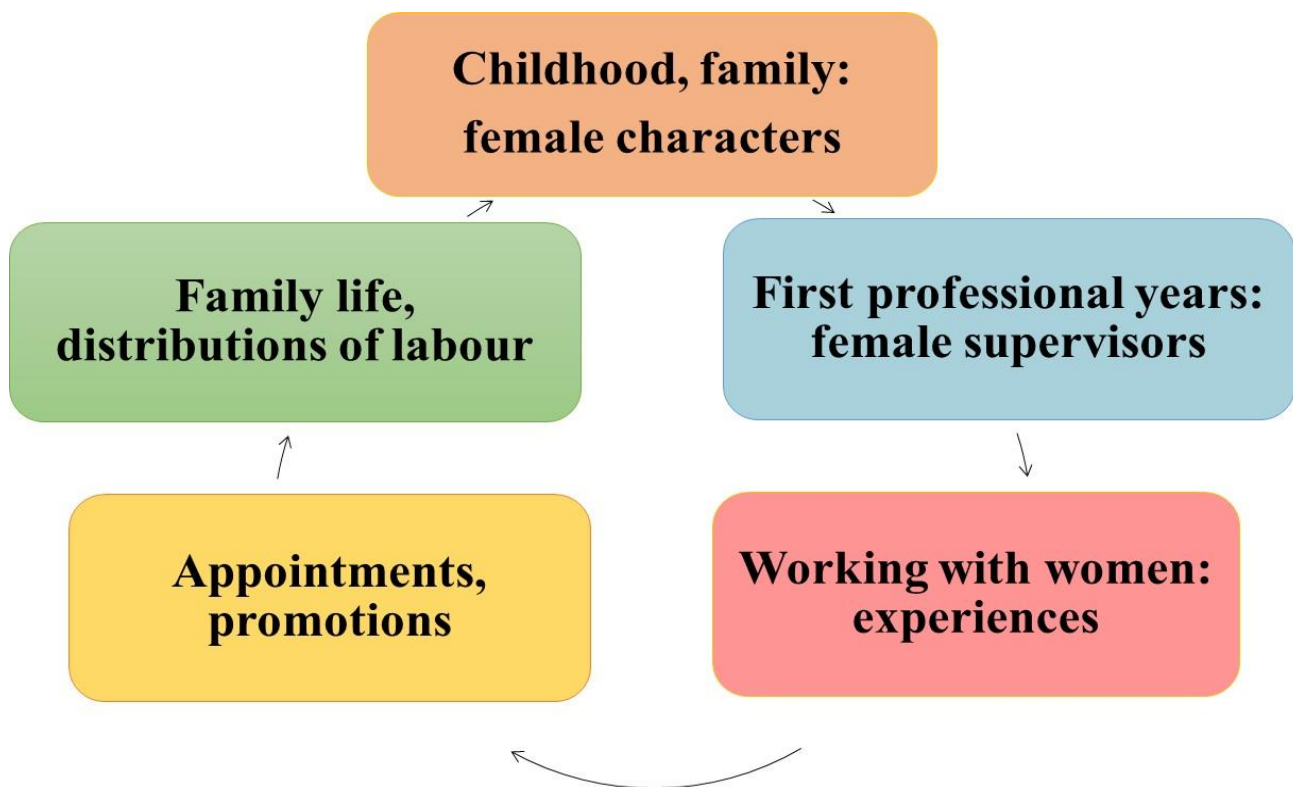
II.2 Research questions and methods

As almost 90 per cent of the senior managers are men (Figure 1.) in Hungary we may assume that they play a dominant role in appointments of senior staff. According to the hegemonic masculinity theory they also have great power in disseminating their constructions of reality. At the same time, however, I identified a research gap because I have managed to find only a limited number of studies that involved people from that group. At first my goal was to understand the views, beliefs, feelings and ideas of decision makers who are mostly men. As I realized the research gap, I reformulated my focus and targeted only men.

When designing the interview questions we need to find a golden mean between stability and spontaneity. Following the exploratory style of my research my interview questions were semi-structured to leave some room for my respondents to talk as they wish but still guide them with several questions. The broad topics (figure 5.) covered sets of questions while I was open for new issues as well.

Unlike the samples of quantitative studies, the one I designed was not statistically representative. Following the advice of Mason, Kvale and Maxwell I compiled a diverse sample to have chances to explore a lot of aspects and contexts of the issues. Living in Hungary, having personal and professional experiences and local connections here, Hungary was chosen as a geographical focus of the research. I involved senior managers, leaders that have been in leading positions for not less than ten years in Hungary. All interviewees are members of the baby boomer or the X generations. The group is balanced with various sectors represented such as consulting, IT, heavy industry, financial enterprises, and others. Executives of Hungarian companies and Hungarian branches of international companies are both represented in the sample (figure 6.).

Figure 5.: Questions of the semi-structured interviews



Source: designed by the author

Senior managers, leaders including the chief executives of the biggest Hungarian privately held corporations cordially accepted the request to be interviewed. Some reviewers of the thesis proposal doubted that male interviewees would answer openly and frankly. But in fact, their overly frank reactions exceeded my expectations. They spoke about their preconceptions and prejudices openly, making honest self-reflexions at times, looking for the causes. They shared their negative experiences and pondered about whether they had possibly put their foot in them. With only three exceptions everyone allowed to have their interviews recorded. They all knew that I had a lot of background information. It may be one of the reasons why they never tried to mislead me.

With my research I primarily intended to discover personal realities. Whatever I heard I tried to understand and decode. Understanding happened with the help of hermeneutical cycles. The starting point is textual analysis, where actual analysis happens in the cycle between the meaning of words and understanding the text. And last, adding the third player to the game, the meaning of the research does not only rely on me, the researcher, but also on the reader. The reader is also a part of the construction process of the research. For example, any given reader could have a presumption about my topic even

without reading a single line. In order to be able to ingest the message it is important for the reader to be open enough.

Figure 6.: Members of the sample

Number	Position	Company	Generation
1.	CEO, regional board member	headquarters and large subsidiaries of international companies	Baby boomer
2.	Founder, CEO, board member	company of dominant importance in its sector in Hungary	X
3.	CEO, board member	several Hungarian companies and a large subsidiary of an international company	X
4.	Fonder, CEO, board member	company of dominant importance in its sector in Hungary	X
5.	CEO, board member	large subsidiary of an international company	Baby boomer
6.	Fonder, CEO, board member	company of dominant importance in its sector in Hungary	Baby boomer
7.	CEO	large subsidiary of an international company	X
8.	CEO, board member	large subsidiary of an international company	Baby boomer
9.	CEO	large subsidiary of an international company	X
10.	CEO, regional board member	Hungarian international company of dominant importance in its sector	X
11.	CEO, board member	large subsidiary of an international company	X
12.	Board member	large subsidiary of an international company	X
13.	CEO, regional board member	large subsidiary of an international company	X
14.	CEO, board member	Hungarian international company of dominant importance in its sector	Baby boomer
15.	CEO	large subsidiary of an international company	Baby boomer
16.	Board member	large subsidiary of an international company	Baby boomer
17.	CEO	large subsidiary of an international company	Baby boomer
18.	Founder CEO	company of dominant importance in its sector in Hungary	X

Source: designed by the author

Figure 7.:Approaches of data analysis and researchers' attitudes

Internal/understanding oriented analysis			External/Critical analysis
Literal reading	Critical reading		
	Person centric	Context minded	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is told (rational level)• Opinion level• Experiences, perceptions• What is told about himself• What is told about others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is deliberately suggested• The emotional way of talking• First mentioned topic, longer talk• What is not told, not even mentioned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interpretation in the context of the interview• Interpretation in the context of all interviews• Interpretation in cultural context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relation to other issues• Interpretation, evaluation• Local explanations• Wider explanation• Conceptual interpretation

Source: (Gelei, 2002, old.: 187.) (With the author's permission)

III. Results and conclusions

'It is very important to research and talk about this topic. This PhD dissertation has everything that helps to convince people about the importance of it. To point out the reasons of importance and the benefits of this' (Interviewee no 9.)

In line with the quotation introducing this chapter, I will write about the results of the research and the conclusions drawn from them. When analysing the sample, and evaluating the outcomes it should be remembered that the goal is to develop a deeper understanding of the individuals in the sample. That means that importance does not depend on the frequency of an issue but on its relevance to the topic. Tendencies give ideas about trends but in a qualitative and not in a quantitative manner.

III.1 Research questions and answers

Due to the fact that the philosophical standpoint of my research was subjectivist and I conducted an exploratory qualitative research I formulated only some vague assumptions. Following Kvale's (1996) advice I left room for the unexpected. My presumptions were the following:

- Senior managers, especially men, will not be willing to participate in my research, even though we have known each other for a long time. They will be preoccupied or uninterested, or this kind of topic may be inconvenient for them. Therefore, I have to make great efforts in order to get them to cooperate.

This presumption was not confirmed. As I said earlier they were open and co-operative. They were interested in the topic. We together could create atmospheres in which they were happy to share their perceived realities, and were talking about their experiences, feelings, beliefs and thoughts like tour guides. They talked not only about their positive attitudes and support for talented females but also shared their negative constructions, doubts and bad experiences. Sixteen out of eighteen interviewees allowed me to record our talks by a dictaphone. Knowing the field, I could triangulate their words. They also knew it. They were honest.

My second presumption was related to potential causes of the fact that women receive much fewer appointments for senior positions than men:

- Men are socialised in such a way that they do not know many positive female senior managers, and therefore remain „blind” to this kind of talent, and do not recognise such merits in women (they trust in men and require proof from women).

The first important cultural factor identified is that at the time of the interviewee's childhood a policy called full employment was implemented in Hungary. That meant that before the political changes of 1990 all citizens, including women, were obliged to take on a job, i.e. a workplace outside the household. This is why it was natural for the Hungarian interviewees that their mothers went to work every day. It may be the main reason that none of them said in the interviews that women should not work at all or they should work only at home. We have to take into account the probability of a bias here.

Based on the sample results, taking into account all limitations, what I can say about the presumption is that not the negative but the positive examples seem to have had an influence on future behaviour. All those leaders who were always very supportive of women, and promoted some female leaders to senior positions as decision makers, had good memories about successful and talented female leaders from their early career years. Most of them remembered women of managerial talent either in their families or in schools. The mothers of those men who spoke in the most enthusiastic manner about female leaders were talented managers. There are interviewees who went through a positive learning process and later became promoters of female leaders. Their memories are mostly similar to the first group.

For the others, however, there is no any relation between the two factors. That suggests that there are other stronger factors that can overshadow any positive memories. One of the most negative interviewees for example, have nice memories about his first female supervisor. When she was lagging behind in the corporate hierarchy he developed an explanation that served as a basis for his rejection of female

promotions into top management. All in all, we may say that as the number of positive examples is growing there is a chance that the overall attitude is improving.

The third presumption was formulated on the basis of the literature review:

- We know from previous research a number of ways how appointments and promotions are biased and disadvantageous for women. We do not have information, however, how those processes work “here” and “now”. What kind of patterns are constructed to support these mechanisms?

In the course of the research I was impressed by the colourful cultural environment where the issue of female participation is interpreted. Even if some of them are negative and strongly biased the richness of constructions exceeded my expectations. I found different attitudes and practices according to several dimensions. Before we go into detail, in order to keep the integrated framework of the analysis, I also consider the research questions or with the words of Jennifer Mason (2005) the ‘intellectual puzzle’.

Research questions:

General question: What is the reason for low female representation in senior managements of the profit-oriented private sector?

Specific questions:

1. How is this issue constructed by senior decision-maker men who are responsible not only for the almost 90 per cent of appointments but also responsible for the performance of the companies in the competitive private sector? What kind of beliefs, feelings and ideas and metaphors they have?
2. How are these constructions are related to the corporate culture and its changes? What is their relation to the management styles?
3. How does unconscious bias work

The following advantages of working with women were mentioned by the interviewees:

- Women are more empathic than men even at company level. An example mentioned was that the “mission” issues are always taken care of by women. And another one was that personal tragedies are never only numbers for women but also human issues.
- Ability to make peace between male colleagues.

- Positive contributions at corporate meetings:
 - less ‘boys’ club talks’ and cock fights among men
 - less meaningless arm wrestling among men
 - less exclusively masculine collaboration
- New perspectives provided by women widens the basis for decision-making
- Female creativity and problem solving ability help in both scientific and corporate issues. At this point the vast majority of the interviewees agreed that the aversion of girls to mathematics, IT and technology is more a result of socialization process than genetics
- Positive emotional energies. This issue of emotions was raised first as a negative factor and was labelled as mood swings. Four interviewees, however, represented the opposite view. They said that on the one hand men may also have mood swings. On the other hand, they agreed that emotional energies of women may inspire others and have very positive influence on corporate culture
- Reliability and honesty
- Inspiring atmosphere and “glittering eyes”
- At the same time there was a set of compliments that represented constructions for vertical segregation.

That means that women are typically taken into middle-management positions only in support functions such as HR, PR, marketing, accounting and finance, i.e. behind a firm ‘vertical glass wall’. These areas also demand performance, but in a different way from the areas dominated by men, and so women get stuck in these functions, because there is rarely a route upwards. The positions are thus filled by men. Internal units operating as profit centres are still mostly bastions of the male empire. As Jackman says “women are warmly congratulated for having traits that make them able to fit in behavioural patterns and duties that men do not wish to fulfil at all.” (1994 p. 347.)

From an external, critical point of view it is important to declare that due to their talent and abilities women have every right to become members of decision-making bodies even if they do not have any of the above- mentioned stereotypically female characteristics. Going back to the platform of special contribution of women we can see that the constructions above somewhat exceeded the traditional empathy and consensus. New added values are recognized such as creativity, new views and good problem solving abilities. The fact the majority of the interviewees thought that girls’ attitude towards mathematics and IT can be changed with better-targeted education may be overambitious. Family socialization has very strong influence and that starts much earlier than formal education.

During discussion, a new aspect was raised by two leaders. They experienced that one of the reasons why men do not appoint women was the lack of enough self-confidence. They thought that men who feel uncertain would find it difficult to tolerate a woman who is cleverer than they are. Much more difficult than tolerating a man. Asking about this issues other two leaders said that self-confidence was always an issue at promotions and this difference may be valid but they never experienced it.

Even if we could see a long list of female advantages, the majority of the interviewees still had a longer list of negative constructions.

- Fewer interviewees than I expected talked about the traditional distribution of labour in the households and its disadvantageous effects on women's careers.

Most of the other comments were about conscious and unconscious biases and prejudices. Some of them talked about discrimination as well.

- One of the interviewees stressed for example that leading abilities do not rely on being smart, but on other skills. He mentioned his wife as an example: although she is smarter than him, she would not be a good manager. He finds that women get overly committed to issues, and this makes them stiff and sometimes even biased.

Commitment as a negative construction in itself is a strange interpretation. All recommended leadership styles emphasize the value of commitment. The sample he quotes is very limited and certainly too small to formulate such a strong opinion for all women. If we put this construction into the context of his words we get some hints about the meaning behind. He claims that his views on masculinity being superior is proven by his theory that patriarchy might be genetically transmitted; just like famine, it builds into our genes and we pass it on. The two constructions together reveal that the real meaning is masculine superiority whatever context and wording is applied to deliver that.

- Another view is that women are better at analytics, but weaker in synthetics, that is, they don't see the big picture.

When the interviewee started to explain the reason he realized that his construction was based on the perception of his wife. At the end he said that all women should be like his wife otherwise nobody would marry them. The interpretation of this reasoning is again the masculine superiority that is supported by the construction that this is the best distribution of labour as all women want to marry "normal" men and want to look up to their husbands.

- Although I never asked the interviewees about their wives, four of them mentioned them by themselves. All of them modelled their wives in their constructions.

Some claimed that their wives were not capable enough to become leaders. Some others, although adored their wives, still did not appoint women to senior positions for other reasons. It seems that wives are supposed to be good reference points for some reason. Men96 told me about the persons they chose to be their partners in life and not to be colleagues in the company. Female colleagues in some constructions are closer to wives than to male colleagues.

- Another construction that all women would like to look up to their husbands.

This is why women are not supposed to be too ambitious because they would get higher positions in the hierarchy than her husbands. Besides the masculine superiority this construction suggest it also assumes that mutual respect does not exist between married couples and that the whole world is hierarchical. Furthermore I believe that there is a lot of marriage, where the basis is mutual love, without any up and down looking.

- Exclusion from male networks was mentioned as a female disadvantage. One interviewee said that they do not invite women for hunting because women would disturb them at the afterparty. He emphasized the fact that this means career disadvantage. The others claimed that women are really disturbing them in male talks but they denied any disadvantage stemming from this fact.

Such corporate cultures discriminate women from the 'inner' circle and decrease their chances to build networks. Women are not there when new ideas are born, important information are not shared with them and they can be "seen" for decision makers less than their male colleagues.

Besides the quoted genetical reasoning there were other evolutionary, biological or hormonal constructions mentioned as well:

- "Women are better in discovering talents and inspire them because they have a good instinct to find good fathers for their children. Although they could be better leaders than men, however, they do not enter into cock fights for power. These are the men who do it due to their instinct to fight for women."
- „While women are born with their ova, sperms are continuously produced and urge men to compete."
- „High levels of testosterone is the reason for the desire for power and the ability to keep that."

- „The female brain is not structured enough for such activities as portfolio management.”
- Lastly, the already quoted theory that patriarchy could be genetically transmitted; just like famine, it builds into our genes and we pass it on

We can see that when the interviewees were trying to find explanations and excuses for not appointing women to top jobs they turned to these constructions. Explanations on grounds of evolution, biology and hormones suggest that these factors will be valid forever. There are various historical examples, geographical differences, and many research findings, however, that prove that these are in fact social constructions. An aspect of this issue is highlighted by the role congruity theory where leader and gender stereotypes put female leaders at a distinct disadvantage by forcing them to deal with the perceived incongruity between the leader role and their gender role (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Another explanation is the ‘lack of fit’ model (Heilman, 1983) (1995) (2001) (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). It suggests that even in cases when the female and male managers being evaluated are exhibiting exactly the same behaviour, individuals who believe that men possess the characteristics that are best suited for the managerial role more than women are likely to evaluate male managers more favourably than female ones. The hegemonic masculinity theory explains how men are able to maintain their dominance (Connell, 2005) and what how masculine contractions are related to management (Collinson & Hearn, 1994). According to the ‘similarity-attraction’ paradigm, people make the most positive evaluations of and decisions about those whom they see as being similar to themselves (Byrne & Neuman, 1992). Kanter (1977a) characterized the results of such a preference in management ranks as “homosocial reproduction.”

There were some rare attempts to find social constructions. An example for them is the following:

- “Women abandon their lossmaking positions more quickly than men. Men do not want to admit the loss immediately, so they keep the position for a longer time putting themselves into risky situations.”

This interviewee was aware of reality-constructing patterns as well, because he said if a woman accepts the social idea that women are not that smart, it is easier to say: ‘I’ve made a bad decision, I pull back.’ If social patterns change, this behaviour will also change.

- Women are blamed for not fighting and competing enough for power.

If we look closer, this reflects a masculine idea of leadership based on competition. As if the only job of the top leaders would be to announce the winner of a game. Relationship oriented, transformational

leadership builds on co-operation and win-win constructions. Leaders are responsible to maintain an appropriate framework for that.

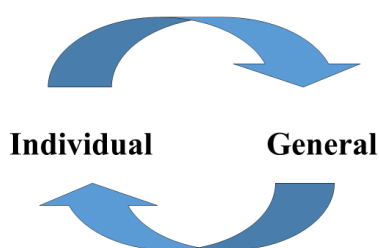
- Two examples that highlight the double standards are the perception that women talk too much and that they advertise themselves in an improper way.

These phenomena are practical examples of diffuse status theory, which asserts that the same gestures get different receptions depending on whether these gestures were sent by men of a higher status or by women of a lower status. Men talk quite lengthily at board meetings but that is perceived in a different way. If they talk about their success, it is better taken.

III.2 Answers beyond the research questions

While looking for the answers to the research questions I found some answers to the high level issue i.e., the reasons for the low female participation in senior management. According to the hermeneutic circles of qualitative research, one's understanding of the text as a whole is established by reference to the individual parts and one's understanding of each individual part is established by reference to the whole. It stresses that the meaning of a text must be found within its cultural, historical and literary context. Interpretative circles start from individual interview data, then categorizing strategies are applied (such as coding and thematic analysis) and arrive to connecting strategies (Maxwell, 2013).

Figure 8.: Hermeneutic circles



Source: (Gelei, 2002) with permission

I started with the 'vertical' analysis using codes for topic categories such as childhood, early years, and promotions. With these codes I could compare the individual answers by questions and topics. Showing the ways of changes in attitudes or the building of constructions I conducted some 'horizontal' analysis with narratives. At this stage of analysis, I focused on the integration of the two dimensions using the interpreted content of the statements and actions that are not only about concepts and beliefs but also about the researcher's understanding.

According to the interpreted attitudes and the appointment practices I formed five groups of the eighteen interviewees (see *Figure 9*). We could see various behaviours, beliefs and attitudes ranging from open rejection to full-hearted support. The appointment practices, however, are not always in line with the opinions expressed. There are leaders who adore and acknowledge women's leadership skills and still never appoint them. There are examples for the opposite cases as well, when leaders are not certain about the advantages but appoint one or two women anyway.

Figure 9.: Interpreted views and appointment practices of interviewees

	Never appointed	Appointed one or two	Appointed more than two
	women to senior positions		
Supporters			3., 4., 7., 9., 15.
Developing group			1., 7., 12., 13., 18A
Uncertain group		8., 11.	16., 17.
Theory constructors	2., 6., 14., 18.		
Reluctant and rejecting group	10.,		5.

Source: prepared by the author

The frequency of interviewees in the categories should not mislead the reader. As the sample is not representative and we do not know the distribution of the population we should focus on the content and not the numbers. All of them are equally important.

I labelled the five groups based on the following two criteria: their interpreted views and their appointment practices:

- Supporters: positive, optimistic views on female leaders, trust in young talented women, appointing more than two women to senior positions, positive feedback about their performance
- Developing group: changes in behaviour, improving attitude on female leaders, becoming supporters, appointing more than two women to senior positions, positive feedback
- Uncertain group: positive views, appointing one or two women, still have some doubts
- Theory constructors: positive views expressed, not appointing women to senior positions, theories are constructed to support these practices
- Reluctant and rejecting group: negative views on female talents and abilities:
 - Reluctant: still appointing some women to senior positions, mostly negative feedback
 - Rejecting group: never appointed any women to senior positions

Recalling the findings about the second presumption on early experiences about women of leadership talent, conclusions here are similar. In the first group all interviewees had positive memories on talented female leaders and the most enthusiastic members were proud of their mothers. The second group is similar with some exceptions and there is no other relation between the groups and the early memories for the other three groups.

The next question is how the two different generation groups are located in the table. In this small qualitative sample, the only tendency is that there are mostly X generation members in the most supportive group. In all other groups the distributions are quite balanced.

According to my management research orientation the last analyses are focussed on management styles, corporate cultures and industry profiles. A deep research on management styles of the interviewees would be beyond the scope of this research. During the interviews, leaders talked about their jobs, their interpretation of their duties and their leadership styles. When they talked about meritocracy, most of them explained the values of their firms in detail and their own understandings of their mission. When we talked about diversity, they shared their views about decision making and motivation. During the analysis I realized that some interviewees showed similarities with some masculine constructions of (Collinson & Hearn, 1994). As these constructions show strong correlation with certain leadership styles that information also helped in the research. Using this information supplemented by my knowledge of the terrain I developed views on the leadership styles of the majority of them.

The style of four leaders in the *Supporters'* group was less task oriented, they were mostly democratic in decision making and more transformational than transactional leaders. Their emotional intelligence was high, and two of them had a strong entrepreneurial spirit. There are three leaders in the *Developing* group who were rather similar to the members of the first group. High emotional intelligence, entrepreneurialism, relationship orientation, mostly democratic decision making and transformational leadership are their main characteristics. One leader from the *Uncertain group* is jovial, relationship oriented, somewhat paternalistic and democratic decision- maker. The other two were of technocratic orientation, had more task than interpersonally oriented styles with some transactional attitude. Both of them are democratic decision-makers. One of them is similar to a certain extent with the masculine construction of *Entrepreneurialism*. The general attitude of the members of the group of "*Theory constructors*" is technocratic, they mostly lead in transactional and task oriented styles. Most of them are rather paternalistic and two of them are sometimes autocratic. This is in line with the fact that two of them have similar attributes to the construction of *Paternalism* while one of them is close to *Entrepreneurialism*. The last two leaders of the *last group* are more task oriented persons leading mostly

in transactional style and have a tendency to be autocratic in decision making. One of them is similar to the masculine construction of *Informalism* while the other is more to *Authoritarianism*.

The summary about the management styles hints that those leaders' orientation is positive about women leadership who implement such management style where female stereotypical characteristics fit well. Addition to that, democratic, relationship oriented, transactional leadership styles create open and inclusive atmosphere that helps to discover talented women as well. Equal opportunities are more given even to non-stereotypical women who are supposed to be appointed to top positions if they are talented enough.

Going back to the interviews there is one factor to be analysed. That is that part of the corporate culture that is related to female issues about which they shared a lot of information. Three leaders belonging to the *Supporters'* group talked about their supportive corporate culture. All of them belong to foreign companies. All of them internalized the positive attitudes and the value of inclusiveness. All of them talked in a very positive manner about their experiences. One of them explained that the company started to focus on the issue from the perspective of human rights but later they expected additional value creation as well. The most enthusiastic one in this group was the head of a consulting firm. The other two companies are Hungarian. In one of them the personality of the leader is key. Wherever he worked he was always very positive in this issue. The fifth member is the head of a consulting firm. He talked a lot about how he built the firm. He always worked together with women who became leaders later and who were always very successful in their businesses.

Every interviewee in the *second group* had his own story about the process that had changed his attitude and behaviour. One of them pointed out that working together with female managers had been a gradual process for him. When he became an executive there were not any female managers around him for five years. Since then, both of his deputies have been women he had appointed. Today there are female board members in nearly all the countries of the region he administers. The foreign parent company is very supportive in this field. Another respondent was a newly elected chairman of a board when he realized that there was a crisis situation that the CEO could not manage. He had to appoint a woman (glass cliff-situation) and after proving her skills, she received a permanent appointment. This is how he discovered the advantages of cooperation for the first time. Following this situation, he was more willing to appoint women to leading positions and is working successfully with them up to this date. The third group member was surprised when he joined a foreign firm and realized the very supportive female pipeline management. The firm started to deal with the issue due to customer expectations. He could see the advantages of the framework of trainings and networks and appointments and became an

active member of the supporting team. He could see how CEOs grew up and became successful leaders. The last interviewee has just started working as a venture capital investor. Since he invested first into firms led by women he has been learning the value of good female leaders.

In the *Uncertain group* we can find the leaders of four local companies of multinational firms. Gender issues are not considered in similar ways. Female career opportunities are different depending on the nationalities of the companies. In one of the cultures one and two women have been appointed to the board. Both of the interviewees are satisfied and have good experience but do not want to increase female participation. One of them said that the target proportion is higher but as their mother firm is lagging behind they do not rush. The two leaders belonging to the other nationality companies followed the very supportive policy coming from the mother companies but still have some doubts.

The members of the *last group* are leaders of a Hungarian and a foreign company. The firms are market leaders in their markets but still different in size. They are the least inclusive and supporting.

We can conclude that in my research sample the American firms are located in the first three while the Hungarians are mostly in the last two groups. The corporate culture of most of the American firms is not only supportive for women but also pay attention to female talent management. The Scandinavian and the Dutch corporate cultures are also positive about female leadership. We can see that corporate cultures at most of the Hungarian firms in the sample are not inclusive. Either openly or in hidden ways, consciously or unconsciously, women are not considered to have the potential to become good senior managers and leaders. In the sample, the corporate culture of the German firms seems to be closer to Hungarian than to American ones.

Finally, talking about the industries, the most positive firms are the ones where the results of personal contribution are relatively direct and visible. In the sample these are the consulting and servicing firms and the start up companies. In other cases it is not enough that the declared values are positive, at international firms the top management should adopt them to everyday practice. There are firms whose main drive is customers' expectations, and they are very firm in their commitment. Other drives are human rights and value creation. Finally, there are persons and personalities who are devoted and committed to the issue either from the beginning of their professional life or starting later.

IV. Relevance of the Theoretical and Empirical Results

In the context of global competition a number of companies have been realizing that the inclusion of female talent, the devotion to their support and their appointment into senior positions contribute to value creation. Diverse management teams are more flexible and responsive to changes. Management styles recommended by the researcher community show more feminine than masculine stereotypes.

According to the EU statistics, female participation in senior management is only 13 per cent in Hungary. We are far behind the neighbouring countries where this ratio ranges between 20 and 25 per cent. In the sample of my qualitative research I have found that the Hungarian firms – with some exceptions – do not pay attention to this issue. Although I found only one example for open and direct rejection of the idea to appoint women to top positions, I also found others who spoke in positive ways but who never promoted women to senior jobs. I revealed that feature of the culture that a lot of 'theories' are constructed to hide unconscious biases. Instead of turning to social studies to understand the nature of the uncertain feeling, leaders of big firms create ideas that have no scientific basis.

My goal was to contribute to the dialogue about this topic. I have managed that partly with conducting 18 interviews with important decision-makers who started thinking about the topic in somewhat different ways. I have already published an article and I am planning to publish more, not only in academic literature but also in the press. In education we can use the results of this research. This can be an element of the efforts to change the traditional management culture in Hungary. This is particularly true if women in top management act and behave not like queen bees who fight against talented women but in co-operation with men and women to enrich the corporate culture, improve the management style and make the company more successful.

V. Publications

Earlier publications are also included from the area of management and business administration. The first article and all other publications belong to the current research.

1. Journal articles:

1. Dunavölgyi Mária
Women and men in senior management – Key recurring themes and questions
VEZETÉSTUDOMÁNY 47:(5) pp. 64-80. (2016)
2. Dunavölgyi Mária
A külső és belső államadósság egységes kormányzati kezelésének nemzetközi tapasztalatai és magyarországi kezdetei
KÖZGAZDASÁGI SZEMLE 44:(6) pp. 509-520. (1997)
Link(ek): [Teljes dokumentum](#), [Matarka](#)
Folyóiratcikk /Szakcikk /Tudományos
3. Dunavölgyi Mária
Az állampapír-értékesítési módszerek nemzetközi tapasztalatai
KÜLGAZDASÁG 40:(6) pp. 47-55. (1996)
Link(ek): [Matarka](#)
Folyóiratcikk /Szakcikk /Tudományos
4. Dunavölgyi Mária
Önkormányzati pénzek: tökesúly
HVG 18:(12) pp. 127-134. (1996)
Link(ek): [Matarka](#)
Folyóiratcikk /Szakcikk /Tudományos
5. Dunavölgyi Mária
Állampapírpiaç 1995
BANKSZEMLE 40:(1) p. 15. (1996)
Link(ek): [Matarka](#)
Folyóiratcikk /Szakcikk /Tudományos
6. Dunavölgyi Mária
A vállalatok eszköz- és forrásszerkezete a fejlett ipari országokban
KÜLGAZDASÁG 35:(11) pp. 46-56. (1991)
Link(ek): [Matarka](#)
Folyóiratcikk /Szakcikk /Tudományos
7. Dunavölgyi Mária, Sándor György
Nemzetközi adósságsere-ügyletek
GAZDASÁG 23:(1) pp. 127-147. (1989)
Link(ek): [Matarka](#)
Folyóiratcikk /Szakcikk /Tudományos

8. Dunavölgyi Mária

A piac korlátai és a korlátok piacosítása

KÖZGAZDASÁGI SZEMLE 36:(5) pp. 572-584. (1989)

Link(ek): [Matarka](#)

Folyóiratcikk /Szakcikk /Tudományos

9. Dunavölgyi Mária

XV. Magyar Operációkutatási Konferencia

SZIGMA 19:(1-2) pp. 151-152. (1986)

Link(ek): [Matarka](#)

Folyóiratcikk /Szakcikk /Tudományos

2. Conference papers in English:

1. Critical Approaches to the Understanding of Women and Leadership within the Framework of Neoliberal Capitalism – Conference paper (The 8th International Conference in Critical Management Studies, Manchester, Jul 10-12, 2013)
2. Women on Top Management Teams and Boards of CEE Companies – Cultural and Regional Comparison – Conference paper (11th Chemnitz East Forum, 11 – 13 September 2013)
3. Women in Top Management – Conference abstract (IACCM 2013, at Rotterdam, Netherlands)
4. Women in Top Management- conference paper (Ph.D. Student Conference, Corvinus University of Budapest, 2013 május 30.)
5. Women in Top Management in Europe and in the Central and Eastern European Region (EGOS [Paper Development Workshops](#), PDW-02 [SWG-04]: Gender and Diversity)
6. Women in Top Management (EURAM 14th Annual Conference - 15_01 Toward a responsible management of cultural diversity)

3. Conference paper in Hungarian:

1. Nők és férfiak a felsővezetésben – Tanulmány lektorált konferenciakötetben (Közgazdász Kutatók és Doktoranduszok Téli Konferenciája, Pécs, 2014. jan.31.-febr. 1.)

4. Book chapter:

1. A globális értékláncok irányítása – Cikk tanulmánykötetben (szerk.: Czakó Erzsébet, 2014)

5. Popular publications:

1. Cégek kultúra: a jéghegy csúcsa (Manager magazin 2016 február)
2. A sokszínűség előnyei: Központban a férfi – nő dimenzió (Üzlet és Pszichológia, 2013/február, 8. oldal)

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