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Reasons for the Low Female Representation in Senior Management

What Do Senior Decision Makers Say About It?

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PhD Thesis

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Table of Content

Table of Charts and Figures:

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I am very lucky to be a member of a supportive and creative community at the university. My research topic was also received with interest, and my colleagues were key factors in developing my research methodology.

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I Introduction

In this chapter I present the aim of my research on low female representation in senior management. I highlight my professional and personal motivations in choosing this topic. Finally, I introduce the conceptual model of the research design.

I.1 Research Goal

Prior to enrolling on the PhD programme, I acquired many years' experience in corporate management and research. My goal is to show academic insights in a field that has been part of my personal and professional development, which are, therefore, based on my personal experiences and thus add a unique value to my research. I was in the 10 per cent of female minority in senior management for over a decade and a half. Through my experiences, I may be able to uncover some of the underlying reasons of this low representation through my experiences that otherwise would not be unveiled for an outsider, as they require personal involvement and trust. I can provide all advantages that comes from the hands on, personal knowledge on the so-called terrain. This idea is supported by several authors who call attention to the definite benefits of personal experiences in academic studies (Mills, 1959), (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), (Putnam, 1990), (Glense & Peshkin, 1992), (Maxwell, 2013).vision

Due to the complexity of the topic it is examined from a range of angles simultaneously. I chose to approach from the side of management research, using this particular field's terminology and methodology. Unfortunately, management researchers show very moderate dedication to the subject of female minority in senior management, therefore I am trying to build a bridge that covers the gap between these sides.

The tone of this thesis is personal and self-reflexive. In alignment with this tone, I am planning to reveal the route I have chosen to walk, and the outcomes of my decisions throughout my research. During my research I took notes and memos, many parts of which serve as an important source for this thesis. For reasons of validity, reliability and generalization, I have participated in many department consultations where my

colleagues and I discussed the methods used and results attained, and they have been put across.

Kvale 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 cour room (1996, p 259). I also attempted to create a thesis that is both a good read and professional at the same time. In order to reach this goal I tried to write a document that is easy to follow, and the markings I used help the reader navigate in the text. The format may also seem unusual – paragraphs containing my personal observations and methodological descriptions are printed in thinner columns; they look somewhat like notes in a log. When I cited other researchers or interviewees, the columns were also shifted more to the right, and I used *italic* letters to separate them from the rest of the text.

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. My vision is a world where men and women mutually acknowledge each other's strengths and human qualities free of prejudices, where all people, regardless of their gender identities have an equal chance for promotion and appointment, and senior managers work together for mutual benefits.

Figure 1: Female representation in senior management
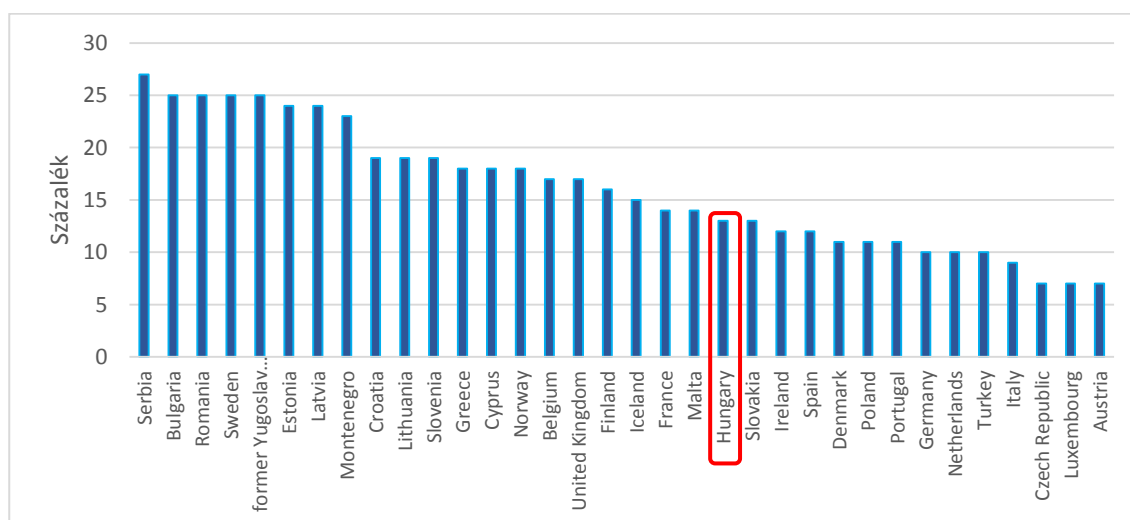
Source of data: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision making/database/business-finance/executives-non-executives/index_en.htm, graph is prepared by the author

The companies covered in the statistics are the largest publicly listed companies in each country. Publicly listed means that the shares of the company are traded on the stock exchange. The "largest" companies are taken to be the members of the primary blue-chip index, which is an index maintained by the stock exchange covering the largest companies by market capitalisation and/or market trades (BUX in Hungary).

> As a former CEO of the Budapest Stock Exchange I know that the representativeness of data is limited by the relatively low capitalization of BCE. I still used this survey because it provides the most useful internationally comparable data on the topic analysed.

If we take a glance on *Figure 1*, we can see that the Hungarian data point to a low, 13 per cent female representation. This is even lower than the European average of 15 per cent and much lower than the female participation in some neighbouring countries. We can see that there is still a lot of work to do to realize my vision, including conducting researches in this field.

Up to this time, results of the research conducted highlight a difference in evaluation between men and women. In conventional thinking, the role of a manager does not match our social norms, traditional thinking does not seem to support women as much as men when taking these leading roles, not to mention the effect of socialisation processes on representatives of each gender. Even leadership theory as a science mostly ignores the issue. Scientific approaches were only stipulated by researchers into gender studies, not by those researching leadership theory.

I have spent the majority of my professional life in the profit-oriented, competitive private sector and closely attached areas, mainly in senior management positions. In order to achieve my aforementioned vision, I consider it my own mission to help reveal senior managers' opinions, ideas, feelings and beliefs on female roles management and teamwork. I believe, if I could uncover the motives and feelings of these decision-makers in high corporate positions, it would add valuable material to the academic discussion of the topic.

I.2   Choice of Topic

I am fortunate to be one of the few people who, even before enrolling on their PhD studies, had a clear idea of their future research topic. In my case, even a lot my spontaneous researches and readings I completed in decades were all about it. This enabled me to match my PhD studies with research, which in fact did help one another.

> My interest in the topic started at the mathematics faculty at high school where I was surprised to find one girl for every two (or even more) boys in each class, and wished to know the reason for it.

As it happened to many in my generation, I became a senior manager after the political changes in Hungary in 1990. It was unique, however, that I attained this role as a woman. I participated in committee and board meetings as the only woman, or one of the few in the best case. I did not feel that special at all to be able to easily explain the phenomenon.

> It was a crucial, surprising moment when two other women and me, as representatives of the Government Debt Management Agency, met the representatives of twenty-two leading financial institutions, who were forty-four men altogether. The other surprise came when, on another occasion, we met with back office heads, who were almost solely women.

> As the chief executive of the Budapest Stock Exchange, I always sat with men at the board meetings. Representatives of large investor or issuer companies were also solely men. My experiences were similar when at Deloitte I was almost the only woman partner within the Hungarian, regional and international partners, when I worked as the chief executive of one of the OTP Bank's subsidiaries, and as the chairwoman of the Hungarian Leasing Association.

I read a lot about the subject, participated in different meetings. I was also interviewed several times asked to talk about my experiences. Therefore, when it came to deciding upon my PhD research topic, which is important to me and may be of use for others as well, after a short period of hesitation, disregarding many other topics about financial

management, I decided to choose the research topic of male and female gender roles along with their other issues in senior management.

I.3   Research Design

Designing my research, first I used Maxwell's (2013) guidelines alongside his five-part model, and Andras Gelei's (2013) revised plan for illustration purposes. Then as my research moved forward I made my own alterations and amendments to these models.

Figure 2: Research design
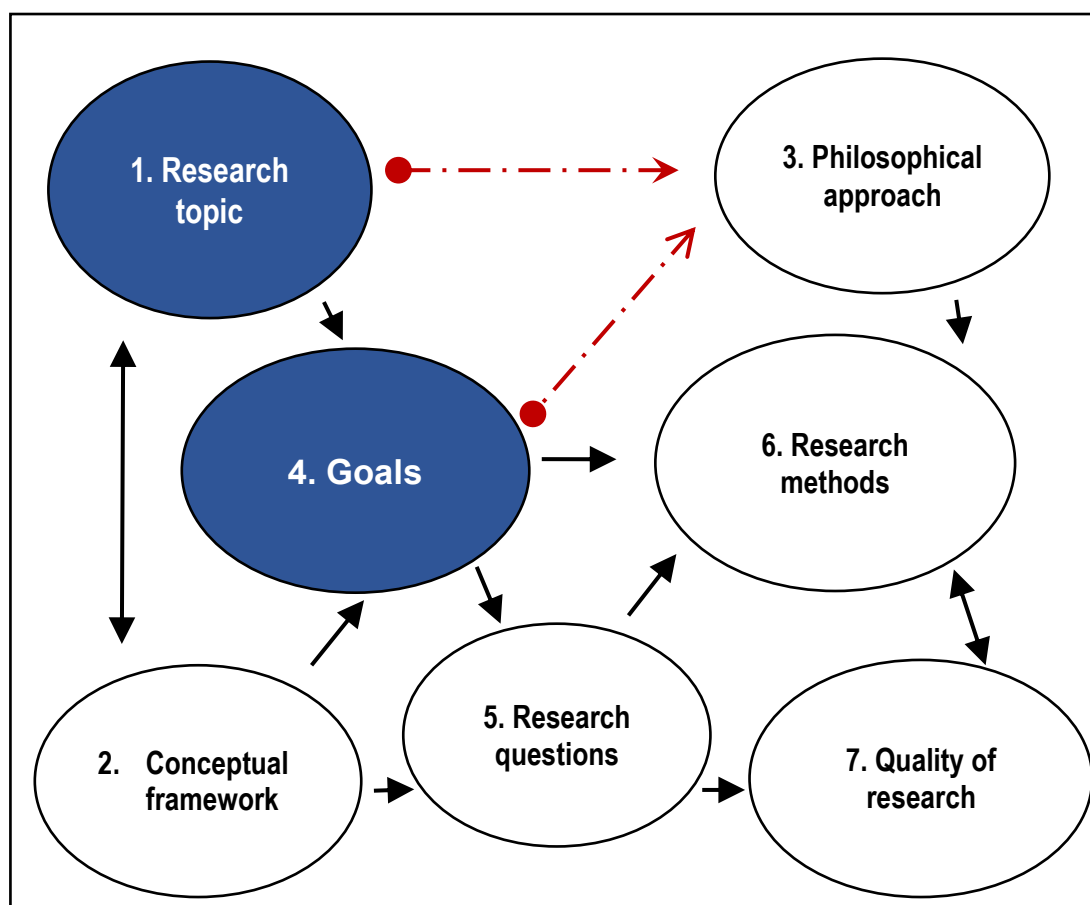
The base model, as it is seen in the Appendix is made up of seven logically attached parts, which all symbolise important points of decision and consideration. The programme below, henceforth referred to as the „Base Model", presumes that the

researcher should first define their field or topic of research (1.), then examine the conceptual background (2.) which refers back to the topic itself (1.). Based on these two resources, the philosophical standpoint gets established (3.), followed by the research goals (4.).

In the case of my own research, however, for the aforementioned reasons, the order of the steps changed. The research topic made itself clear long before I had become familiar with the philosophical aspects, therefore as *Figure 2* shows some changes were made in the design. The logical connection between the philosophical standpoint (3.) and the aim of research (4.) changed direction (shown by a different arrow), and in the case of my research topic, it became one-way.

II   Philosophical Standpoint

In this chapter I present my research assumptions about ontology, epistemology and paradigms. I share my experience in choosing research paradigm and the key aspects of the decision making process. I formulate the initial version of the research questions i.e. the „intellectual puzzle" (Mason, 2005, old.: 15).

II.1 Ontology, Epistemology and Paradigms

After defining my research topic and goals, I had to find philosophical standpoints to start my work (*Figure 2* piece 3.). I needed to decide which way to choose, whether to approach from an epistemological or an ontological point of view.

> Ontology is the branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature, reasons, reality or essence of being or existence. It can be actual or potential. The word itself is composed of the parts „on", meaning existent, and „logos", word, speech, theory, in Ancient Greek, together meaning philosophy of existence, philosophy of life.

> Epistemology means „theory of knowledge", composed of parts originating from Ancient Greek: „episteme", means experiential knowledge, and „logos" – word, speech, theory. It examines the origins, nature, patterns, limitations of knowledge and tries to explain and interpret questions about beliefs, knowledge, argumentation and scepticism.

Ontological and epistemological questions mainly concern my thesis when it comes to scientific paradigm discussions. Kuhn interpreted scientific research paradigm as follows:

> *„By this I understand the results, that at a certain time, for a certain circle of scientific researchers, serve as a basis for their problems and the solutions for these problems."* (Kuhn, 1984, p.: 30. Translation from the Hungarian original).

Kuhn's theory sparked a huge debate (Laudan, 1977) (Lakatos, 1978), (Hacking, 1985), (Morgan, 1986), (Acemoglu & Angrist, 2000) and (Primecz H. , 2008), throughout

which the coexistence or incompatibility of paradigms, incommensurability, content, and role came to discussion. The term „paradigm" therefore, gains its meaning by its usage and context. Thus, it can be used as a metaparadigm, a term that spans over disciplines and eras of science, while some researchers also choose the term as a title of their research programmes.

There are, however, some schools that deny paradigms altogether and put more emphasis on slow, evolutionistic development and the importance of falsification; like Popper (1997) and his followers.

This also means that the interpretation of a given phenomenon relies greatly on the underlying paradigms, that is, on what presumptions the research is being built on, from what basis we start off our research. By covering the same topic while relying on different paradigms we can come to different results as we examine the same subject from different angles. Thus, research paradigms, – implicitly or explicitly – define what we consider reality and what are relevant questions that are worthy of attention. They have an impact on defining our aims, goals, research patterns to use and on considerations whether our research was successful or not.

For my own research I chose the approach that accepts paradigm as a general view and way of thinking that provides us with basic beliefs and convictions. These beliefs and convictions refer to the essence of reality (ontology) and human nature and its studiability (methodology), as seen in (Giota and Pitre, 1990.)

I also accepted the fact that many paradigms may coexist and they may all be utilised, regardless of their differences, for the examination of the same phenomena. My duty was, then, to choose which side to take when using different paradigms. It is, therefore, important to acknowledge that in different paradigms different things might count as „theory" and different things might constitute it, and one must choose the system of paradigms they use accordingly. Similarly, an approach using several paradigms may lead to dissimilar answers since they examine and interpret things differently.

If we regard the world as a multidimensional shape, we see that reality can only be examined – taking a mathematical metaphor – alongside partial derivates, that is, through focusing on segments of the several aspects. If approaching dimensions are

different not only in ways and scopes, but also in philosophy, we might find that their beliefs of reality are just as different. There are some that measure, count and define. But then again, there are others that examine how visible spheres are made and how they are altered by people. These approaches also have many shades and variations.

Morgan and Smircich in their article show the network of basic assumptions characterizing the subjective – objective debate within social science (Morgan & Smircich, 1980, p. 492)**.** As to describe the two endpoints, they chose to describe them with metaphors such as „transcendental" and „machine".

In my research, I picked two of their six-step scale of perspectives:

- the objectivist extreme, that is, the one described with the „machine" metaphor, advocates of which see reality as an outside world that does not depend on the observer;

- and one standpoint on the subjectivist side, which is not extremist at all though, that regards reality as a continuous social interaction along the metaphors such as „accomplishment, language game, text", which all depend on the observer as well.

II.2 Philosophical Aspects and Approaches

Reading a number of articles and conference scripts on leadership theories, I could see that even though the subjectivist approach is gaining more and more in popularity, it is still the objectivist approach which is more popular with researchers.

As for me, I have participated in such research. When I enrolled to the PhD program, this project was not unknown to me. Between my corporate career and my university studies I worked as a researcher in Budapest and New York. I became familiar with many different research methods and I used them as well. I participated in many fruitful meetings and conferences, and I also had the chance to publish my own articles.

Following my interest in mathematics, I conducted objectivist econometric analysis built mathematical models and identified statistical relations between

numeric data. The topic of my first, doctor univ. dissertation was also on econometrics.

At my next workplace, at the UN's headquarters in New York I used objectivist mathematical-statistical methods to examine the income inequalities in the world. Later, back at home, I analysed exchange rate volatilities and trade volumes at the securities market, as well as risk and liquidity premia and studied game theory for designing government security auctions.

At that time the positivist, objectivist approach was the only way of research I knew. This approach takes social reality the same way as it does natural science. In this theory, social and institutional is defined by cause and consequence relations, general laws, and social structures. I assumed that this approach offered an objective basis, and I could remain an outsider, an observer, examining reality regardless of subject.

As a consequence, explanations became of central importance. The target was to find the most relevant explanations of general rules regarding social reality and universal mechanisms by describing mathematical-statistical relations in a set of − the most adequate possible − variables. In this sense, human behaviour patterns, both on a collective and personal level − regardless of whether they are the one who examines or the one who is examined − is regarded to be independent from the agent's consciousness (that is, it stays objective), therefore, they consider their actions as a result of external laws and regularities. In this sense, this kind of reality is denoted as „deterministic" by Astley (1983) and Blaikie (2007).

On the contrary, the subjectivist concept views organizational reality as something that cannot be seen and studied directly. It is not the observable phenomena that constitute the essence of organizations but the meanings and interpretations that are being formed in intersubjective processes, i.e. by way of interactions and communication. Therefore, reality is continually being constructed, maintained and changed in and through meanings that emerge in interactions. Thus organization research is possible only through the study of interactions, interpretations and meanings (Silverman, 1970), (Astley and Van de Ven, 1983), (Marsden & Townley , 1996), (Drótos, 1999).

The subjectivist concept adheres more to a given place and time (in a certain society, group, organisation etc.) and it looks for answers as to how local constructions and interpretations emerge – this is why its central concept is understanding.

It is important to note, however, that we are not talking about an idealist-subjectivist approach here, which would take the human mind as a basis for everything existent, or would deny a reality that exists independently from the individual. It is not the individual, but the society, the collective, what counts as the base unit for defining, explaining and assigning meanings to reality. It is not the independent, sole individual that would be able to redefine the historically, socially and constructionally built – and therefore collective and cultural – reality.

Many hardcoded and institutionalised mechanisms work just this way in society (customs, law, market, media, religion, education etc.) as in organisations (I. e. formal and informal hierarchy, rules and orthodox behaviours, strategies, parts of organised culture) and other views, like ideas about women. It is important though to note that these mechanisms always have local relevance, and local influence.

II.3   Choice of Approach

The professional literature, consultations and debates with my colleagues and my experience helped me in the decision between the two approaches.

> Even if I was an objectivist researcher working with quantitative data and analysis, my interests, gradually started to change. After finishing my university studies, beyond macroeconomic analyses I participated in conducting more and more qualitative surveys that led me to the „micro" side of the world and enabled me to adopt a more subjectivist way of thinking. After a while I also took part in panel discussions with industry leaders four times a year in the research institute I worked. Subjectivist, qualitative, imperative analyses were carried out. I have also participated in qualitative research based on interviews, which had brought the experience and excitement of discovering the hidden dimensions of corporate realities.

While working for the UN, at first I was interested solely in mathematical-statistical analyses, later, however, my interests turned from GDP-based approaches towards other welfare indicators that lie closer to showing the quality of everyday life. And even later on I became interested in how families' and people's everyday lives was reflected by different qualitative methods of welfare statistics.

When working on securities markets I paid more and more attention to the fact that behind each transaction there are individual decisions, made by individual investors with individual considerations in their minds. Discovering bounded rationality has become a new way for me to understand such phenomena.

As a consequence of my previous research experience, when I decided upon the research topic of disproportionate male/female representation in senior management, the methods and the approaches of both standpoints were to some extent already known to me.

One of the greatest added value of the PhD programme was the clarification and enrichment of my philosophical views. The empirical, intuitive feelings and views have thus been replaced by a higher-level, better-organised more sophisticated level of knowledge. On this basis I could decide on the ontological and epistemological concepts of my research.

The table published in one of Gelei's articles (Gelei 2006, p. 83.) based on Morgan and Smircich quoted method (1980, p. 492) helped me to make the choice on philosophic approach. In the table Gelei compared the starting points of objectivist and subjectivist approaches along with their views, implications and research methods from the aspect of organization studies. The table focuses on organisation studies. This is in line of my own research which is about organisations, where female representation is only 13 percent. I adjusted some details of the table to my research topic.

The first choice (see *Figure 3*) – whether in my research I would adopt the approach that the reality I am examining is a concrete structure that is independent from the researcher, or that is in fact a social construction – was challenging to decide. Originally I was considering quantitative data analysis. The fact, however, that the issues related to

the research topic are deeply embedded in culture encouraged me to conduct some sort of survey to collect information about individual opinions. I could have applied large sample survey, but my early experiences in the Economic Research Institute highlighted for me the benefits of personal interviews in understanding complex phenomena.

Figure 3: Choosing between objectivist and subjectivist approaches

Assumptions	Objectivist approach	Research Characteristics	Subjectivist approach
Core Ontological Assumptions (study of existence) *What is reality?*	Reality as a given structure, independent from the observer Reality is a concrete structure	Objectivist Subjectivist Subjectivist	Social-institutional reality; symbolical, cultural, linguistic, underlying meaning Social construction patterns – communication, interaction, persuasion, coping Locally defined reality
Epistemology (study of knowledge) *How to seize reality?* *What is*	Knowledge /aim: Uncovering and forecasting general laws (reasoning) Etic approach: using generalised terms to explain the specific The researcher is an outsider, free of any	Subjectivist Subjectivist Subjectivist	Knowledge /aim: understanding (meaning-understanding) local meanings (What does this mean here in particular?) and reality construction methods (How does this come here?); reasoning for meaning (What is its reason here in particular?) Emic approach: using local terms to explain the specific (or the general)

knowledge?	presumptions		The research / researcher is always
		Subjectivist	subjective and biased, Research
	Leaves		may change institutionalised reality
	institutions intact		

Source: Gelei's chart (2006, p.: 83.), adapted, used with the author's permission

In case of epistemology it was much easier to find the answers that matched my research ideas, and they all belong to the subjectivist approach. It can clearly be seen from the table that the characteristics of my own research – as I have identified them one by one – all show similarities with the subjectivist philosophy.

Nevertheless, the initial dilemma shed light on two important points. One of them is that the two approaches coexist without any problem in my mind, and the way I conduct the research depends on the nature of the given aspect and the accessible data.

Another important revelation was that for reasons of time and space I could not conduct all the research I was originally planning. In future, however, I may conduct an objectivistic research analysing the reasons for low representations of women in senior management using quantitative data analysis and statistical methods to find relations with explanatory factors.

> Such research topic would be for example the one I presented at a conference, which covered the negative correlation between the representation of women in senior management and the number of owners of SMEs. This fact suggests that women, if faced with inadequate promotion possibilities, may leave a firm and turn to other sectors, thus big companies, unwilling to give leading roles to women, lose their talented female managers.

The comparison summarized in *Figure 3* made it clear for me that in the case of this research my attitude towards the topic was not only mainly subjectivist but it also suggested me conduct an emic research.

For the emic approach, the important parts are those unique for a specific culture (Den Hartog et al., 1999). Interpretations are usually left for the locals, as emic research

builds on the assumption that a given culture could be best learnt through its own interpretations, and through revealing inner connections (Primecz, 2006.). Even though the focus of interpretations turns towards local phenomena, generalization is still possible. (Máramarosi-Takács, 1998). What is more, in emic research, the researcher becomes an insider.

Emic research generally follows the logic of ethnographic studies: It relies mainly on observation, sometimes on unstructured (or semi structured) interviews (Morey-Luthans, 1984). Local interpretations are put into the focus, which may give answers to questions that have not even been asked by the researcher because of the lack of knowledge about them – it is easy to come across surprises and new information.

This, however, does not aim to exclude etic approach from the research completely, I only intended to define the mainstream. Although the majority of researchers tend to stand ground when it comes to the choice between etic or emic approach, many researchers still accept the results of the other approach.

In the last few rows of *Figure 3* one can find statements about the connection between the researcher and the interviewees. It is especially important that the qualitative researcher be aware, as much as possible, of his/her own basic assumptions, mental models and potential sources of his/her perceptual biases. This requires a high level of self-awareness and a continuous practice of self-reflection.

II.4 Research Questions – the Intellectual Puzzle

Getting back to the research design (*Figure 2*), we can see that by taking the inspiration sparked by the theoretical background (2.) and the goal of research (4.), we can confidently formulate the research questions.

For editorial reasons, the detailed description of the theoretical background is found in the next chapter. This is why the first version of my research questions – interpreted as „intellectual puzzle" by Mason (2005, p.: 15.) - is found here, and, if necessary, I shall alter or revise it with respect to the theoretical background.

In order to formulate the research questions there is one more issue to clarify. Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan (1979) defined four paradigms for the analysis of social and organizational reality and placed them in a matrix of 2 by 2 (see *Figure 4*). We have just covered the horizontal dimension. The vertical dimensions are about the "social order versus regulation" theories of society and organizations. By presuming the reconcilability of various interests, the assumption of "regulation" considers consensus and harmony among different organizational parties possible, and it deems the maintenance of order and internal stability as the principal challenge. Regulation and order can be ensured by continuous organizational adaptation, by creating a so-called "dynamic equilibrium" of the organization (Katz and Kahn, 1966; Lewin, 1975). A "radical change" view has an opposite position since it deems organizational reality fundamentally full of contradictions and tensions, in which a seeming stability can only be maintained by force and oppression and where a fight among different groups and classes (may) result in revolutionary changes.

Figure 4: Paradigms in social sciences
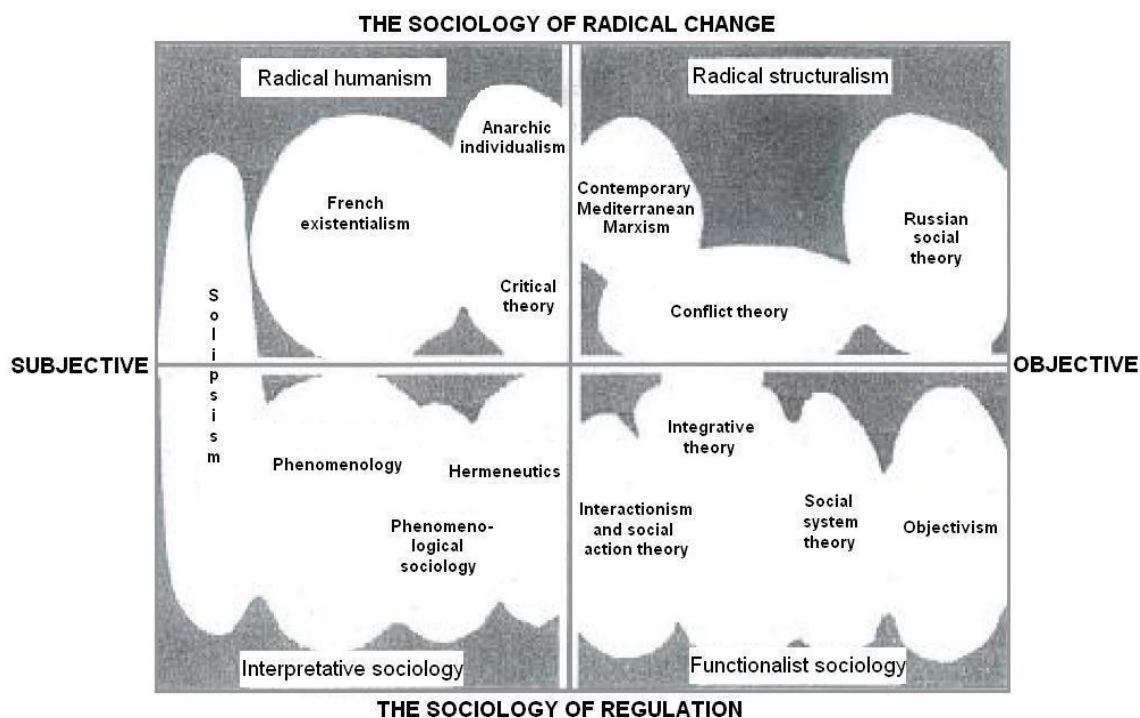
Figure 2.1. *The four sociological paradigms (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, 29)*

This chart has been heavily criticised, from all sides, for its contents and editing. Alvesson & Deetz (1999, p.: 19.) made a chart where the parts they deemed problematic were replaced by different endpoints, and as a result, the entire chart got a different focus. The vertical axis, which is important in this research, was given new headlines „denial" and „acceptance". The authors, as they explained in the text accompanying the chart, however, made it clear that „acceptance" was an umbrella term for anything that is not complete opposition. This was important for me, because, even though I do not have revolutionary ambitions, it is a definite goal of mine to help this present situation move forward.

The purpose of my research is to explore the construction processes related to low female participation in senior management in order to enhance positive communication about the topic and improve the situation.

Men – women, male–female equality, mainstreaming, emancipation are all topics covered by a wide spectrum of studies, academic articles as well as by the mass media including printed press, radio, television and the electronic channels, portals. Different attitudes. opinions and actions are attached to that. When it comes to female representation in senior management, I may be faced with many, sometimes extreme, reactions.

My research relies on the assumption that the participation of female representatives in senior management can increase peacefully. My goal is to produce a research paper that might hopefully contribute to the players' understanding of themselves and also each other. I believe that a deeper understanding of reality construction patterns would help in this process.

Research questions:

1. General question: What is the reason for the low female representation in senior management?

2. Specific question: How are issues related to low female participation in senior management constructed by members of senior management teams (CEOs and board members)?

The goal is to promote mutual understanding and reduce the amount of prejudices, negative feelings presumptions and unconscious biases related to female senior managers. Therefore, my research is not of a solely descriptive nature that regards the actual status quo („How are things?"), but also focuses on patterns of change („How should things be?"; „How are things meant to be?").

II.5 Methodology

According to the research design (see *Figure 2*), after I defined the research topic (1.) and goal (4.), clarified the philosophical approach (3.) and identified the research questions, it was time to select the most appropriate methodology (6.).

As we can see in *Figure 5*, there is no deterministic relation between the philosophical approach and the research methods and techniques. One does not automatically follow from the other and vice versa, the philosophical approach cannot be deduced automatically from the research method either.

Figure 5: **Philosophical approaches and research methods**

	Subjectivist approach (+)	**Choice** (+/-)	**Objectivist approach** (-)
Qualitative methods	• Semi-structured interview • Empathetic analysis of interviews • Action research • Preparing research diary • "Identity memo" • Use of metaphors • Drawing mind maps	+ + - + + + +	• Structured interview • Content analysis • Quantitative survey, interview
Quantitative methods	• Data and stats describing the research question and research conditions • Questionnaire containing open questions	+ -	• Large sample data collection, analysis, modelling • Controlled experiment • Formalised, standard procedures, tests, • Repeatability

Source: Prepared by the author

. At the same time, it is no coincidence that one diagonal of the chart contains far more examples than the other. It is easier to pair for example quantitative methods with objectivistic approach while the subjectivist orientation is served by more qualitative techniques (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) tools.

From the methods applicable for subjectivist research, I considered the quantitative methods first. I considered the followings:

- (+) There was a need for numerical data to measure the ratio of female participation in senior management. There were other quantitative elements, too, in the course of further research, such as simple comparisons and ratios expressing empirical facts and highlighting relevant and important circumstances.
- (-) I rejected the idea of a questionnaire with open questions as this would not have given insight enough to understand the reality creation processes in detail.

Qualitative methods were carefully evaluated:

- (+) Semi-structured interviews were in line with my goals, because my aim was to understand the interviewees' "life world", and to see reality (and the research topic) from their perspective as much as possible. Semi-structured interview is a widespread method in leadership research. According to a review by Bryman (2004), 56 out of 66 qualitative surveys, fully or at least partially applied this methodology.
- (+) Empathetic analysis does not focus on explanations, contrary to objectivistic analysis, but instead, it seeks to understand lifestyles and looks for interpretations.
- (-) Action research was not feasible for my research, unfortunately, since the busy schedule of those people whom I intended to involve in my research made it hardly possible to conduct one.
- (+) Writing a research diary is a useful tool in achieving research targets. I targeted self-reflexivity, for which it was quite helpful to write a diary. Some parts of my notes and memos I inserted to the research document.
- (+) „Identity memo" (Maxwell, 2013), which sums up the researcher's personal motives for choosing the topic as well as motivations and targets. My memos can be found in the first chapters, many times separated from the main text, printed in thinner columns. Besides, at the beginning of my empirical research a colleague of mine also recorded an interview with me about my targets and motives.

- (+) The use of metaphors helps to give a condensed representation of complex phenomena and concepts (Morgan, 1986) (e.g.: glass ceiling, labyrinth). Metaphors are often used for explaining certain aspects of cultures, because they represent „conceptual windows which help the organizational analyst gain better access to rich avenues of meaning" (Chia, 1996, p. 128).

- (+) Mind maps had already been prepared for the presentation of my research design, and there were also opportunities in later stages of my research to display some of the results through them.

In summary it can be said that beyond using statistical data and simple analyses to present the research topic, I mainly applied qualitative methods in the course of my research. In line with the goals of my work, the research primarily targets understanding, therefore I preferred methods serving this objective. My intention to change the current situation was an indirect target, the implementation of which may only be possible through understanding and interpreting the interviews and sharing the results.

In concordance with all this, hermeneutic and phenomenological analysis was given extra emphasis in order to bring hidden content and elements of reality construction to surface. Hermeneutics is the field of study concerned with interpreting hidden content in texts, the science of textual interpretation.

> *"Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word "hermeneuein" (utterance, interpretation, explanation). It refers to Hermes, the messenger of gods from ancient Greek mythology."* (Cs Komlósi, 2016).

The goal of hermeneutical interpretation is that it goes beyond a structuring of the manifest meanings of a text into deeper and more or less speculative interpretations of the text. The analysis happens in hermeneutical cycles, with the interpretation deeper with each cycle (Kvale, 1996).

> *"Phenomenology is a philosophical movement that describes the formal structure of the objects of awareness and of awareness itself in abstraction from any claims concerning existence"* (Merriam Webster dictionary)

Phenomenology intends to reach beyond perceived phenomena to make the invisible visible. It examines the perspective of its subjects' lifestyles. This method capitalises on the unique and privileged opportunity of accessing other people's realities via qualitative research interviews.

My research was not about one corporation in particular, neither it is about corporations in general, but about a phenomenon to be observed in the corporate world: low female representation in senior management. I included companies from the highly competitive, profit-oriented private sector in my research.

I interviewed chief corporate executives and board members, who make decisions about senior managers' appointments. From a hermeneutical point of view, I applied an interpretative framework that could well be used for understanding the views, ideas, believes and practice of decisions makers, aiming at a complex and elaborate analysis of not only the explicit but also the hidden meanings.

I accept the assumption that organizational reality as a part of reality is a social construction (Bouwen, 1990). That means that organizations are social-relational and, even more, mental-cognitive constructions, and not at all tangible, measurable phenomena that could be directly experienced. Organizations do create their internal and external environment and, collective action becomes possible on the basis of collective interpretive schemas and cognitive maps. Senior managers participate in the construction process and influence the common reality of their firm and also the wider environment. Their role is particularly important because "reality" of those whose influencing power is greater prevails in defining "common" reality (Gelei, 2006).

My personal experience from my top manager time also supports this view - corporate reality is in fact created, sustained and altered by meanings stemming from interactions. The actual reality of organisations "exists" in people's minds, feelings, identities, intentions, interests and interactions.

Further details about the methodology are discussed in chapter IV where the preparation for the empirical research is presented.

III   The Literature Review

In this chapter - to the extent possible - I review the literature focusing on the relationship between management and gender. Within the firm constraints of the PhD thesis I present definitions, theories and empirical research results. I cover not only feminine issues but also some aspects of masculinity research.

As it is presented in *Figure 2* due to my early choice of research topic (1.) and research target (4.) the review of the study of the theoretical framework (2.) was very focussed and the one-way direction between fazes (2.) and (1.) became a two-way relation.

It may sound as an oversimplification that I write in the dimension of men and women - the reason for this is the intention to emphasise the domineering relations in my research. I know many other ways to perceive and experience gender and gender roles and I am aware of the diversity as to how it is being handled by academic researchers. One example is queer theory, which

> "questions the usage of such straightforward notions like "man" or "woman", and regards the hardly compatible, transitional forms of sex, gender and sexuality. *[...]* as a subject worth examining." (Hadas, 2010, old.: 15.)

I am also in the know of the fact that minority and diversity issues far outreach the issue of gender, however, for reasons of space limitations, this research does not go beyond the discussion of this latter.

III.1 Basic concepts, definitions

In order to provide clear distinctions between the everyday meanings and terminological interpretations of terms, definitions were defined for the concepts (see *Figure 6*).

III.1.1 Leadership: Definitions, Roles and Stereotypes

In everyday language, the word "leadership" is used implicitly and intuitively, with attributes that vary from person to person. However, leadership as an academic research topic is a highly complex phenomenon. Its scientific definition was given by different

approaches with an emphasis on different aspects, such as function, behaviour, style and role. It may focus, for example, on information processing, decision making, leaders' traits, followers, the role of power, culture, and group dynamics.

Leadership and management denote two different concepts. The latest definition was by Kotter, who writes:

> "*Management is about coping with complexity. Leadership is about coping with change*" (Kotter, 2001, p. 86).

Consequently, those in leadership function provide vision while they also direct, inspire and motivate people. Leaders in managerial function deal with daily complex tasks. Of course, the two functions may also be fulfilled by one person, and boards can also do such tasks.

For leadership, Rost (1991) found more than 200 definitions published between 1990 and 1990. By their sheer volume, these definitions - plus the ones which have been formulated since then - may only be interpreted in a certain framework, out of which I chose the historical overview. Having reviewed numerous articles, I concluded that in this respect there is a consensus among authors about the changes of the concept of leadership. From the available sources, for the discussion of theories and definitions I chose the relevant article from „The SAGE Handbook of Leadership" (Grint, 2014) as well as Gyula Bakacsi's (2002) book.

There is a correlation between business environments in which the company operates and successful leadership styles. The world - as we all know - has sped up. Global businesses, day-to-day innovations in technology and international competition have changed the world. Where are the times when Henry Ford could say "any customer can have a car painted any colour that he wants so long as it's black"?

A further important conclusion of leadership research is that the changes in content and definition of leadership do not solely react on changes in economic processes, but they have also been affected by changes in zeitgeist, shaped along the processes in society, culture and politics.

Though the analyses could go back to 3000 BC, it is sufficient for my research to focus on the twentieth century. At the turn of the century, with the birth of modern industry and mass production, the first form of one of the decisive schools called scientific management, was created by Taylor and Ford. In the centre there are apt leaders who, knowing what is to be done, give clear orders to their subordinates while keeping tight control over the processes. For them, the source of organisational efficiency is the system rather than the human.

The other important school in the 1920s and 1930s, is the "human relations" theory that was based on experiments conducted in General Electric Hawthorn, which emphasised the human factor and work culture. One of the most emblematic advocates of this theory was Mayo.

What happened later may be interpreted as alternating manifestations of these two basic schools. All in all, a grouping of theories can be made along a simple guiding principle - other groupings would be possible of course - that a theory either belongs to scientific management or culture-related issues are in its focal point. Central to this approach is the consideration and shaping of control, based on the definition of leadership and conscious realisations, or the norms of corporate culture.

According to Grint's (2014, old.: 12.) definition, the essence of the scientific approach to leadership is the belief that leadership is a question of knowledge, and decisions are based on rational analysis and understanding. The leader and the individual is in focus rather than community and corporate culture. He lists the following models into this group:

- 1910s, 1920s: Scientific Management
- 1950s, 1960s: situational model adapting to the circumstances (Contingency Theory), System Analysis, Self-Actualization (Maslow and McGregor).
- 1990s: BPR, Psychometrics competencies, Emotional Intelligence, Benchmarking, Targets, New Public Management.

Culture-based approaches are characterised by leading along the cultural norms and values of the organisation instead of rules. Inspirational missions and proclamation of visions are important elements. He lists the following models into this group:

- 1930s, 1940s: experiments in Hawthorne, theory of Human Relations + search for leadership traits + stress on charisma
- 1980s: Corporate Culture, Transformational leadership, Quality Circles, Total Quality Management, Delayering
- 2000s: Distributed Leadership, Followership, Identity, Mission-Command

Another important guiding principle of grouping leadership approaches is the intensity of centralisation and decentralisation. All models of the first half of the twentieth century can be regarded as having been centralised, also the ones between 1990 and 2000, whereas the models between 1950 and 1980 and after 2000 were decentralised. (Grint, 2014, old.: 11.)

This wide palette above tells us about what people considered the main function and definitive method of leadership throughout the past century. The details important for my research are discussed later.

At this point I accept Gyula Bakacsi's (2002, old.: 184) statement as a general definition for leadership: "an element of leadership activity which,

- of all resources of an organisation, deals especially with human resources (looking for the types of relations between leaders and followers)
- and it also refers to the ability by virtue of which the leader can influence and motivate the members of the organisation towards realising the objectives."

This summary may be complemented by stating that leadership (Northouse, 2013) is

- a social construction process which involves influencing,
- and the objectives may appear as joint objectives or assignments.

There are two more concepts that are important for my research: leadership stereotypes and leadership roles:

- while leadership stereotypes are beliefs about the psychological traits of leaders,
- leadership roles are beliefs about the behaviours that are appropriate for leaders.

III.1.2 Sex and Gender: Definitions, Roles and Stereotypes

Similarly, to the words used for leadership and management the terms we use for sexes, men and women are not expressive enough to denote the conceptual system of scientific understanding accurately. Gender studies are such a field, therefore the scientific definition of "sex" calls for the definition of (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008) "gender" (Unger, 1979), (Calás & Smircich, 1996), (Archer & Lloyd, 2002), (Powell and Graves, 2003), (Lippa, 2005), "gender stereotypes" (Gherardi S. , 1994), (Kite at al., 2008) and "gender roles" (Eagly, et al., 2000), (Wood & Eagly, 2010).

The term "sex" is generally used to refer primarily to the categories of male and female (in a wider sense, the term "sex" also covers other forms of identities or personal preferences). "Sex" refers to people's biological characteristics that denote their physiological make-up and reproductive status (Powell and Graves, 2003).

At the same time, "gender" is a societal and cultural construction. It refers to more than just biological sex (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008). In other words, the term „gender" is applied mostly as a socio-cultural construction (Calás & Smircich, 1996) of the categories „masculine" and „feminine" based on what society culturally considers to be appropriate attributes and behaviour for a man or a woman (Unger, 1979).

Furthermore „gender" is used to refer to the psychosocial implications of being male or female, such as beliefs and expectations about the kinds of attitudes, values, skills and behaviours appropriate for or typical of one sex as opposed to the other (Archer & Lloyd, 2002; Lippa, 2005) including feelings, behaviour and interests.

> *„We "do gender" while we are at work, while we produce an organizational culture and its rules governing what is fair in the relationship between the sexes"* (Gherardi, 1994, p.: 591).

Many authors define the categories „masculine" and „feminine" as beliefs about gender stereotypes (Eagly, et al., 2000), (Kite at al., 2008) and (Wood & Eagly, 2010).

By the definition of the authors above - similar to that about leaders - gender stereotypes represent beliefs about the psychological traits that are characteristic of the members of

each sex, whereas gender roles represent beliefs about the behaviours that are appropriate for members of each sex.

Structuring the conceptual spectrum makes it possible to differentiate "female" from "feminine" and "male" from "masculine". "Female masculinity" and "male femininity" have thus become interpretable notions.

*Figure 6***:** *Summary of basic concepts*

Leader roles	beliefs about the psychological traits that are characteristic of leaders
Leader stereotypes	beliefs about the behaviours that are appropriate for leaders
Leader	provides vision, directs, inspires and motivates people
Manager	manages assignments in connection with the coping with complexity
Sex	refers to biological characteristics: physiological make-up and reproductive status
Gender	a societal and cultural construction, refers to more than just biological sex categories. feminine, masculine
Gender roles	beliefs about the psychological traits that are characteristic of the members of each gender
Gender stereotypes	beliefs about the behaviours that are appropriate for members of each gender.

Source: prepared by the author

As there has been much talk about stereotypes and feminine traits, some researchers deem it important to stress that they regard women executives an inhomogeneous group

(Joecks., Pull., & Vetter, 2012). Each woman is unique with different values and characteristics to the rest of the sub-group (Huse et al., 2009) (Nielsen & Huse, 2010).

Masculinity studies have been also dealing with definition issues, at least since recently. The most striking fact for me which later made sense was that the definition of masculinity had not even existed until the last third of the twentieth century. It has only been since the 1960s and 1970s that approaches appeared which began to consider earlier, bodiless and sexless entities of rational thinking as beings who have both bodies and sexes (not only biological sexes but also genders). Besides, the definition implicitly refers to the fact that without female studies and the paradigm shift after the second wave of feminism this field would not have been born. Masculinity studies consider masculinity and its social construction as a specific human experience that defined historically and culturally by gender relations and worthy of reflexion (Hadas, 2009).

III.2 The Analytical Framework

The literature about women and leadership is vast. Researchers of women issues have published many books and articles on issues of leadership and the low female representation therein. Masculinity studies also came to important conclusions in management related issues.

Leadership studies bestow less consideration to the male/female topic on their part. Apart from a few exceptions, they disregard relevant issues in both theory and empirical research. My approach, however, focuses primarily on leadership studies.

> „Although management researchers no longer exclude female managers from their samples, many of the existing theories of leadership were developed with male managers in mind. However, most theories refer to feminine and sex-neutral as well as masculine characteristics." (Powell, 2012, p. 129.)

Due to the fact that my approach is leadership oriented, later in this chapter I will review – following Powell's last remark – leadership theories, that refer in any form to gender characteristics.

In looking for guiding principles at the time I began my research, I studied the analytic framework prepared by Alvesson & Billing (1997) , which structured certain dimensions of the complex relations between women and management (see *Figure 7*). 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.

This approach came to be the guiding principle of this chapter, a map that can always be referred to when orientation is needed. Beginning with the definition of some key terms, the discussion follows the structure of the matrix.

*Figure 7***:** *Approaches to analysing the relationship between women and management*

	Ethical/political considerations (equality, humanisation)	
Emphasis on gender equality	**Equal opportunities** / **Alternative values** — **Meritocracy** - / **Special contributions**	**Emphasis on gender differences**
	Emphasis on organisation efficiency	
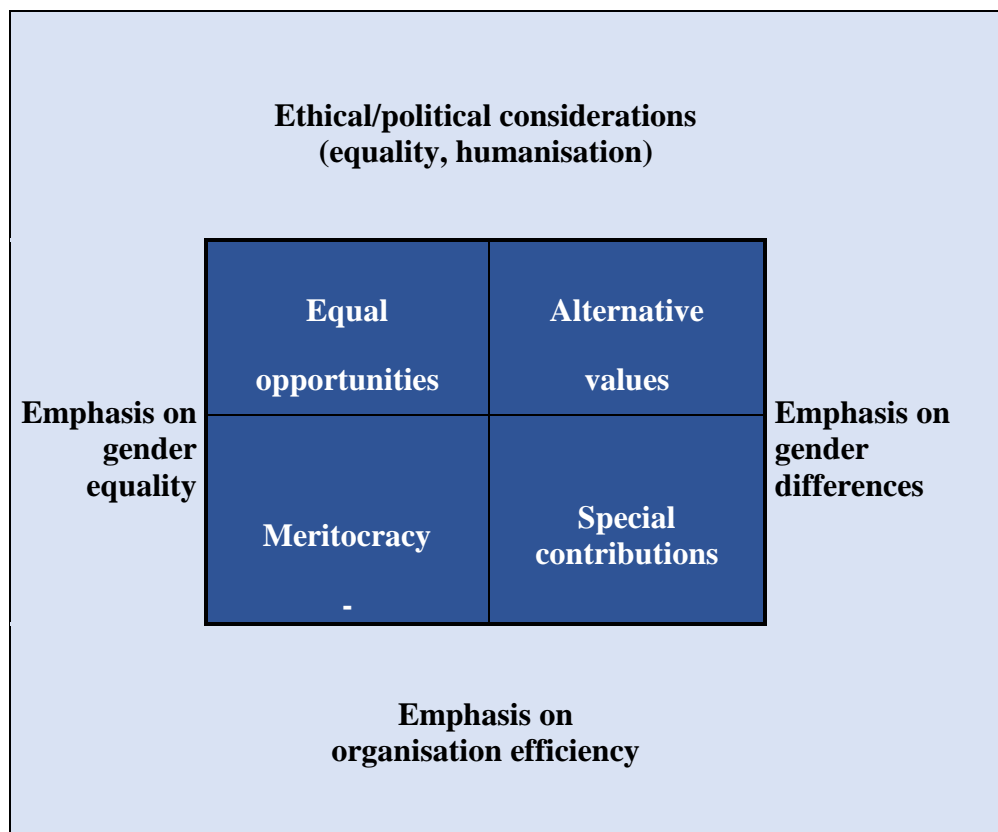
Source: (Alvesson & Billing, 1997, p. 171.)

- The first issues relate to the extent to which mixed management teams and boards, by virtue of female participation, can contribute to organisation efficiency (lower right corner of the table).

- Afterwards, I summarise the conclusion of research papers on the alternative values of female stereotypes (upper right corner).

- Further to this, results of econometric analyses and arguments of theoretical models are also summarized to assess the optimal gender composition

- Empirical facts based on statistics published in October 2014 show that women accounted for only three percent of CEOs and 13 percent of senior executives in Europe's stock exchange listed blue chip companies (see *Figure 1*). In order to investigate the reasons, issues of deficiencies in the application of meritocracy will be examined.

- Finally, the last part analyses the deficiencies of equal opportunities (upper left corner of the table) to shed light to the reasons for the question as to why reality falls so far from the theoretical optimum.

The reviewed studies were prepared by a community of researchers with an interdisciplinary scope including psychology, sociology, leadership sciences, gender studies, anthropology, decision and political sciences, philosophy and econometrics.

Developments within gender and management research were achieved in „waves" (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011). Each „wave" of gender and management research builds on and helps transform the issues raised by the predecessors (Marshall, 1995). Research started in the early 1970s. The first articles raised attention to the correlations between gender stereotypes and the characteristics necessary for leaders (Schein V. E., 1973), (Schein V. E., 1975), as well as attitudes towards female managers (Terborg et al, 1977).

There have been a number of comprehensive works approaching the topic from different aspects. According to Powell (2012, p,119), the following articles were the most important: Terborg (1977), Bartol (1978), Riger and Galligan (1980), Nieva and Gutek (1981), Butterfield and Grinnell (1999), Davidson and Burke (1994, 2000), and Alimo-Metcalfe (2010).

Growing interest in the field is marked by the fact that he has published articles in the periodical "Women in Management Review" and its legal successor, "Gender in Management: An International Journal" since 1985. Several other periodicals published articles on his research results, his conclusions drawn from findings of others with some

papers debating them. Although the great number of articles makes it difficult to create a comprehensive image, I attempted to integrate all the important results, conclusions and assumptions into my research. Some of these helped in forming presumptions, others offered useful support in the assessment of interviews. As a result, I managed to prove certain presumptions, while others seem to have been irrelevant. Later, in course of the research I carried out comprehensive comparisons between the main conclusions of scientific literature and my findings.

III.2.1 What do leadership studies tell us about female advantages?

Starting the analysis with leadership studies the focus was put on special contribution of women found in the intersection of "considerations of efficiency" and "gender differences".

Figure 8 : Women and leadership: special contribution

Ethical/political considerations (equality, humanisation)

| | Equal opportunities | Alternative values | |
| **Emphasis on gender similarities** | Meritocracy | Special contribution | **Emphasis on gender differences** |

Emphasis on organisational efficiency
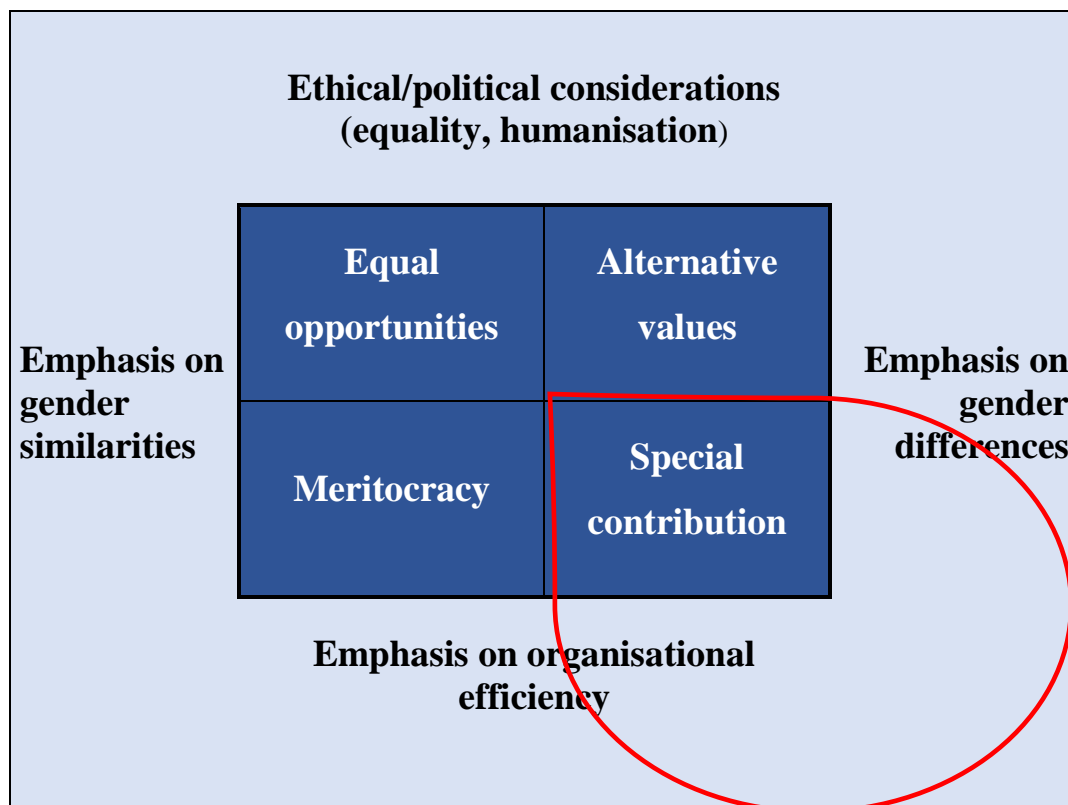
Source: Alvesson and Billing, (1997, p. 171.) adapted

I summarise here the theories and research results which focus on whether there may be any traits among (stereotypical) characteristics attributed to women which can contribute to improve corporate efficiency when utilised by female leaders or members of leadership teams.

In line with the definitions discussed earlier, „sex differences in leadership" examines how male and female leaders actually differ in attitudes, values, skills, behaviours, and effectiveness, while „gender differences in leadership" focuses on how people believe that male and female leaders differ. (Powell, 2012).

This latter is approached by authors through stereotypes. If we are after the nature of "special contribution", we might say that the advantage originating from "womanhood" or feminity is, at first consideration, coming from diversity enabling some more flexible adaptation skills. On the other hand, the "feminisation of leadership" embodies a style where the leadership tool set is shifted towards participation, division of power and exchange of information (Fondas, 1997).

Both scientific and public thinking have changed substantially in terms of beliefs about women leaders' competence. Henning and Jardin's much debated, popular book from 1977 still argued that the disadvantages of women's socialisation processes - because of which they were, for example, too emotional - made them unfit for leadership (Hennig & Jardin, 1977).

The time of slightly more than a decade brought change in research and public thinking by the early 1990s. The headline of the article in Harvard Business Review read: „The male-type order-and-control leadership style is not the only way to success." (Rosener, 1990). The average readers could peruse books like "Female advantage: female leadership methods" (Helgesen, 1990) and "Why a woman is the best man for the job" (Book, 2000)

Although it was hardly a breakthrough, still, scientific researchers dealt more with this issue, and as a result, more publications came out. A considerable part of the articles stepped beyond the question of competence, and among others, studied by empirical research methods whether stereotypical advantages really appeared in everyday life. (e.g. (Dobbins & Platz, 1986; (Eagly & Johnson, 1990), Powell, 1990), (Bass, Avolio,

& Atwater, 1996) (Billing & Alvesson, 1997) and (Bajdo & Dickson, 2001). van Engen, Leeden, & Willemsen, 2001; and many more.

At the definition of leadership, I already presented the various approaches from the early twentieth century - they were either derivatives of scientific management or placed emphasis on corporate culture. By proceeding to stereotypical traits attributed to women and men I compare the recommendations of major approaches of leadership theory with feminine and masculine characteristics as they appear in common belief.

Research on stereotypes mostly uses various versions of the „Personal Attributes Questionnaire" (Spence, Helmereich, & Stapp, 1974), (Spence & Helmreich, Masculinity & femininity: Their psychological dimensions, correlates,& antecedents, 1978).

It is not surprising that these stereotypes reflect traditional attitudes (Eagly & Johnson, 1990), (Deaux & Kite, 1993), (Wajcman, Managing like a Man, 1998), (Heilman M. , 2001), (Bagihole & Goode, 2001). According to these beliefs, a woman is responsible for creating a home, consequently she is a social being, who is socially sensitive, that is, emphatic, understanding, good at building relationships, emotional, self-sacrificing, nurturing, helpful, trusting, unselfish and kind, whereas a man, as the breadwinner who takes on jobs is agentic, aggressive, status-oriented, hierarchic, independent, active, decisive, persistent, self-confident, sustains stress, makes good decisions, and has a need to control.

Having clarified the stereotypes, we can return to approaches of leadership theory, to see which approach is best suited for gender stereotypes. Leadership styles focusing on cultures that attribute marked importance to the trustful development of culture based on common values generally need empathy, good communication, interpersonal skills and trust. These characteristics are closer to the feminine than to the masculine stereotypes. They are, actually rather far from stereotypical masculine autonomy and competitiveness, as well as men's attraction to hierarchy and need for control.

By looking at approaches of scientific management it becomes clear that while some of them (e.g. Taylorism) are close to masculine stereotypes, elements of other approaches

embrace the feminine values as some elements of the situational model or emotional intelligence, the popular approach discovered in the 1990s.

Researchers to this topic analysed in detail the comparison of some leadership theories that count as important even today. *Figure 9* summarises the similarities in stereotypical traits of each gender and some of the most important leadership styles revealed throughout the decades by leadership studies.

The first question to be answered is how leaders make their decisions (Bakacsi, 2002). Several approaches deal with this issue (Lewin's experiments (1947), Likert's model (1960), Tannembeum and Schmidt's model (1973)). Simplifying the matter for the sake of making stereotypical comparisons, leaders' decision-making styles fall between two extremes:

- *Democratic style*: The leader involves subordinates in decision-making and in revealing issues that call for decision. This style includes considerable trust, large scale information sharing and joint brainstorming. It has high motivational power.

- *Autocratic style*: The leader excludes subordinates from the whole decision making process. The leader controls, orders, and is mistrustful. The style involves low levels of information sharing and strict centralisation.

Linking styles to gender stereotypes, the autocratic style of decision making is associated more with the masculine stereotype, reflecting a greater emphasis on dominance and control over others. In contrast, the democratic style of decision making is more associated with the feminine stereotype, reflecting a greater emphasis on the involvement of others (Eagly et al., 1992).

Successful organisations are shifting away from an authoritarian model of leadership towards a more transformational and democratic model. In Western societies, management has been the last bastion of the autocratic style (Collins, 1997). However, consistent with the recent focus of leadership theories, fewer organisations are choosing this style. (Drucker, 1988); (Hitt et al., 1998) and (Lawler et al., 1995). The trend highlights the growing importance of female characteristics (Powell, 2012).

The next leadership approach included in this analysis is personality theory. Its basic elements of typology: the leader's personality, personality traits, orientation of attention (Bakacsi, 2002, old.: 101.)

Examples are the University of Ohio and the Blake-Mouton model. Eagly and Johnson and their colleagues (1992) and (2003) distinguished between two approaches: the way in which managers influence the actions of their subordinates and the manner in which they make decisions. In the first approach, two distinct types of behaviour were identified:

- *task oriented style* (refers to the extent to which the manager initiates and organises work activity and defines the way work is to be done) and

- *relationship oriented style* (refers to the extent to which the manager engages in activities that tend to the morale and welfare of people). The completion of assignments is achieved thus.

The task-oriented style is associated with the masculine stereotype with a high propensity to exhibit behaviours such as setting goals and initiating work activity, without involving subordinates, and at the same time embracing hierarchical control.

Contrary to this, the relationship-oriented style is associated with the feminine stereotype with a high propensity to exhibit behaviours such as showing consideration towards subordinates and demonstrating concern for their satisfaction (Cann & Siegfried, 1990) to achieve goals.

When individuals are high in the propensity to exhibit both task-oriented and interpersonally-oriented behaviour, they adopt (Hoffman & Borders, 2001) the profile of an androgynous leader, one who is high in both masculinity and femininity (Sargent, 1981). When individuals are low in the propensity to exhibit either type of behaviour and display laissez-faire leadership, however, they adopt (Bem, 1981) the profile of an undifferentiated leader, who is low in both masculinity and femininity (Sargent, 1981).

Finally, transformational and transactional leadership styles have got much attention lately (Judge & Bono, 2000) (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The call for transformational leadership has occurred partly in recognition of the changing economic environment in

which organisations operate. As global environments become more turbulent, highly competitive, and reliant on new technologies, they call for "high involvement" organisations with decentralized authority, flexible structures, and fewer managerial levels (Drucker, 1988) (Lawler, 1995).

- *Transformational leaders* motivate subordinates to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group or organisation by setting high standards for performance and then developing subordinates to achieve these standards. (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996) (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). Transformational leaders exhibit four types of behaviour (Powell, 2012): charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

Overall, the transformational leadership style appears to be more congruent with the feminine than with the masculine gender role (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996), (Judge & Bono, 2000) (Kark R. , 2004), (Vinkenburg, Engen, Eagly, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). Transformational leadership is positively associated with nurturance and agreeableness, feminine traits, and negatively associated with aggression, a masculine trait. Individualized consideration is congruent with the feminine gender role because its developmental focus reflects a high concern with relationships and the needs of others.

Survey results revealed that woman use the transformational leadership style more. In general, women, more than men, use power based on charisma and contacts (personal power), as opposed to power based on organizational position, title, and the ability to reward and punish (structural power) (Rosener, 1990).

- In contrast with the transformational leaders, *transactional leaders* focus on clarifying the responsibilities of subordinates for which they get their salaries and then responding to how well subordinates execute their responsibilities (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996) (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004).

They exhibit two kinds of behaviour: contingent reward (by promising and providing suitable rewards if followers achieve their assigned objectives); and management by exception (by intervening to correct follower performance either in anticipation of a problem or after a problem has occurred). Transactional leaders who engage in active

management by exception monitor subordinate performance for mistakes (Powell, 2012), whereas those who engage in passive management by exception wait for subordinate difficulties to be brought to their attention before intervening.

Both active and passive management by exception seem compatible with the masculine gender role in their focus on correcting followers' mistakes, because they stress immediate task accomplishment over long-term building of relationships and favour the use of leadership position to control others. In addition, contingent reward appears to be consistent with the masculine gender role because it is primarily task-oriented.

- Transformational leaders may be transactional when it is necessary to achieve their goals, however, transactional leaders are seldom transformational.

Empirical research supported this as early as in 1996, and it turned out that theoretical presumptions were also observable in practice. Men and women directly subordinated to female and male leaders assessed their bosses' leadership styles by transformational and transactional criteria. Regardless to their gender, subordinates generally felt that female leaders were somewhat more transformational in style than male leaders (Bass et al., 1996).

Later, a meta-analysis revealed (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003) a small but robust difference between leadership styles, according to which female leaders employ tools of transformational leadership more and they are also more dedicated to offering contingent rewards.

As the main tendencies in business requires customer orientation, horizontal structures and team work increasingly requires co-operation, communication and interpersonal skills, i.e., the „feminine" competencies became advantageous (Simpson, Ross-Smith, & Lewis, 2008). Rather than a weakness to be overcome and „solved", difference is seen as strength; as opposed to experiencing gender as a disadvantage, the special contribution approach indicates that „femininity" is a newly recognized asset and holds potential advantage in the workplace.

Under current circumstances, individuals who are able to articulate and rally followers behind a unified vision, stimulate creativity in achieving the vision, and develop

rewards, recognition, and career opportunities for high-performing specialists are best suited for leader roles in such organisations (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).

Figure 9: Similarities in leadership styles and gender stereotypes

Leadership style	Typical tools	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	Stress on harmonisation of interests, support, offering opportunities to develop	**Feminine**

Source: prepared by the author

Even though early leadership theories were developed at a time when there were far fewer women in leader roles, review of the major theories does not support that fact that leader stereotypes place a high value on masculine characteristics.

At the same time other opinions have been formulated by researchers. Some have, for example, found fewer feminine leadership traits in female leaders than it is presented above (van Engen et al., 2001). For their part, the authors acknowledged that masculine corporate culture as an environmental element may have been an influencing factor in comparison with other research that led to different results.

Others, for example Powell, wrote:

> „*At the same time, leadership theories do not exclusively endorse feminine characteristics either. Instead, situational leadership theories (Hersey & Blanchard, 2008) (Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1973) recommend that leaders vary the amount of masculine and feminine characteristics they display according to the situation. Thus, leadership theories do not suggest that either feminine or masculine behaviours are the single keys to leader effectiveness* „

(2012, pp. 131-132).

Serious arguments can be brought up against the categorical nature of this statement. The first one is that situations in which any cited authors recommend markedly masculine methods are rather rare. Actually, the only situation out of the four where it is simpler to give orders than to explain is the one including very inexperienced or immature subordinates, which phenomenon can easily be followed on the bell-shaped graph of Hersey- Blanchard (2008, old.: 152.). The other situation where, according to the chart, interpersonal orientation is insignificant, task orientation is also low level - as

this is, in fact, the situation where an assignment is delegated fully, which is again closer to female stereotypes than it is to masculine traits.

Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (1973) *situational leadership theory* recommends that managers become more democratic and less autocratic in decision making, as subordinates display a greater need for independence, readiness to assume responsibility, and ability to solve problems as a team. Their new three dimensional figure also shows this. (Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1973, old.: 11.). These views are closer to female stereotypes, too.

Altogether the „feminization" thesis has been influential in shaping beliefs about possible changes in gender positioning in society and in organizations (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011).

Two important warnings were formulated by researchers of this topic. The first one highlighted the importance of meticulous interpretation and scientific accuracy, and pointed out the potential danger of misinterpreting stereotypical „caring" leadership (Billing & Alvesson, 1997) associated with women managers. A related issue is how organisations could operate if they kept to recommendations. That is, how stereotypical feminine traits and organisations influence each other. (Ely & Padavic, 2007).

> „*If study after study reports findings that align with stereotypes and does not address why, then these differences—in temperament, values, attitudes, and behaviours - take on a determinative quality. This approach also precludes new ways of thinking about gender.*" (Ely & Padavic, 2007, p. 1122).

The second warning was formulated by Judy Wajcman:

> „*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. With this she warns that the similarities and differences given in the matrix (see *Figure 7*) along both dimensions are equally important. None of these factors may be ignored. As she continues:

„Indeed, a stress on such differences can easily slide into reinforcing traditional stereotypes of women managers and gender differences more generally. Whichever way women play it; we will never make the grade as men." (ibidem)

Connected to the last paragraph we involve more leadership theories and research fields in the literature overview, that are discussed later in this chapter. Such are the Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory categories, such as the „out group" and the „in group" which represent a challenge for women or methods of selection, that is, whether masculine companies promote masculine women differing significantly from the female stereotypes, or selection methods are different. Another question is whether women can retain feminine traits upon promotion in a masculine corporate culture.

III.2.2 Alternative values

In *Figure 10* Alternative values are located in the intersection of „Ethical/political considerations (equality, humanisation of the workplace)" and gender differences. This means that those values are covered here that have stereotypically feminine nature and are different from masculine stereotypes. Unlike in the case of „special contribution" the emphasis is put primarily not on economic efficiency, but more on ethics and humanization.

Figure 10.: Alternative Values

Ethical/political considerations (equality, the humanisation of workplace)

Equal opportunities	**Alternative values**
Meritocracy	**Special contributions**

Emphasis on gender equality

Emphasis on gender differences

Emphasis on organisation efficiency
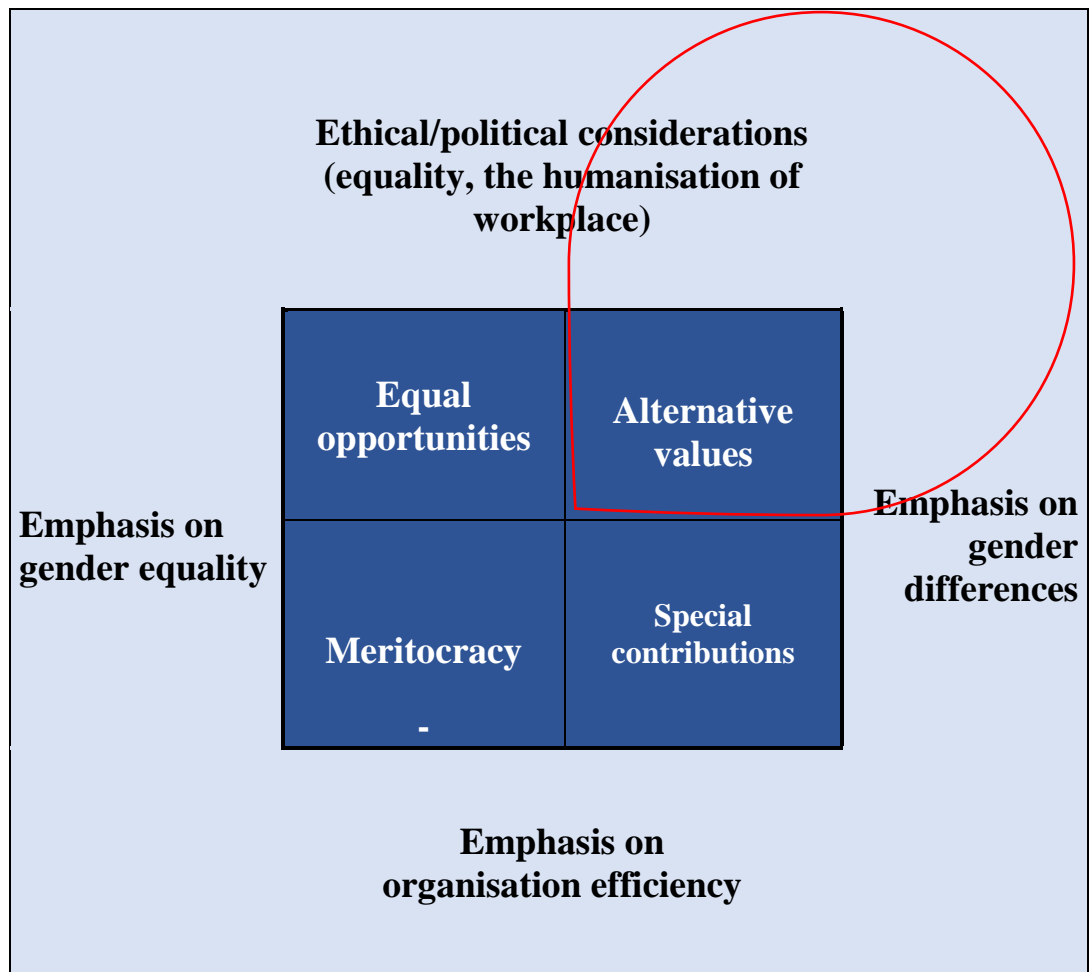
Source: Alvesson and Billing, (1997, p. 171.) adapted by the author

Humanisation of the workplace is advantageous for both women and men, as Edgar Henry Schein concludes in his book "Organisational culture and leadership". Prominent in the content of gender stereotypes are two themes: the communal (e.g. sympathetic, concerned about others) qualities of women and the agentic (e.g. active, aggressive, decisive) qualities of men (2004).

From the gender stereotypes discussed so far, the *communal stereotype* refers to an interpersonally sensitive orientation by which individuals are concerned with the welfare of others and with interpersonal relationships. Women are stereotypically viewed as kind, helpful, and empathic, as well as motivated by needs for nurturance and affiliation.

In contrast, the *agentic stereotype* centres around power, independent thinking, competitiveness and task-orientation where the individual is predominantly driven by power, dominance and control. Men are stereotypically viewed as ambitious, competent, competitive, and individualistic, as well as, motivated by needs for autonomy, aggression, dominance, achievement, and endurance.

Where the norms are set by the agentic values, other „feminine" characteristics such as friendly atmosphere (Wicks & Bradshaw, 1999), emphasising peer cohesion, or being cooperative and valuing and developing people (Phalen, 2000) cannot prevail.

From the feminine stereotypes, the skill of community formation is not the only alternative value. Different risk-taking strategies is also such an asset. *Women are supposed to be more risk averse than men* (e.g. (Jianakoplos & Bernasek, 1998) (Niederle & Vesterlund, 2007) (Croson & Gneezy, 2009)).

Although there are some debates, it is well documented in the literature that men and women in the boardrooms differ in a whole range of respects (Joecks., Pull., & Vetter, 2012). Women tend to be less aggressive in their choice of strategy and more likely to invest in a sustainable way (Ertac & Gurdal, 2012) (Charness & Gneezy, 2012). This fact also supports that, at a level of behaviour, women are more risk-sensitive.

The notion that female directors help create shareholder value through their influence on acquisition decisions is well exemplified and supported by a research on mergers and acquisition (Maurice Levi, 2014). The less overconfident female directors are, the less they overestimate merger gains. As a result, firms with female directors are less likely to make acquisitions and if they do, pay lower bid premium.

Another important issue is corruption. Research finds that states with more women involved in government are also less prone to corruption (Dollar, Fisman, & Gatti, 2001). Behavioural studies have found women to be more trust-worthy and public-spirited than men. These results suggest that women the "fairer sex" (Swami et al, 2001) should be particularly effective in promoting honest government. Other research suggests (Sung, 1982) that the observed association between gender and corruption is spurious and mainly caused by its context, liberal democracy — a political system that

promotes gender equality and better governance. Data support this „fairer system" thesis.

Other research (Wangnerud, 2014) presents evidence from 18 European countries showing that where levels of corruption are high, the proportion of women elected is low. It may be a consequence of the fact that corruption indicates the presence of „shadowy arrangements" that benefit the already privileged and pose a direct obstacle to women when male-dominated networks influence political parties' candidate selection.

A recent review of experimental evidence (Justin Esarey, 2014) indicates that women are not necessarily more honest or averse to corruption than men in either the laboratory or the field (Frank, Lambsdorff, & Boehm, 2011). Rather, the attitudes and behaviours of women concerning corruption depend on institutional and cultural contexts in these situations. (Alatas, 2009) (Alhassan-Alolo, 2007).

The authors argue that a great deal of experimental and observational evidence has shown women to be more risk-averse than men. In democratic systems, where corruption is typically stigmatized punished by law and custom, corruption is a risky behaviour. Ergo, we should generally expect women to engage less in corrupt behaviour in democracies.

The governments' ability or willingness to hold corrupt officials accountable have a greater effect on women than men, therefore a negative relation was observed between gender and corruption. The strongest negative relationship between gender and corruption should be where accountability is strongest.

III.2.3 Quantitative analyses: What would be the ideal composition?

The empirical evidence on the link between female representation on the board and firm performance is controversial. While some studies found positive correlation between women on boards and firm performance (Carter, D'Souza, Simkins, & Simpson, 2010) (Nancy M. Carter, 2011) (Barta & Kleiner & Neumann, 2012), others provided negative correlation (Gallego-Álvarez, García-Sanchez, & Rodríguez-Dominguez, 2009) and (Holst & Kirsch, 2014), while others did not find any relation between the two (Haslam, Ryan, Kulich, Trojanowski, & Atkins, 2010).

There are a number of factors that complicate such studies. First, there are complex processes and relation around and within a company. Oversimplified approaches may miss the point (Mensi-Klarbach, 2013). Then there is the time component (it takes time for board members to become sufficiently knowledgeable and experienced in board matters to be able to influence decisions and have impact on the organization). Other important components are the individuals' age, experience or the relationship with the other members of the board.

For example, an analysis of German banks' executive boards in the period from 1994 to 2010 at first sight showed that a higher proportion of women on the executive board resulted in a riskier business model. After a closer look, however, it became clear that

> *„decreases in average board age robustly increase banks' portfolio risk. This effect is statistically and also economically large.*" (Berger & Schaeck, 2013).

This means that the explanatory factor was not female participation, but rather the decrease in the board members' average age, male and female alike.

Some of the differences in the studies' results may be due to the data being obtained from different countries (with differing board systems) and in different time periods, as well as, from the use of different performance measures and estimation methods (Campbell & Mínguez-Vera, 2008, p. 441), (Rhode & Packel, 2010). The Glass cliff effect (see in section Equal chances) may also distort some data.

Results may further be affected by studies being compared with differing ratios of women on boards (Joecks., Pull., & Vetter, 2012). If we assume that the link between

gender diversity and performance were non-linear and, e.g., U-shaped, in case of boards with few women, the relation between gender diversity and performance would be negative, while in a reverse case it would be positive.

This *U shape assumption* is built on Kanter's influential work (1977a, pp. 206-242) and (1977b), concerning gender diversity in groups i.e., the *critical mass theory*, in which Kanter provides insight into effectiveness and gender composition. In her analysis of group interaction processes, Kanter sets up four different categories of groups according to their composition: uniform groups, skewed groups, tilted groups, and balanced groups:

- Uniform groups are groups in which all members share the same (visible) characteristic. With reference to salient external master statuses like gender, its members are similar.
- Skewed groups (up to 20 % women) are groups in which one dominant type controls the few, thus controlling the group and its culture. The few are called ''tokens.'' Kanter highlighted the problems faced by women in groups containing a large preponderance of men over women (the rare "token managers"): how men assigned to women based their opinion on stereotypical attributes and, through informal networking and other processes, „closed ranks" against them.
- Tilted groups (20-40%) are groups with a less extreme distribution. Unlike in skewed groups, minority members can ally and influence the culture of the group. Members are to be differentiated from each other based on their skills and abilities.
- In a so-called balanced group, majority and minority turn into potential subgroups where gender-based differences become less and less important.

As regards group interaction processes, Kanter regards skewed groups to be especially problematic. Either the tokens are in the focus or they are overlooked, and they may be subject to stereotyping (1977a). For women, there are different strategies to cope with a token status (1977b). Either they pretend that differences between women and men do not exist, or they hide their individual characteristics behind stereotypes.

With an increase in their relative numbers from a skewed to a tilted or even a balanced group, women are more likely to be individually differentiated from each other. As a

result, they might then bring in their different knowledge bases and perspectives. Although women in the boardrooms are individuals and may be different from the gender stereotypes, there is a good chance that they may add value to a male-dominated boardroom by providing new perspectives and by asking different questions (Burke, 1997), (Burgess & Tharenou, 2002), (Farrell & Hersch, 2005), (Konrad & Kramer, 2006) (Apesteguia et al.;, 2012).

To sum up: the critical mass theory postulates that until a certain threshold or „*critical mass*" of women in a group is reached, the focus of the group members is not on the different abilities and skills that women bring into the group. In consequence, skewed groups will have lower performance than uniform or tilted and balanced groups, while tilted groups will outperform uniform and skewed groups (Konrad, Kramer, & Erkut, Critical mass, 2008; Torcia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011; Joecks., Pull., & Vetter, 2012).

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. At that critical mass, their research shows, women tend to be regarded by other board members not as "female directors' but simply as directors, and they don't report being isolates or ignored.

In a later study, the following advantages were identified (Konrad, Kramer, & Erkut, 2008, p. 146):

> „*First, multiple women help to break the stereotypes that solo women are subjected to. Second, a critical mass of women helps to change an all-male communication dynamic. Third and last, research on influence and conformity in groups indicates that three may be somewhat of a ''magic number'' in group dynamics".*

Results of Torchia, Calabro and Huse (2011) suggest that attaining critical mass – going from one or two women (a few tokens) to at least three women (consistent minority) – makes enhancement of the level of firm innovation. Joecks and Vetter (2012) found that skewed supervisory boards were outperformed by tilted supervisory boards.

One of the studies, that is frequently cited in the corporate world prepared by Catalyst (2011), highlights similar tendencies: companies with the highest female board membership quartile had an average of 16% higher return on sales (ROS) than those in the lowest quartile and their advantage in terms of return on invested capital (ROIC) was 26%. Companies of at least three women board members who worked at least for four years outperformed the others by 84% and 60%, respectively in terms of ROS and ROIC, and 46% in terms of return on equity (ROE).

The critical mass theory was proved to be true in the Chinese private, stock exchange listed companies. (Yu Liu, 2014). Statistics show that female executive directors have a stronger positive effect on firm performance than female non-executive directors, indicating that the executive effect outweighs the monitoring effect. A Dutch study (Lückerath-Rovers, 2013) shows that firms with women directors perform better than the others. The author calls attention to the fact that having women on the board is a logical consequence of a more innovative, modern, and transparent enterprise where all levels of the company achieve high performance (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004).

The representation of female executives is still far from rates that are considered optimal. Boardbridge & Simpson worried about the current conceptualizations that gender issues have been „solved" with a tendency towards „gender denial" in understandings of work based disadvantage. They concluded that there was still a need to continue to monitor and publicize gender differences, and clarify and conceptualize emerging gendered hierarchies, as well as, reveal hidden, gendered practices.

We still should not forget the fact that even under the circumstances of a global race for management talent, female representation on the corporate boards is below 15 per cent, which means a lot waste of talent and creative energy (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011).

Indeed, there is an essential difference between the two genders that is disadvantageous for women in moving up the career ladder. Many components of this difference are a result of gender construction at the workplace, where corporate cultures, rules and the limits of fairness in gender relations are formed. This difference is constructed by the fact that when we do business we do gender as well The inner ambiguity of gender construction is expressed in the dilemma: how can we do gender (Gherardi S. , 1994) without second-sexing the female?

III.2.4 Exposing meritocracy

Although there are a number of arguments supporting female participation in leadership, in reality female participation in senior management is still very low (see *Figure*

(Vecchio, 2002), (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In this and the next sections I summarize the findings of research documents that investigated the reasons for this underrepresentation. One of the explanatory factors is related to the meritocracy (see *Figure 11*). Once female leadership talent does not get equal opportunities, the efficiency of the organisation will suffer and the organisation will lag behind its full potential.

Figure 11: Exposing meritocracy
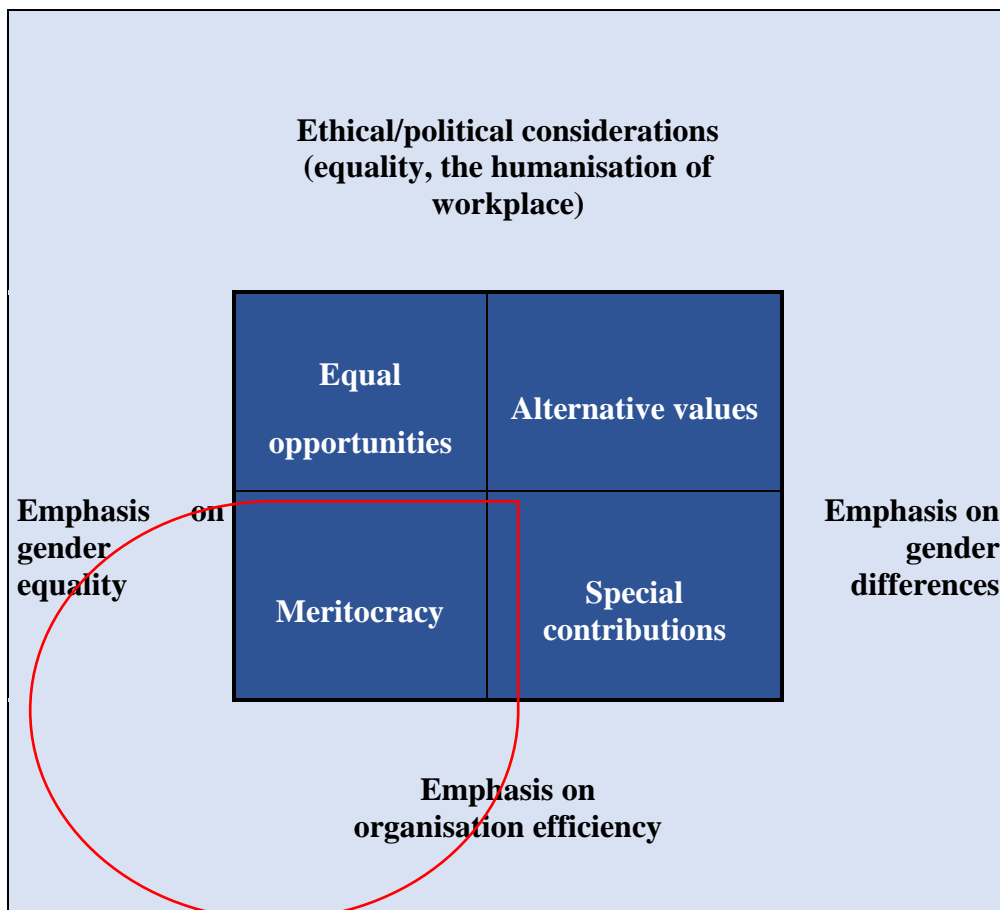
Source: *Figure of Alvesson and Billing,* (1997, p. 171.) *adapted*

A number of metaphors were constructed to express the complexity of the reasons for low female participation in management. „*When searching for the*

60

causes of low female representation, studying gender symbols and metaphors make it possible to use indirect speech and, discursively, to change gender relationships within organizations. Metaphors are often used for explaining certain aspects of cultures, because they represent „conceptual windows" which help the organizational analyst gain better access to rich avenues of meaning" (Chia, 1996, p. 128).

The metaphor of „glass ceiling" has been widely used since the late eighties (Morrison, White, & Velsor, 1987; Billing A. &., 1997; Powell G. N., 1999) (Liff & Ward, 2001). According to Murrell and Hayes James:

„most well-known illustrations of discrimination in the workplace are captured by the concept of „glass ceiling", which defines the invisible barrier that prevents many women and minorities from advancing into senior and executive management positions within organizations." (2001, old.: 244)

The reason for the name „glass" is that no visible constrains may be identified, because the legal system provides equal opportunities and no open discrimination is applied. Limitations, however, stemming from the nature of metaphors are best expressed by the following statement: seeing something means the same as not seeing something. The same expressive power that highlights some features of a phenomenon will suppress others. So it is hardly surprising that one can witness the birth of new metaphors from time to time. Researchers later suggested that some new characteristics and the complexity of the issue could better be reflected by some metaphor (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

„times have changed [...] the glass ceiling metaphor is now more wrong than right' for two reasons" (p. 64).

On the one hand, positive changes made the term outdated, because of the description of an absolute barrier at a specific high level within organizations - that has changed. As a result of some recent developments, female chief executives and board members were appointed, i.e.: they managed to break the glass. On the other hand, the metaphor implies that women and men have equal access to good entry- and midlevel positions - and actually they do not. The new metaphor „labyrinth" expresses the never-ending

challenges that women traverse to attain and effectively exercise power and authority in the hierarchical organizations.

> *„A better metaphor for what confronts women in their professional endeavours is the labyrinth. [...] it conveys the idea of a complex journey toward a goal worth striving for. Passage through a labyrinth is not simple or direct, but requires persistence, awareness of one's progress, and a careful analysis of the puzzles that lie ahead [...] For women who aspire to top leadership, routes exist but are full of twists and turns, both unexpected and expected."*

(Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 64).

Survey results (Carter & Silva, 2010) revealed that even in those companies that implemented programs to fix structural biases against women and support their full participation in leadership, women continue to lag behind men at every single career stage. The management pipeline is not healthy; inequality remains entrenched. Even after adjusting for the years of work experience, industry, and region, it was found that men started their careers at higher levels than women. The finding held when only those women and men were included who said they were aiming for senior executive positions. Even amongst women and men without children, living at home, men still started at higher levels. It was also revealed that after starting out "behind", women didn't catch up. Men move further up the career ladder - and they move faster.

The fact that „ceilings" can be found at every level of the hierarchy inspired the construction of the „*leaky pipeline*" metaphor (Carter & Silva, 2010). Finally, the metaphor of „glass firewall" portrays a sort of discrimination that is complex, fluid, incoherent, and heterogeneous, and stresses a processual view of discrimination as „doing discrimination" (Bendl & Schmidt, 2010, p. 629).

> *„Notions of meritocracy, based on supposedly objective criteria of education, experience and skills, have strong purchase in understandings and applications of „fairness" at work – suggesting that women can compete for jobs and promotion on the „same basis" as men."* (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011, p. 477).

These „neutral" criteria on which meritocracy are based, however, do contain a gender bias (Lewis & Simpson, 2010).

The societal and cultural aspects of gender may help find the key to the challenge in meritocracy. As Billing and Alvesson explain (1997), the traditional gendered division of labour, i.e. men specialising in paid employment and women specialising in unpaid family work, has long been the societal norm. As a result, the public and the private spaces have become separate. The public sphere, with its bureaucratic organisations, is historically dominated by men. The corporate world – and especially top management circles – can thus be compared to a game that was invented by and for male players, which follows certain rules that correspond to men's ideas and principles of work.

Other authors support this idea with the reasoning that *organisational cultures are often conceptualised as being more „masculine" or „male"*, indicating that they are more in line with stereotypical masculine values such as aggressiveness, competition, status-orientation, hierarchy and control (Wajcman, Managing like a Man, 1998).

Historically most organisations have been founded by and are still dominated by men, especially in the higher management positions:

> *"Other barriers are based in gendered social systems, where work has been designed by men for men, and where patriarchy defines work roles by gender, leading to direct discrimination and stereotyping. Structures such as recruitment and promotion systems operate in a gender-biased way, for instance in the assumption that career paths for leaders will be unbroken, thereby excluding women who take maternity leave or part-time work, or who relocate several times due to partners' career moves"* (Terjesen & Singh, 2008).

Another interpretation of this process comes from a researcher of historical male studies, Leo Braudy (2005), according to whom the strengthening of market relations led to the distancing of home and workplace, which in turn became a masculine territory. Masculine identity was identified with the developing *concept of "mission"* while women remained in the family domain. To amend this, Okin also remarks that women's work at home consists of taking care of their families, for which they do not deserve wages (Okin, 1979)

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). Due to socialization and family-related expectations, women may be limited in gaining the same level of experiences and skills as men. At the same time, men may be more oriented towards ambition and career due to the traditional roles of the two genders. (Bagihole & Goode, 2001)

As social acceptance and personal trust are also important and men have more access to male networks where the powerful decision-makers belong to, thus, in this respect, merit does not translate the same way for the two genders. This supports Wajcman's (1998) notion of „contemporary patriarchy", i.e. the subordination of women within a framework of equality.

An example for masculine merits is *the male-biased definition of commitmen*t (Schein E., 2004). Even at the time of personal computers, laptops, internet and smart phones, which provide a great deal of flexibility in work, the widespread assumption is that a committed manager is always available, accepts unpredictable working hours, works late into the evening and over weekends in the office, and shows a high degree of spontaneity and flexibility. This creates specific challenges for women who are often unable to conform to this norm due to the traditional family-related responsibilities.

The *work-life balance* debate (Tóth, 2005) shows that that the existence of such a long hour's norm, along with high demands in terms of flexibility and geographical mobility, creates working conditions that are incompatible with most women's lives. Nobody challenges this norm even if with better planning work could be managed differently, but with the same efficiency.

Even if a woman could accept the above conditions she may not even been asked due to the presumptions. A survey (McKinsey & Company, 2012) revealed cases where women applicants were rejected because of the 24/7 availability requirement; however, nobody checked whether they would have been able to meet the requirement or considered whether unlimited availability was really necessary.

Assumed neutrality may lead to situations that Simpson, Ross-Smith and Lewis (2008) revealed: women managers rationalized observed disadvantage as the effects of personal

decisions, thus avoiding reference to gendered organizational practice that worked against them. In spite of all biases, meritocracy is an often referred excuse for low female representation in senior positions. Male senior managers and CEOs make frequent references to meritocratic principles in their hiring and promotion decisions to demonstrate their adherence and commitment to gender equality in their organizations (pp. 199-200).

Principles of meritocracy may be distorted not only due to masculine characteristics of values and principles but also because of the different gender roles and statuses. This disadvantages and theories explaining them are presented in the next chapter.

III.2.5 Barriers to equal opportunities

Boardbridge & Simpson worried about the current conceptualizations that gender issues have been „solved" with a tendency towards „gender denial" in understandings of work based disadvantage. They concluded that there was still a need to continue to monitor and publicize gender differences, and clarify and conceptualize emerging gendered hierarchies, as well as, reveal hidden, gendered practices (2011).

They called attention to the fact that even under the circumstances of a global race for management talent, female representation on the corporate boards is below 15 per cent, which means a lot waste of talent and creative energy. Indeed, there is still difference between the two genders that is disadvantageous for women in moving up the career ladder (see *Figure 12*).

A number of review articles such as (Ely & Padavic, 2007), (Terjesen, Sealy, & Sing, 2009), (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011) (Powell, 2012) (Danowitz & Hanappi-Egger, 2012) and (Kornau & Festing, 2013) discuss research outcomes on components of unequal opportunities of women to reach senior positions. Most of the research results suggest that the playing field that constitutes the managerial levels continues to be tilted in favour of men and behaviours associated with the masculine gender stereotype. It is so despite leadership theories and findings of empirical research suggest otherwise.

Figure 12: Barriers to equal opportunities
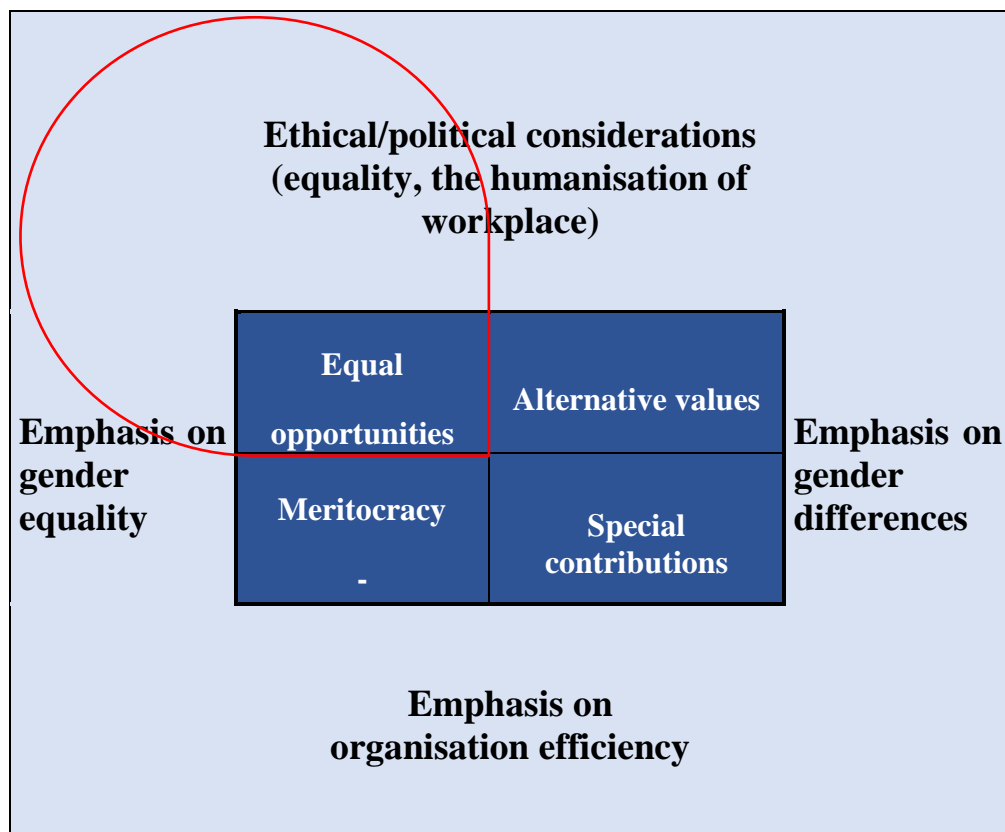
Source: Alvesson and Billing, (1997, p. 171.) *adapted*

One of the most important factors is that even if the beliefs about the personal characteristics of a successful middle-manager have changed over time, men are still believed to be better managers and better managers are still believed to be masculine. A similar pattern of results is exhibited in countries with very different national cultures such as the UK, Germany, Japan, China, Turkey, Sweden, and South Africa. In these countries both men and women believe that men are more similar to successful managers than women are, but men endorse such beliefs to a greater extent than women do (Schein & Mueller, 1992) (Schein et al, 1996) (Schein V. E., 2001) (Vicsek L. , 2002) (Fullagar et al., 2003) (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010).

These results suggest that international beliefs about managers are best expressed as

"think manager – think male"

especially among men (Powell & Butterfield, 1989) (2003) (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011). The fact that a very high proportion of women top managers are daughters of top-manager fathers (Nagy B. , 2001) is in line with this belief. This model seems capable of a „cross-effect" and facilitates the formation of self-confidence and role-model necessary for attaining the position. A related finding (Alvesson & Billing, 1977), is that a high proportion of women managers identify with their fathers rather than their mothers.

An important 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). The more a leadership task is dominated by men, the less congruent are gender role expectations (Kark & Eagly, 2009).

This factor can be observed for example with female engineers, the phenomenon called by Faulkner (2007) the in/visibility paradox, who claimed that women are visible as women at the workplace but invisible as engineers. They should assimilate to their technical role and retain their femininity at the same time. This is also one of the explanations for vertical segregation because women have a hard time choosing jobs that are deemed masculine for the above reasons. This duality - the compulsion to comply with two incompatible norms - in technical or leadership functions may cause considerable uncertainty and anxiety, in extreme cases it may also lead to burnout and dropping out (Hanappi-Egger, 2011).

The status characteristics theory (Webster & Berger, 2006) (Ridgeway, 1991) (2009) provides a possible explanation on the background of these phenomena. The theory argues that unequal societal status is assigned to the sexes, with men granted higher status than women. (Nagy & Vicsek, 2008) Because of their stronger status position, men get more opportunities to initiate actions and influence decision making, leading them to specialize in task-oriented traits. In contrast, due to their weaker status position, women are required to monitor others' reactions to themselves and be responsive to interpersonal cues, leading them to specialize in interpersonally-oriented traits (Aries, 2006).

Status differences influence not only perceived competencies and expected performance but also the expectations on appropriate behaviour in a group. Persons of lower status have lower legitimacy to behave as a leader (Meeker & Weitzel-O'Neill, 1985). In a group of equal level persons, certain characteristics such as self-confidence, assertiveness and verbosity help to become a leader.

In case of persons of different status, however, if an individual of lower status behaves in such way would not be considered competent as it is contrary to expectations. Such group members may be assumed by other group members to be acting from motives of competitive status enhancement, which is not legitimate since he or she does not "deserve" higher status. Contribution of persons of low status may be ignored that further decreases their status (Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992).

The consequence is that women must prove that they are both competent and well-intentioned before either they or others expect or accept high levels of task behaviour from them. They are advised to apply sophisticated methods such as the emphasis on devotion for common goals, co-operative and group-focussed behaviour,

Sayers calls the attention to the fact that the gender wage gap is partly a result of these negative attitudes towards women indicating that broader societal expectations cause people to unconsciously believe that female work is of less value (Sayers, 2012).

The lack of fit model (Heilman, 1983) (1995) (2001) (Haslam & Ryan, 2008) 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.

For this bias, László Mérő, a Hungarian behavioural researcher quoted the „invisible gorilla" experiment (Neisser & Becklen, 1975) as a parallel. This has become one of the best-known experiments in psychology highlighting intentional blindness, also known as perceptual blindness when we focus on one thing and cannot perceive the other. That explains what we see and what we don't see.

According to research findings, women are often aware of these problems (Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2003). Research findings suggest that their general reaction is either showing vulnerability, which is in line with female stereotypes, or its direct opposite (Hoyt, 2010). Whether appropriate reactions were chosen depends on several factors, for example on the volume of stereotype conflicts, representation of interests, task types, teams' gender composition and the leader's power (Bergeron, Block, & Echtenkamp, 2006; Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007, 2010; Kray, Reb, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004; Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001).

Therefore, it is challenging for a woman to compete with men for leadership positions because if they conform to the leader role, they fail to meet the requirements of the female gender role, which calls for feminine niceness and deference to the authority of men (Rudman and Glick, 2001). At the same time, if women conform to the female gender role, they fail to meet the requirements of the leader role.

All in all, a great amount of empirical evidence supports the fact that *gender stereotypes may strongly influence the opinion about female leaders and the evaluation of their performance.* All this has a direct effect on female leaders and aspirants.

Another factor is mistrust. Men are more easily trusted upon selection while women are expected to prove first. Another aspect of this issue is that beliefs were found according to which women are considered primarily nurturing while men are more easily believed to be able to take responsibility (Hoyt & Chemers, 2008).

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." Uncertainty is always present when individuals are relied upon, and the effects of such uncertainty are greatest when the individual holds significant responsibility for the direction of the organisation. One way to minimize uncertainty in the executive suite is to close top management positions to people who are regarded as "different". This phenomenon is certainly very disadvantageous for women when selection is done by men.

There is one exception, the *„glass cliff"*. Despite women's difficulties in obtaining demanding assignments, other evidence shows that some women are placed, more often than comparable men, in highly risky positions. This is also contrary to experience which shows that women get challenging assignments less frequently. However, there is one exception. There are many examples showing that the rate of women placed in high-risk position is higher than that of men (Haslam & Ryan, 2008), (Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010).

> This is the only occasion that I will recount something from my own life experience, because I had such a strong feeling of "aha" that I found it important to self-reflect. My own career started with such a situation the time I was appointed an acting executive. I had only three months to prove I could overcome challenging, crucial issues. At the same time that I had got my temporary assignment the management had advertised the job, and the decision on the candidate was to be made three months later. It was a hard task, still, I finally managed to get things going. I proved, and as a result, I got my permanent appointment form a board of male directors.

When companies are facing financial downturns and declining performance, executives have a fairly high risk of failure. Companies may be more willing to have female executives take these risks, and women may be more willing to accept such positions, given their lesser prospects for obtaining more desirable positions, or their lack of access to networks that might steer them away from such jobs. Some other research also revealed (Haslam, Ryan, Kulich, Trojanowski, & Atkins, 2010) that in some cases, stock-market performance reflected the perception of organizational crisis at the time of women's appointment to leadership positions regardless of the real performance of companies. The latter finding is supported by some further empirical results (Torcia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011).

Devaluation of women and related activities happens when abilities such as communication, empathy, caring that are stereotyped as „women skills" are not considered necessary for line management, therefore women rarely have opportunities to receive such mid-manager jobs where they can practice and prove their abilities. Men encounter broader-based tasks much more frequently during their work (Eagly & Carli,

2007). They have to carry out pre-committed, quantified plans under time pressure and resource limitations, while constantly receiving criticism, which they have to learn how to handle (Bálint Z. , 2007).

Women have a much more limited access to these opportunities. *They fall victim to vertical segregation* (Eagly & Carli, 2007) (Nagy B. , 2007) (Nagy & Primecz, 2010) (Zahidi & Ibarra, 2010). Vertical segregation 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". 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. They have no occasion (Nagy B. , 2007) to learn the routines and develop the skills that render them capable of taking on a full-scale top management position. The positions are thus filled by men. Internal units operating as profit centres are still mostly bastions of the male empire.

Men's negative attitude towards women executives partly comes from the fact that they *identify these women as their competitors* (Everett, Thorne, & Danehower, 1996). which means, in effect, that they do not like to perceive more competitors than previously, when only other men represented a potential „danger" to them.

A further disadvantage for women is the *exclusion from male networks*. Both sexes often form social networks dominated by their own sex, and women often experience exclusion from informal "old boys" networks" e.g., (Katila & Meriläinen, 1999), (Miller, 2002), (Featherstone, 2004). Segregated networks are not optimal for women's advancement, because networks populated by men are generally more powerful. One way to overcome this limitation is to develop mentoring relationships, which provide one way of gaining social capital and tend to enhance the individuals' career progress (Allen, 2004). Mentors who hold powerful positions are able to offer considerable career facilitation. Yet, mentoring relationships, too, in a number of cases tend to form along same-sex lines.

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).

Lack of female support is due to the very low representation of women in CEO and executive director positions. This leads to the lack of female mentors and role models. There are even less women who have managed career and family issues successfully (Liff & Ward, 2001) (Nagy B. , 2001). Women could experience gains from relationships with other women, especially in terms of social support, role modelling, and information about overcoming discrimination (Bilimoria, 2006) (Dougherty & Forret, 2004) (Timberlake, 2005).

At the same time there is also the „*queen bee syndrome"* (Mavin, 2008) which occurs when a female senior executive - enjoying the unique position of being the only woman visible - is unwilling to support other talented women, in fact she can even hurt them. Many senior executive women do not wish to be perceived primarily as representatives of the female gender group, but rather as competent leaders, and are thus not prepared to act as visible change agents to increase the representation of women in higher hierarchical levels.

Hierarchical structures play a role because - partly due to the socialization - more men favour power and authority than women (Schwartz & Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009) (Adams & Funk, 2012). Female respondents argue that organisational culture should be less accepting of established authority (Wicks & Bradshaw, 1999) and, instead, more participatory (van Vianen & Fisher, 2002) (McTavish & Miller, 2009). It was also found that organisational practices that emphasise low power distance (House, R., Javidan, M., Hagnes, P, Dorfman, P., 2002) are correlated positively to the proportion of women in leadership positions (Bajdo & Dickson, 2001).

Women *may be irritated by a highly competitive approach to business* (Miller, 2002), as well as by aggressive competition at peer level. This is accompanied by political power games and involves, for instance, project rivalry and ownership claims (Simpson R. , 2000). Evidence also suggests that women are uncomfortable with men's management styles, as they consider them to be too aggressive and focused on status and visibility (Rutherford, 2001). Based on in-group/out-group categorisation processes, it is not surprising to find that men hold negative attitudes towards female executives with

72

whom they have to compete and do not consider them as equally suited for management jobs (Everett, Thorne, & Danehower, 1996).

Sexism in daily interactions may be experienced when leader roles' perceptions are extremely masculine and people suspect that a woman is not qualified for the position; this often results in resistance to the woman's authority (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In a dominantly male environment, women often experience sexist or hostile jokes (Simpson R. , 2000). In its subtler forms, negative male attitudes are revealed by ignoring women in meetings, not taking them seriously or playing power games at their expense (Phalen, 2000). This may have a repressing effect.

A study (Janne Tienari, 2013) suggests that executive „*head hunters", search consultants* are generally aware of the exclusion of women in their assignments, although, they underline their limited latitude in including more women in search processes. If there is no explicit request for women candidates, head-hunters - under time pressure - are not willing to extend the search outside their established network of contacts. Profiling (Mathieu, 2009) is another example for exclusion as the requirement may suggest male candidates only.

The good news for women is that these less masculine ways of leading have gained cultural currency as the traditionally masculine command-and-control style has become less admired than previously, as presented in chapter III.2. This shift reflects the greater complexity of modern organizations. Evidence increasingly suggests that women tend to be better suited than men to serve as leaders in the ways required in the global economy (Powell, 2012). An appropriate manager of our time gains less from ordering others about and more from assembling a team of smart, motivated subordinates who together figure out how to solve problems (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

III.3 Masculinity Constructions and Leadership

As *Figure 1* shows that the majority of decision makers of the biggest stock exchange listed companies are men. In a number of countries this companies well represent the private sector's firms. Therefore, we may assume that decisions on senior management appointments are mostly done by men in the companies. Beside the studies discussed so

far there is a special area of social sciences focussed on men and masculinity. I review some of the literature and present conclusions that are relevant for my research and related to leadership.

There are a lot of different definitions for the concept of masculinity. In the introduction of the "Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities" (Kimmel, Hearn, & Connell, 2005) the authors list a number of factors, orientations and aspects that influence the approach of the concept. I chose the definition by Whitehead and Barrett because they include cultural and organization framework and the relations to feminity as well:

> „*Behaviours, languages and practices which exist in special cultural and organisational structures and, as a generally accepted rule, which relate to men can be regarded as masculine, i.e. defined as not feminine in the cultural sense*". (Whitehead & Barret, 2001, old.: 15.-16.)

Not only the definiton above but the analysis below emphesize the fact that masculinity is a construction covering social elements and specific human experience as well.

> *"male studies do not consider masculinity and its social construction as a trait which is universally valid, but rather as a remarkable, specific human experience defined historically and culturally by gender relations. Besides, the definition implicitly refers to the fact that without female studies and the paradigm shift after the second wave of feminism this field would not have been born*".

(Hadas, 2009, old.: 6.-7.)

It has only been since the 1960s and 1970s that approaches appeared which began to consider the bodiless and sexless entities of rational thinking as beings who have both bodies and sexes (not only biological sexes but also genders). Earlier, most of important areas were dominated by men to such extent that there was no need to define themselves.

The first thought that is particularly important for my research appeared in an article published in 1985 titled "Towards a new sociology of masculinity" (Carrigan, Connell,

& Lee, 1985). One of the numerous objectives stipulated by the authors was the development of a new conceptual structure which is able to grasp inter-gender and intra-gender relations. The article from the second wave of male studies contained an early version of the theory of hegemonic masculinity. One of the authors of the article, who contributed to developing the theory, Bob Connell has since become the most frequently referenced researcher of male studies.

The aspect of this approach, being a legacy inherited from the (self-) critical traditions of the second wave of feminism, added new analytic dimensions and viewpoints to gender studies. It pointed out that the definition and interpretation of masculinity deeply rooted in the existence of the most important social institutions such as state, schools, corporations and family, assuming that these institutions have indeed been conditioned historically. Also, the space of social relations - besides male-female relations - is expanded to include male-male relations (Hadas, 2009).

> *"the collective definition of a hegemonic masculinity that not only manned the barricades against women but at the same time marginalized or subordinated other men in the industry (e.g. young men, unskilled workers, and those unable or unwilling to join the rituals). Though the details vary, there is every reason to think such processes are very general. Accordingly, we see social definitions of masculinity as being embedded in the dynamics of institutions - the working of the state, of corporations, of unions, of families - quite as much as in the personality of individuals."* (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985, p.: 591)

Hegemonic masculinity is a concept describing how not all, but only certain groups of men can manage to take over positions that make them powerful and rich, and how they can manage to legitimate and reproduce the social relations that created their dominance (Hadas, 2009, old.: 20.).The concept of "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. The notion constructed using this tool is masculinity:

"Instead of trying to define masculinity as a type of natural character, average or norm of behaviour, we should rather focus on understanding the processes and relations owing to which gender characteristics infuse the lives of men and women. Masculinity, if the concept itself can be defined at all, thus could mean: firstly, a permanent place in gender relations, secondly, the entirety of the activities undertaken by men and women, and thirdly, the consequence of these activities manifested in physical experiences, personality and culture."

(Connell, 2005, old.: 67-68)

Connell's approach to hegemonic masculinity had been widely criticised, and as a result, it was later improved. However, its core idea remained unchanged. In the course of debates some examples of conveyance mechanisms were also revealed, like ideals transmitted by sports stars, which are icons of masculinity.

Although the theory now focuses more on male-male relations, they still offered some useful pieces of information for my research. One of these is the way of action it presents, the other is the male image it transmits.

As for the cultural transmission mechanism, with the development of mass communication the tool set has significantly broadened in the past few decades. Referring back to the issue of gender roles and gender stereotypes, now we can also see dynamism, an important component of the process of construction, thus it is no longer displayed as a static image. As for contents, since there is a great number of overlaps people believe to exist between male and female traits, it is an important factor from both aspects.

Beside sports, another example is the effect conveyed by films - it is important how bosses are depicted in blockbusters and whether these bosses are featured as men or women. The question is what masculine ideals male managers convey in these films - the ideal of the autocratic and authoritarian leader, or the boss who really cares for souls.

Unfortunately, in the case of women a part of the few existing examples reinforces the negative view, reflecting role conflicts and the issue of congruity. Just think of the autocratic woman executive from the film "The devil wears prada" or Margaret

Thatcher from "Iron lady". It was chiefly the negative traits that were emphasised in the personalities of the main characters.

The codes and construction of hegemonic masculinity and management are very similar. Leo Braudy (2005) has been mentioned already according to whom the strengthening of market relations led to the distancing of home and workplace, which in turn became a masculine territory.

Hegemonic masculinity was widely criticized among others because it excludes the complexity of different, and competing, forms of masculinity. Several new approaches emerged such as the gender hierarchy or the queer theory (Hadas, 2010).

From this two conceptual threads – relationship with management construction and the multiple, competing forms - we can arrive at the approach of Collinson and Hearn who identified five competing concepts of around the issue of masculinity and management.

> "*These are discourses and practices of masculinity that appear to remain pervasive and dominant in organizations [...] These are particularly interrelated with different managerial styles. Seeking to illustrate the way that power is routinely exercised in organizations, they are presented in an idealtypical and discrete way, whereas in practice they are likely to overlap and co-exist in specific processes*" (Collinson & Hearn, 1994, p.: 13)

- *Authoritarianism:* Intolerance of dissent or difference, rejection of dialog or debate. Preference of coercive power relations based on dictatorial control an unquestioning obedience. Maddock and Parkin's (1993) metaphor is „barrack yard" culture. Brutal and aggressive masculinity, hostility at women and others considered "weak". Other attitudes and styles are stigmatized as „weakness".
- *Paternalism*: Power is based on the moral basis of co-operation, personal trust and the protective nature of their authority. Familial metaphor, the rule of the father, who is authoritative, benevolent and wise. They seek to differentiate themselves from women and identify themselves with other men. Maddock and Parkin's metaphor is the „gentlemen's club". Women are protected and supported as long as they meet the notions of traditional female identity and do not have more ambitions than that.

- *Entrepreneurialism*: By contrast, Entrepreneurialism articulates a hard-nosed, very competitive approach. Prioritizing performance level, budget targets, penetration to new markets, profit, efficiency at the expense of all other criteria. Pregnancy and domestic commitments are taboos, only those women who are accepting the male breadwinner employment patterns are appreciated. They feel comfortable with younger, "hungry" men. Their masculine identities are precarious and insecure, always want to be "in control".

- *Informalism*: Shared masculine interest and common values, in/out group. Currency: sports, sex, humour, car and women and drinking alcohol. May lead to sexual harassment and reduction of women to sexual objects. Maddock and Parkin's metaphor is „locker room" culture.

- *Careerism*: Self-definition is breadwinner who has to "provide" to his family. career is needed for their masculine identity. Work for longer hours, tight deadlines, home support is needed. The price they pay for the fit into the corporate culture is often the loss of the happy family life.

Compared to the management styles discussed in chapter III.1. we can see that there are a number of other leadership attitudes and styles that are more inclusive for women such as democratic, relationship oriented or transformational style. The authors mention some practices that are applied by masculine attitude men to cope with recent challenges such as downsizings and short term contracts. One of them is gendered nature of impression management, when men live their jacket on their chair to give the impression that they are still at work, highly committed and work overnight. Demonstrating strict separation between "work" and "home" is a way to reinforce dominant masculinity in managerial culture through working on days off or unplanned overtime.

The above-mentioned masculine constructions and their impacts on women were discussed already from other angles and in different contexts when meritocracy biases and unequal opportunities were defined among others by Wajcman (1998), (2011), Eagly and Carly (2007), Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen (2003), Powell (1999) (2012), Broadbridge and Hearn (2008) and Broadbridge and Simpson (2011)

At the empirical phase of my research I returned to the issues of masculinities and management and identified the interviewees' self-constructions and management styles according to the classification above.

IV   Preparations for the Empirical Research

After completing the literature review I can turn back to the technical preparations for the empirical research. First I have to reconsider the research question in the light of the literature studied. Then begins the empirical research design with the issues of methods and the data analysis.

IV.1 Research Gap and Research Questions' Adjustment

I decided on the target and the philosophical approach of the research in Chapter II. of the thesis. Building on these, I formulated the first version of the research questions and vaguely defined the research methods to be used.

After the literature review I revised my previous decisions, to see whether there is any need for amendment. Following the logic of the research plan I covered the research goal, the research questions and the philosophical standpoint. I came to the decision that the research goal and the philosophical position did not need any change. As a matter a fact the conclusions drawn from the literature review strengthened my confidence in both choices.

I noticed a research gap, however, at the research questions. Originally, in my Research Proposal I introduced a research focussed on top manager men. I intended to collect information about their constructions on low female representation in senior management and gain deeper understanding about their construction processes. Some of the reviewers proposed to me to consider the advantages of the inclusion of women leaders into the sample. Based on the literature review I decided to return to my original plan for two reasons.

On the one hand, that all of my discussions about the topic with senior manager at several fora (woman at conferences, round tables, in the Women Business Leaders Network of HBLF) for the last 15 years, the interviews I carried out with some of them and my own personal experiences convinced me about the fact that they could confirm the results of previously conducted in-depth research works but they could not add any new detail about the questions of my current research.

On the other hand, the research gap was more striking than earlier. In light of the fact that almost 90 per cent of the decision-makers are men I found very few research that involved senior manager men. Knowing the beliefs, feelings and discourses of men and the relations of those with corporate cultures and management styles are important for further dialogs and discourses. The importance of these issues is also arises from that fact that their influence on public construction processes is much stronger than that of women. The research questions needed to be reformulated focusing on male decision makers.

Finalized 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

According to the recommendations (Kvale, 1996) not hypothesises but presumptions are formulated in the course of exploratory research. The literature review enriched by my own life experiences helped me in this work. I worded my assumptions only vaguely, leaving some room for the unexpected. My presumptions were the following:

- I will have to make great efforts in order to convince senior managers men to cooperate. I assumed that the reason for low involvement in research is men's unwillingness to participate. I expected that they would be preoccupied, too busy or uninterested.
- Men at their younger age (from their childhood to the first work experiences) are socialised in such a way that they do not know positive examples of female senior

managers or women of leadership skills therefore remain „blind" to this kind of talent, and do not recognise such merits in women.

- According to a number of earlier research appointments and promotions processes that are dominated by men are biased and disadvantageous for women. The consequences are known, the „here and now" constructions and mechanisms are not yet discovered. One of the purposes of the research to reveal important elements of them.

IV.2 Choice of Method

When constructing the research design, I already chose the research methods which are in line with the research questions and the philosophical standpoint. The subjectivist qualitative approach seemed to be the most appropriate one.

The best choice for the research method turned out to be the semi-structured interview. Necessary data are acquired through talking with my interviewees, so that I would be able to collect and understand data through their realities. I had to take it into consideration though that senior managers I would have liked to include in my research were very busy, and consequently, the action research I was hoping to conduct had to be cancelled.

I am planning to analyse the data collected during the interviews with an attitude of understanding, which is a keyword here. Hermeneutic processes play an important part in every qualitative, interpretative research, which enables us to unwrap, understand and analyse hidden meanings. This is how one can unveil and explain reality construction processes.

Every method that promotes associations, which serve as the basis for human thinking and learning, helps both research and understanding (Buzan & Buzan, 1996). When we associate, one idea recalls another, and every interpretation is more successful when we match it with other pieces of our previous knowledge. Visualisation stimulates both brain hemispheres, and therefore, it plays an important role in identifying, grouping and anchoring important parts of every new information. Metaphors help when phrasing

complicated ideas and concepts. I have already used metaphors such as „glass ceiling", „labyrinth", „firewall" and „glass cliff".

In order to tune in empirical research, I introduce some metaphors to describe qualitative research, all of which were invented by Denzin and Lincoln (2005., page 5.). One of these is *montage*, which is a photographic term used to describe the joint effect of various, constantly changing processes by showing rapidly changing pictures of different scenes. Qualitative researchers are often compared to *bricoliers,* who take all kinds of scrap material to recreate a certain quality, which is a new meaning or function, sometimes far from the original one(s). This can be one art piece, a collage of art pieces, or even a makeshift piece of furniture. The main idea here is that by using different items from various sources the actor recreates a reality which, at the end of the process, gains a new meaning. The *quilt maker* is also a popular metaphor − and this „popularity" of the term suggests that the majority of the researchers of this topic are of Anglo-Saxon origin. A quilt is a bed cover, a duvet made of small pieces of fabric, sometimes also called *patchwork*. The cover made of different colours and patterns makes a unique, comforting piece in the end, and this unity merges the varied materials into one. Using a parallel from music, *jazz* is considered to be the most adequate metaphor. Jazz symbolises not only variation, but also the improvisatory elements of qualitative research.

And lastly, I would like to mention a further image concerning the topic of women and management brought by Powell (2012) in his article *„Six ways of seeing the elephant".* He meant that sex, gender and leadership have six intersections, and if we examine all intersections, we will hopefully understand the reality of what an elephant is.

IV.3 Interview as a Journey

After presenting all these dry intellectual and linear actions of planning, definitions, decisions and literature review, we can turn our attention towards the field which gives a certain „artistic" liberty to the researcher, that is, to everyone trying to solve an „intellectual puzzle" (Mason, 2005).

Interview as a research method has gained acceptance; there are numerous methodological books on the subject that provide help and reference points to aid such research. The already mentioned works of Kvale (2005) (1996), Mason (2005), Maxwell (2013), Blaikie (2007), Denzin and Lincoln (2005), and many other articles such as Prasad (2002), Bryman (2004), Gelei (2002), (2006), (2011) helped in designing and carrying out the interviews and analyses.

Kvale uses metaphors resembling the style of Scandinavian folk tales (Kvale, 1996), comparing the researcher with miners and travellers. Miners unearth the valuable metal that is waiting to be uncovered and uncontaminated. Travellers take journeys through many countries and bring stories and memories back home, while acquiring something that changes them too. The miner metaphor, where the hidden gold is discovered which symbolises the concept of using existing knowledge, should be set aside for now. I am more interested in the one that captures the researcher on its way in understanding reality as a social construction, and that is indeed how I am planning to carry out my research.

> *„The alternative traveller metaphor understands interviewer as a traveller on a journey, that leads to a tale to be told upon returning home. The interviewer-traveller wanders through the landscape and enters into conversations with the people encountered. [...] The interviewer wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world and converses them in the original Latin meaning of <u>conversation</u> as wandering together with."* (Kvale, 1996, p. 4)

The interview, therefore, is a target oriented, professional conversation. Its target is to get closer to the interviewee's personal reality, however, we have to interpret what we hear. Interviews give us a great chance to see new shades of reality.

> *„The potentialities of meanings in the original stories are differentiated and unfolded through the traveller's interpretations; the tales are remolded into new narratives which are convincing in their aesthetic form and are validated through their impact upon the listeners."* (Kvale, 1996, p. 4)

The citation above, in my case, means that based on the ontological position of my research, the views, knowledge, interpretations, experiences and interactions are all parts of the social reality that I am trying to uncover, and gain knowledge from a local reality.

Phenomenological perspective thus focuses on the interviewees' personal realities, registers their feelings, experiences and beliefs, all while trying to place itself into their life worlds. It is only in the process of the analysis where the researchers distance themselves away from this position.

From an epistemological perspective, these pieces of information serve as a basis for other data that can be generated with interpretation, critical analysis and other methods. During the phases of hermeneutical research, I will be trying to uncover the hidden meanings and processes of social constructions. This way I can get closer to the pieces of the „intellectual puzzle", which then could make up a whole, scientific kind of understanding.

> *„The journey may not only lead to new knowledge; the traveller might change as well. The journey might instigate the process of reflection that leads the interviewer to new ways of self-understanding, as well as uncovering previously taken-for-granted values and customs in the traveller's own country."*
>
> (Kvale, 1996, p. 4)

Only those can interpret and understand correctly who can rely firmly on their own personal backgrounds and sociological frameworks, and are willing to dive into an „other" reality, which refers to the meaning spectrum of the examined word, action or symbol. As this process also involves the researcher, this is what makes self-reflexion important.

> *„Through conversations, the traveller can also lead others to new understanding and insights as they, through their own story-telling may come to reflect on previously natural seeming matters of course in their culture."* (Kvale, 1996, p. 4)

This circumstance, however, raises the question of direct pressure or manipulation. As one of the goals of my research was to make my interviewees think about the issues of women and leadership, their involvement, as well as about women in the process of promotion. The interviews gave a chances for them to recognise their own prejudices and biases. All this was known by them, my interviews did not pressurize my subjects any further, and therefore, the risk of possible manipulation can be ruled out.

IV.4 Interviews Design

My previous decisions defined the goals and strategies of my research, the ontological and epistemological approach and also included my phenomenological position. I decided that my research was going to disclose information mostly through semi-structured interviews. Returning to the research design model (*Figure 2*), we see that this already is the 6th step dealing with research methods and techniques. All left now is designing the chosen methods in this chapter, that is, the interviews.

Figure 13: Main Questions of Interview Design

	Question	Answer
a)	Who am I? (Role-definition)	Firstly: researcher. Secondly: former „club member"
b)	Who are the interviewees?	Senior managers of the big companies of the competitive private sector, mostly CEOs and board members
c)	What kind of sampling strategy do I need?	Small, qualitative research sample (15-20 interviewees)
d)	Where will the interviews be carried out?	Wherever it is the most comfortable for the interviewees
e)	How detailed plan and questionnaire should be applied?	Semi-structured of explorative nature, leave room for surprises,

f)	What questions should I formulate?	Warm up, thematic, useful for dealing with unexpected situations, etc.
g)	How should I behave during interviews?	Understanding, tuned in, attentive, watchful
h)	How should I ask my targeted interviewees to participate?	Ethically: informed consent, anonymity, shared publishing plans
i)	How will I record the interviews?	Dictaphone and notes

Source: prepared by the author

All books on methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) (Kvale, 2005) (Mason, 2005) (Maxwell, 2013) deem it important and explain it in numerous contexts that in order to make research valid, trustworthy and as effective as possible, one must determine how data would be analysed and how results would be presented; and there are also ethical issues. If alterations are needed, it is practical to do them all at once. Keeping all this in mind, I formulated all the questions and answers.

Due to the fact that I spent most of my professional life in the competitive private sector in senior, mostly in CEO positions, defining my identity, answering question was important not only for myself but also for the interviewees. My strategy was to emphasize my role as a researcher, to put the conversation into a transparent context. At the same time, following Maxwell's advice (2013) I did not plan to deny my previous identity, because I intended to utilize synergies coming from it. I hoped that my previous experiences would be of help in discussing certain questions in depth, and based on a good relationship I might be able to uncover hidden layers. I believed that my background knowledge would help also to check – if needed – the content. All in all, though, my researcher identity took the lead.

Regarding question b), due the reasons discussed at the extended research questions in this chapter I decided to include senior manager men in my research. I am planning to arrange another research project where I could discuss for example the conclusions of my current research

Following the recommendation of experienced researchers and based my previous experiences, I considered the first two interviews to be pilots. I was planning to make these interviews with people I knew closely. Based on their feedbacks I was planning to improve the system, and integrate their suggestions into the methodology later interviews.

Question c) proved to be the one of the most exciting, but at the same time, the most challenging one.

The years I spent with quantitative research and related fields had an impact on my way of thinking. I learnt how to prepare stratified research samples, where each segment of the base population is appropriately represented and how probability theory and statistical theory are employed to estimate confidence intervals within which the results are valid. One can also test whether certain results are statistically significant or not. Statistical methodology is also able to tell whether a hypothesis about a certain phenomenon, when apparent in a random sample of a standard population, may be valid or not.

As opposed to this, sampling for qualitative research is described as follows:

„*I believe there is no recipe on how to design qualitative research samples. [...] One must not fall back to the level of mathematical statistics and believe that one fifty-five year old man represents the whole fifty-five year old male population [...] Instead of this, [...] the specimens we choose to represent a certain segment should be used to generate data for revealing similarities, processes and differences, and to test and stipulate theories and explanations in order to prove these differences and similarities*" (Mason p.119., translation based on the Hungarian edition)

Kvale thinks similarly to Freud, Skinner and Piaget, who still set up world-changing theories, based on one sole example. The number of interviews he deems necessary is as follows:

„The answer is simply: "Interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know" [...] New interviews might be conducted until the point of saturation where further interviews yield little new knowledge."

<div align="right">(Kvale, 1996, pp. 101-102)</div>

Maxwell (2013) mentions purposeful sampling, where we only involve those who are expected to serve us with data deemed useful for our research. Others do not call this group of respondents a sample but rather a „panel". In the end, Mason also writes that we should go for deep and full understanding, rather than collecting a wide range of surface material. These ideas led me, when looking for my interviewees. I decided to use a small sample which is carefully chosen and deeply rooted in context, that enable me to carry out focussed interviews and at the same time big enough to cover people of different approaches.

Question d) referred to the best location for such an interview. I have chosen, quite pragmatically, to offer to go wherever the interviewees wishes to carry out the interview, should it be their office, in a quiet restaurant, in their or my own homes wherever they felt the most comfortable.

Question e) turned out to be harder to tackle and this was the one of the questions I read the most advices about. Maxwell says that the simplest questions are also the easiest to decode, compare and analyse, however, they can lead to tunnel vision. This kind of analysis is only useful when we wish to pinpoint differences in pre-determined questions. The fewer pre-set structures we have, the more freely we can discover the respondents' life realities and uncover unique details that help us in understanding.

„less structured. [...] allow you to focus on the particular phenomena being studied, which may differ between individuals or settings and require individually tailored methods. Less structured methods trade generalizability and comparability for internal validity and contextual understanding, and are particularly useful in revealing the processes that led to specific outcomes"
(Maxwell, 2013, old.: 88)

Mason in her cited work emphasizes another important point:

„We have to reject the idea that standardised questions will ensure that interviewees understand them in a standardised way or that standardised form carries standardised meaning" (p.54. Translation is based on the Hungarian edition)

Many authors warn us however, that the less structured interviews are, the harder it is to synthesise experiences, get the pieces of the „intellectual puzzle" together and solve it as intended.

We need to find the golden mean between stability and spontaneity. My research had emic and exploratory characteristics, so my interview design was semi-structured to leave some room for my respondents to talk as they wish but still guide them with several questions. As Mason advises, I accepted the fact that I would not have to ask everybody the same questions. If someone brings up an interesting idea, I can follow that line and pose questions accordingly, or even use them in later interviews.

Looking back the interviews one example for an interesting, undersigned, question was whether the moderate interest of women in IT, mathematics, engineering and technology is a result of socialisation processes, constructions or other reasons. One of the interviewees mentioned this topic had an interesting view. Afterwards I asked this question from others and finally reached a conclusion that was different from the results of previous research.

At the same time, there was one issue, that was mentioned though, I never asked from my partners. That was the case when someone mentioned his wife while talking about female colleagues. I was interested how many of them would mention their wives spontaneously. There were some others who did so and referred to their wives in their constructions.

Answers to question f) generate contents to the framework. When wording my interview questions, I paid attention to many aspects. Kvale's nine-point guide was particularly useful (1996, p. 137).

Figure 14: Questions of a semi-structured interview
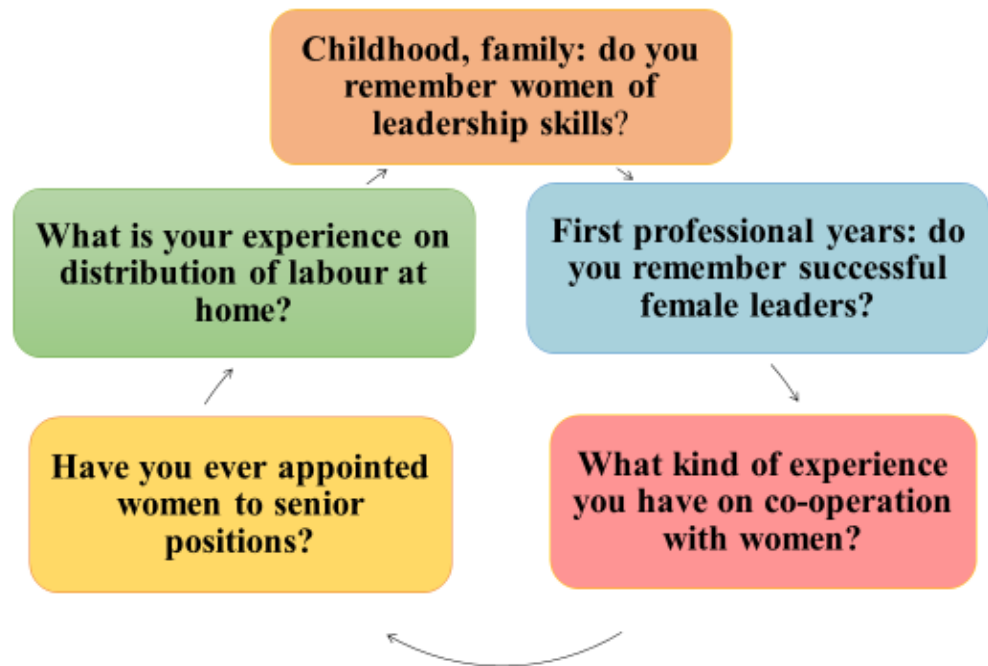
Source: prepared by the author

The questions (*Figure 14*) actually cover whole sets of questions. Behind each of them there is a bunch of related ones, details of which discussed in the next chapter. Whether I asked a question depended on the setting or the pace of the interview. Apart from these pre–formulated questions I also prepared some more specific questions, should they be necessary.

Question g) refers to the actual interviews as conversations. I had to clarify for myself what I intended to learn, what is my goal with the interviews and how would I process and analyse the data. Apart from the main line of questions I prepared others: introductory, bridging and concluding ones, as Kvale suggests (1996, pp. 133-135)

- *Introductory and concluding questions*: they are important as they serve as a warm-up and cool-down for the conversation.

- *Probing questions*: „Could you tell me more about this?" or „Do you have examples for that?". Before the first few interviews I put these down in my notebook as a cheat-sheet, but later I found them unnecessary.

- *Specifying questions*: Important not only for the sake of the outcome but also for that of a shared experience. Typically, „What did you feel then?", or „What was it like, when...?".

- *Interpreting questions:* These questions can be used to react on anything that has been said, like: „You mean...?", „What do you mean by this?", „Am I correct, that...?".

- I also prepared some *confronting questions* that can be asked from my interviewees, if the mood or the atmosphere of the interview allows, or if I face views that oppose general research findings. My colleagues warned me, however, that I should not create the impression of being too scholarly, nor should I induce them to act that way. I planned to formulate these questions in the form of indirect ones, like „what do you think about these research results, and why do you think your experiences are different?"

Kvale enumerates nine personal traits of a researcher, that promote the success of an interview as they put both the respondent and the interviewer into a „fair situation" (cited work p. 148-49.). These helped me to become self-reflexive even before starting my interviews and to learn what to pay attention to the interviewees.

Question h) raises both practical and ethical issues. I was afraid that it would be hard to convince my targeted interviewees to talk about the research topic, but I did not want to mask the meeting as a professional or personal meeting either. In order to be ethical, based on the informed consent principles (Bailei, 1996), I introduced my research, my goals and some of my questions, and asked for one or one and a half hour of their time.

For question i), I found the answer quickly through my previous experiences. Firstly, I decided to ask all my interviewees if they approved of recording – with a promise to keep secrecy and anonymity. I deemed the recording very important as I knew what a difference it made. Interpretative analysis is much easier if there is possibility to listen to the recorded materials several times and perceive gestures and intonations. Additionally, however, I decided that I would take notes, too. This makes the use of a „cheat sheet" easier, and I can register the important parts of the conversation immediately.

IV.5 Data Analysis Design

All of the aforementioned papers and books agree that it is important to pay close attention to the design of the data analysis that should be in line with the interview design. In preparation for the interpretative analysis, I had to establish the most appropriate framework.

The first issue I considered carefully was the time schedule. I decided to do it such a way to have enough time after interviews to record all impressions and knowledge that generated during the interview. Based on the advice given I assumed that many things that were vivid right after the interview might fade later, so I considered it important to take notes and memos about my impressions as soon as possible.

I did not want to leave too much time between the interview and the first analysis, so the experience would still be „fresh", and I myself would not lose my enthusiasm. In order to realise these, first I needed to establish the necessary infrastructure. Kvale's words impressed me as he puts this as follows:

> *„Interview is an evolving conversation between two people. The transcriptions are frozen in time. [...] A transcript is a transgression, a transformation of one narrative mode – oral discourse – to another narrative mode – written discourse."*

> *„Interview transcriptions are often boring to read, ennui ensues in face of the repetitions and the incomplete sentence [...] The apparently incoherent statements may be coherent within the context of a living conversation with vocal intonations and facial expressions and body language supporting.*

> *„Transcripts are decontextualized conversations. If one accepts as a main premise of interpretation, that meaning depends on the context, then transcripts in isolation make an impoverished basis for interpretation."* ((1996, pp. 166-167)

Kvale mentions in his book of 1996 that he heard of some computer programs with which it is possible to analyse sound and video recordings.

„The direct listening to and structuring the original oral speech allows an empathetic listening to what was said in the interview interaction, [...] The many methodological and theoretical problems of transforming oral speech into written text simply bypassed when the analyst works directly on recordings of the live conversations. (pp. 174-175)

So, I decided to look up such software, or at least something similar. Due to the rapid development in informatics in the last twenty years I was sure that I would manage to find one. I could find a software named „Atlas.ti 7" that helps data analysis in the ways below:

- Coding can be done while listening to the record.

- While coding, the sound file is visualized and one can split and coordinate pieces with the appropriate codes.

- Parts of the same codes are filed under parallel folders, therefore:

  o When typing a code, everything appears that has been said in relation to it

  o these recording parts can be used and played on demand

I could have used pre-determined codes. This, however, was not in line with the semi-structured, exploratory nature of my interviews. I was planning to follow the emic way, to assign codes after having understood the interpretation of my recordings. Listening to the recorded conversations by their assigned codes allows the user several times to listen to what interviewees said about a certain topic. As Kvale said, there is no distortion, there are no boring texts either, live interview conversations reclaim their importance as opposed to a hegemony of interview transcripts.

Statements can only be analysed in context, together with metacommunication (laughter, sighs, voice fades). Only a video file could provide a „higher density" picture together with all non-verbal signs, but I was afraid that making a video would embarrass my partners and I myself did not have experience in making videos either.

This all was to achieve better results with my research. Quoting Gelei (2006):

> *„Interpretative approach is rather a philosophically driven attitude, manifested in experienced reality (and life), than the learning and use of a certain specific toolbox. This attitude can be described with such attributes as sensitivity, taste, empathy, sense of judgement, and even understanding traditions, sense of morals, validity, morally right actions, and after all: acting in the spirit of the truth."*

The starting point is the question: how can we understand the meaning and the reasoning behind the words? In my own research, I interpreted my partner's words (and acts, and signs) in the course of which I focused on words, actions and culture as a whole. When we interpret the words we heard we have to get to the speaker's intention and mind, to the "inner word" or to the sender's "soul" (Grondin, 2002).

The goal is to perceive the whole meaning, including its hidden layers. The speakers do not only express themselves (their own psyche), when they write, speak or act, but they also show the particular tradition and culture they are parts of and which they cannot leave behind. Only those can understand correctly who, based on their personal backgrounds and traditions (imprints) dive into the other world that holds different meaning horizons of a given word, action or symbol.

IV.6 Assuring the Research Quality

The last two issues covered in this chapter are related to the quality of the whole research. The first concern is the influence of the three parties involved while the second one is the relevance of the comparison with previous research results.

When conducting an interview based interpretative research, at least the following three player groups are involved:

- interviewees
- researcher(s)
- readers of the research findings

All three subjects are related to the research in some way and they are all influenced by it, and in turn they also all affect the outcome. Learning and interpreting the reality

construction of the interviewee is the duty of the researcher. As I presented that with the help of Kvale at the beginning of this chapter however, this is not only the interviewees that influences the researcher, but the researcher also affects the interviewees in the same process. An interviewee makes the researcher think about issues that he or she otherwise would not be concerned about, reveals things that otherwise would have remained hidden. Recalls memories, views, beliefs. They can make discoveries together or find connections which would otherwise have been overlooked. Consequently, the interviewee may look at issues differently than before.

On the other hand, the researchers themselves are subjects and the research results are products of their own understanding and explanations, so it is through their personality that we see the research subjects and results. Their personal past, previous theoretical knowledge, empathy, interests, predispositions are all unique attributes. The person of the researcher cannot be excluded from any research, not even from quantitative ones. It is especially true for qualitative research. But it is important, to consciously try and add something through self-reflexion, to show the personal effect – those being „data" as well (Maxwell, 2003.).

> This is true for my own case too, having been one of the few female senior managers of the examined sector. My role here, therefore, is unique, I am an outsider and an insider at the same time, and that is how my environment also regarded me. This situation helps me for example to involve interviewees who would were not reachable otherwise, to have a deeper understanding of the environment and to check the validity of what is told to me. Therefore, these circumstances - with appropriate self-reflexions - contribute to the results of my research.

The Department of Organizational Behaviour and Management at the Corvinus University of Budapest, where I work, and its intellectual agglomeration have become one of the central workshop of the Hungarian qualitative research in the last few decades. Vast methodological knowledge and experience have been amassed, offering great help to me during my research including quality assurance of my work.

While preparing for the interviews, for example, Attila Bokor, one of my colleagues who is practiced interviewer and coach, conducted an interview with me about my

planned research and prepared a memo about the potential risks he identified. This document with my reflexions is found in the Appendix. At a later phase my colleagues also helped me to validate my research.

Talking about the third players, the final interpretation of the research does not only depend on me, the researcher, but also on the reader him or herself. The reader is also a part of the construction process of the research. Any given reader for example could have a presumption about my topic even without reading a single line. A category may be associated to my research topic for example is „feminist". That has a wide range of associated meanings from very positive ones up to stigmatizing negatives. While I emphasize that my approach is of leadership studies, it might also generate different readings depending on the reader's presumptions, previous knowledge, interests or intellectual background. Readers of different backgrounds, genders and knowledge about leadership can make different interpretations. All in all, in order to be able to receive the message it is important that the reader should be open for that.

In order to ensure validity, reliability and establish ground for generalizability I implemented a strategy of considerate, well–documented, transparent decisions from the phase of research design to the final dissemination of results.

In favour of the aforementioned goal, it is a positive fact, that there is another opportunity which has not yet been presented in the base model (*Figure 2*).

Figure 15: *Supplemented Research design*
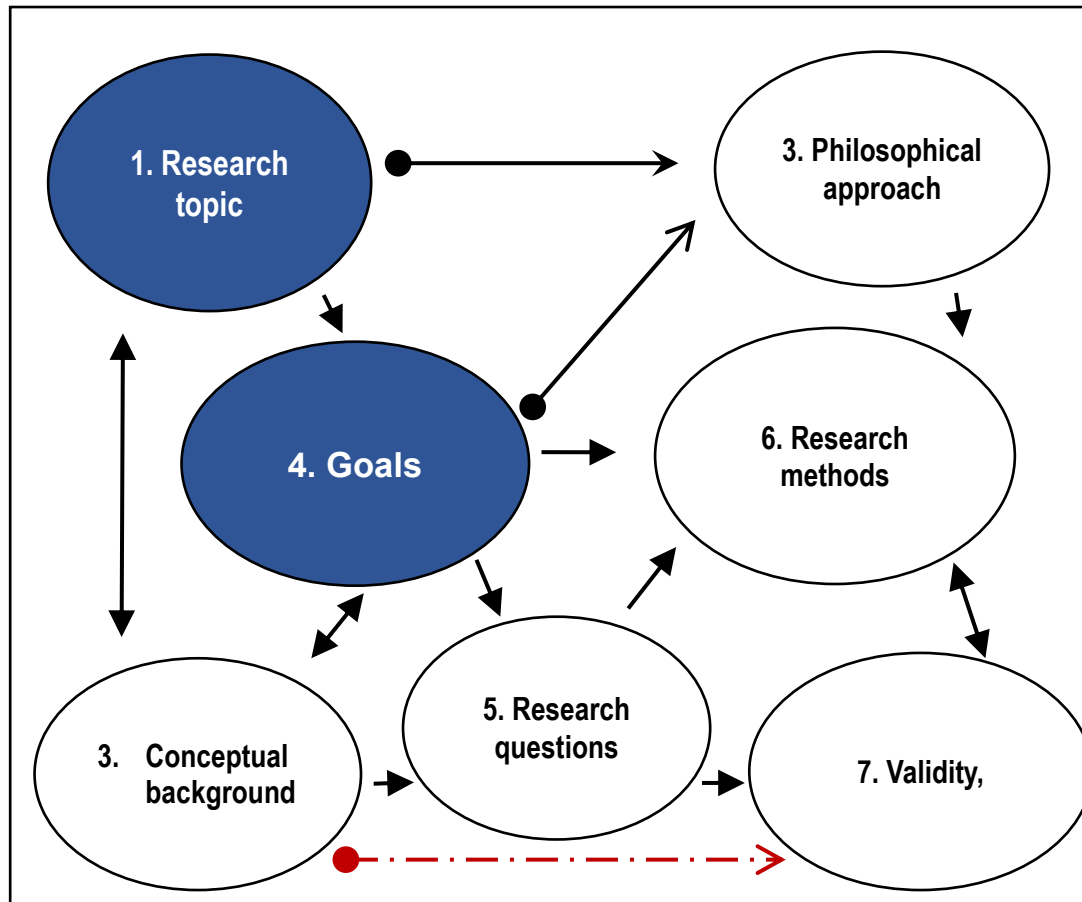
The continuous comparison of the findings of my own research with the results of previous ones and the different theories provides a good occasion for a quality check. The conceptual background and the literature review were presented in III. and *Figure 15* presents the link between items (3) and (7) that illustrates the logical connection.

V   Empirical Research: Interviews with Decision Makers

After clarifying the philosophical position, reviewing the relevant literature and deciding on research methods we arrived at the implementation of all these. In the next chapters I discuss the interviews, the interpretation process and finally, my conclusions.

V.1   Interviewees and the Interviews

I run into a dilemma right at the beginning of my empirical research: I happened to bump into a CEO whom I could invite for an interview... or perhaps not? The problem was the geographical focus. This was the time that I needed to face the question: what do I regard as a base population?

While making decision I considered the goal and the methods of the research and the aspects of validity and generalizability of my work. I intended to carry out an emic analysis that – by definition - focuses on a given culture. What was needed to define the culture I would focus on.

For validity reasons, it is useful to have a well-defined focus, to be able to tell exactly what the research is about. As for generalisation, it is more relevant to use a population that has clear boundaries and parameters than an amorphous, undefined set.

Living in Hungary with all my personal and professional experiences and connections, I choose Hungary as a geographical focus. The question of nationality seemed to be a harder to tackle, but keeping the research target in mind I was able to find a suitable means. There are a number of foreign CEOs in Hungary who lead local companies of multinational firms. Besides Hungarians I involved some of those who had worked at least five years in the country. I also involved Hungarians who used to be senior managers in Hungary for most of their professional lives but at the time of the research lived abroad.

I had already decided that a small sample should be used in order to allow personal interviews and deep, contextual analysis. Instead of statistical representativeness, therefore, I intended to assemble a consciously chosen sample.

In qualitative research, the final sample is not always defined at the beginning of the research; the theoretical points only define one or two starting points, and further research is defined in accordance with the research targets and firstly analysed data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It was the way I built my sample. I tried to cover people of different personalities, leadership styles working for companies of different industries and corporate cultures.

I have conducted 18 interviews. All of the interviewees have been working in top decision-maker positions for a number of years (see *Figure 16*). All of them are involved in leadership decisions including senior management appointments. Generations were defined by definitions given by Howe and Strauss (1992). Regarding their age, all interviewees are members of the Baby boomer and the X generations.

Various sectors are represented such as consulting, insurance companies, banks, financial enterprises, telecom, IT, engineering, chemical, heavy industry and others. Executives of Hungarian companies and Hungarian branches of international companies are both represented in the sample. The headquarters of the multinational companies range from the USA, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Scandinavia to Hungary.

As for the willingness to participate in the research, my first presumption fortunately proved to be unfounded, Senior managers, including the executives of the biggest Hungarian privately held corporations cordially accepted the request to be interviewed. I made them fully aware of the nature and their role in my research. In line with the principle of informed consent (Bailei, 1996) I provided all information necessary for them to be able to decide whether or not they wish to participate.

They all were aware of the topic and its implications. I promised to them that if any personal opinions would be quoted I would present them without names. Most of the interviewees knew by experience that if I promised to handle things confidentially they could take my word. The others also accepted these conditions.

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Identification number	Position	Company	Generation
1.	CEO, Board member	Headquarters of international firms and their Hungarian daughter companies	Baby boomer
2.	Founder CEO, Board member	Hungarian company dominant in its sector	X
3.	CEO, Board member	Hungarian daughter companies of multinational and Hungarian firms	X
4.	Founder CEO, Board member	Hungarian company dominant in its sector	X
5.	CEO, Board member	Hungarian daughter company of a multinational and a Hungarian international firm	Baby boomer
6.	Founder CEO, Board member	Hungarian company dominant in its sector	Baby boomer
7.	CEO	Big Hungarian daughter company of a multinational firm	X
8.	CEO, Board member	Big Hungarian daughter company of a multinational firm	Baby boomer
9.	CEO	Big Hungarian daughter company of a multinational firm	X
10,	CEO, Board member	Hungarian international firm	X
11.	CEO, Board member	Big Hungarian daughter company of a multinational firm	X
12.	Board member	Big Hungarian daughter company of a multinational firm	X
13.	CEO, Board member	Big Hungarian daughter company of a multinational firm	X
14.	CEO, Board member	Hungarian company dominant in its sector	Baby boomer
15.	CEO	Big Hungarian daughter company of a multinational firm	Baby boomer
16.	Board member	Big Hungarian daughter company of a multinational firm	Baby boomer
17.	CEO	Big Hungarian daughter company of a multinational firm	Baby boomer
18.	Founder, CEO	Hungarian company dominant in its sector, Hungarian daughter company of a multinational firm	X

Source: Prepared by the author

The leaders mostly had themselves interviewed in the office, though some of them suggested that we meet in a nice, quiet restaurant or café. The numbers of the two

persons who did not allow me to use the dictaphone is 14 and 17 With only two exceptions everyone allowed to have their interviews recorded. When I quoted their words or mentioned their constructions I referred to them as partners or interviewees and by their „Identification" number in the table.

One of the reviewers of the Thesis proposal doubted that male interviewees would answer openly and frankly. But in fact, their overly frank reactions far exceeded my fairly optimistic expectations. We could create an atmosphere in which they were happy to share their perceived realities, and were talking about their experiences, feelings, beliefs and thoughts like tour guides. They spoke about their 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. They involved me in issues behind which they suspected various covert causes, and they revealed the walls men build around themselves and rarely let women step inside. They also talked about their good experiences about their female colleagues. Later in this document I share many examples with readers, the research community.

> All the above proved to me that in the course of the interviews my new identity did not disturbed my partners. All interviewees got used quickly to my researcher self during the interviews. At the same time, my past as an executive often helped. Sometimes we talked about events we had lived through together, so I could reflect on their interpretations. There were also interviews when people and examples we both knew were mentioned, and it was easy for me to put them in context.

It was especially exciting for me as a former executive when beliefs, and at times, prejudices were spoken out. My past experience helped me to validate the information received. The interviewees were aware of this fact. It may be one of the reasons why I hardly perceived any sign of misinterpretation or distortion of facts or events. It happened rarely that I felt I needed some double check.

Kvale's metaphor often crossed my mind - it was as if I had gone on a journey. Sometimes to countries that are closer, sometimes to ones more distant. All of them were fascinating, some of them downright exciting. Even if I heard something I disagreed with. I do not want to sound too solemn, but I had a revelation during my

research that the interviews led me to understanding. Besides, to quote Kvale again, my words had an effect on my interviewees to rethink certain things. They were asking me about general experiences and my own beliefs. Thus my ambition to understand did not lead to inefficiency but to mutuality.

With my research I primarily intended to discover personal realities. Whatever I heard I tried to understand and decode. Some interviewees provoked debates, claiming for example that women should rather have only children and not careers or stating that women's ways of socialisation make them incapable of being good leaders.

These times I first made it clear that the goal of the interview was understanding and not making judgements or engaging in direct persuasion. I shared my research findings, international experiences and, if it was relevant, my own experiences with them.

This method generally made the interviewees think over what they had said. It prodded them to self-examination. Some of them said that on second thoughts, they might have had "preconceptions". There were others who, though maintaining their stark opinion, conceded that women may have different lives and free choice for everyone is a good thing. I feel that their attitude helped me a lot to get closer to revealing subconscious prejudices.

At other times they asked curious questions because they were interested in what science said about the matter at hand and what I thought. My former manager consultant self-revived at these times. I gladly shared my knowledge and thoughts and I asked the interviewees to express their opinions. There were exciting discussions starting this way.

> My experiences convinced me that preparing with questions was not a waste of time, because I managed to make discussions fluent, and interest was constantly maintained. Reviewing the theories thoroughly proved to be useful, because on the one hand I could share little known facts that were interesting for them, and on the other, I could demonstrate my skills in my new role as a researcher.

As for the preparedness of the interviewees, they were often surprisingly well-prepared. It was pleasing to hear it from people so often that they had started thinking about the

topic days before the interview. It was exciting to making joint discoveries and watching new beliefs and ideas being born.

> *"I have never given any thought to it, but now that we're into it, I realised."*

> *"Now that you ask and I'm thinking hard, a lot comes to mind."*

Getting feedback later was also very pleasing. The executive of a giant company recently said that without the interview he would have made a different decision at his company. It had been an important decision and he felt that he might have made a precedent to be followed by others.

Contrary to my expectations, in the majority of cases both me and the interviewee found the topic interesting, we got soaked in and in the end, we were richer with joint experiences. We almost became co-authors. It was often difficult to stop. Many of them cancelled their upcoming meetings or called in to say they would be late. There were some who called me the next day to add something.

V.2   Data Analysis in Practice

The interviews served an emic research therefore the emphasis was on the exploration of the constructions of the local culture. As my goal was to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons for the low female participation in top management I built a sample of senior decision-makers. I intended to discover the local interpretations of thoughts, beliefs, feelings and experiences existing within the culture. In such research, the researcher tries to live in the contexts and be open for surprises. The methods implemented should help in reaching these goals-

> This is why I choose semi-structured interviews as a primary method. My years spent in the culture proved to be an advantage in local-focussed analysis contextual interpretation and validity checks of information.

Already during the interviews, I often revealed interpretations of the stories heard. This process had an influence on me, reflexion processes were activated and as a result, my understanding became richer in understanding. As I have already mentioned, the discussions led the interviewees to new discoveries therefore it was more than just

recounting stories. In this phase the very task was to compose the framework which, once filled up with content, can serve to create „new stories" from the „tales" ((Kvale, 1996).

V.2.1 Recommendations and Applications

Prior to starting the data analysis, I summarized my answers to the questions os "What?", „Why?" and „How?" In relation to this questions I have found many suggestions in literature. When choosing my research methods I examined the approaches by Kvale (2005), Mason (2005), Maxwell (2013) and Gelei (2006) in detail.

At certain points their suggestions are very similar. For instance, they all recommend that from the beginning of research we should keep our eyes on the final output, that is, the research paper we want to prepare. This advice is similarly to suggestions discussed at quality issues. We should designate the challenging "puzzle", the topic, set the goal, choose a suitable philosophical position and select the methods to be applied. In the meantime, the literature should also be reviewed for previous research issues and conclusions.

Data analysis is therefore a logical consequence of a well-structured research process, and as a result, all parts fit harmoniously. Data analysis is compatible with data collection and promotes research objectives.

> I have built my research as a step-by-step sequence of transparent decisions. The experience I have gained was in line with the advantages described in literature. The consistency of the procedure and the harmony created by this manner enabled me to focus continually on the core issues, and avoid the dead ends of controversies inherited from earlier stages of research.

The other opinion often formulated was that we should start figuring out and noting down the fresh ideas and inspirations already in the course of data collection to make our work smooth and enjoyable. It also helps if we do the analysis as soon as possible after the interviews. This way materials will not get "cold" and lose context (Maxwell, 2013, p. 104.), which is rather difficult to reconstruct. If we work on our analysis

continuously, we do „like the fox stalking the hare" as Heinrich said (1984, old.: 71.). If we think continuously on our research paper intended for readers, then each of our interviews will really build on the previous one, accumulating experiences will be more organised, pushing us closer to our goal.

> My experience supports again the advantages of the suggested methods. If we do the analysis shortly after the interview, we enjoy the advantage of the fact that the whole experience is still with us. That not only helps us but also makes the analysis enjoyable. Thinking about the research between interviews leads new ideas and inspirations that would otherwise have been lost.

Finally, a third remark which is mentioned – among others - by Kvale and called „the method as a black box" by him (cited source p. 250). That means that instead of boring descriptions written in "boilerplate language" as Maxwell puts it, studies ought to include meaningful and intelligible methodological analyses and explanations for choices (Maxwell, 2013, old.: 104)

> When writing the following pages, I endeavoured to clarify the methods I considered, the choices I made and the reasons why.

In Mason's (2005) book, which I so frequently cite, three levels of interview analysis are identified.

- *Literal reading*: word-by word interpretation where language, sequences of interaction, style and structure should concern us. By doing such an analysis, we might have the illusion of working on something "real" and "objective", however, our subjectivist thinking contradicts. Since a description is always a construction, the readers will read it with their own preconceptions. So it is, eventually, still a social construction of some sort, whatever name we give to it. As a result, most researchers do not stay on this level, and neither will I.

- *Interpretative reading*: we are actively involved in the construction and documentation of an interpretation, since we have to give answers to what the findings mean and represent. What we can get out of it. How interviewees interpret our questions. What underlying content their answers may contain.

- *Reflexive reading*: denotes our role in interpretation. How we came to be part of the process, what role we play in generating data.

In my own research I implemented all three. In several cases readings developed in my mind in a parallel manner.

In his cited work Kvale talks about five stages of data analysis that are partly similar to Mason's classification (1996, pp. 192-204)). Brief summaries of the stages are as follows:

- *Condensation of meaning:* The empirical-phenomenological approach is based on the priority of the interviewee's personal reality, which is done by dividing the entire text into semantic units, and condensing their meanings. This approach is descriptive and interviewee-centred.

- *Categorisation of meaning*: used for structuring interviews by both positivist and qualitative researchers. Categories are either prepared in advance or developed during analysis. If the research is qualitative, this tool promotes a deeper understanding of life realities with measures taken to establish comparability of interviews.

- *Narrative structuring*: The narrative analysis of a recorded interview leads to retelling the story based on the topics of the original interview. The story can be based on one or several interviews. It is partly chronological, following the pattern of events. It also has a social dimension if somebody tells it to others and it has a plot which gives a meaning to the story. Both narrative search and narrative creation may occur in the course of the analysis

- *Meaning interpretation*: similar to Mason's interpretative level. The researcher goes beyond the manifest meaning of the text to deeper interpretation. In contrast to decontextualization. like categorization it recontextualizes the meaning of the statement within a broader frame of reference. Unlike condensation it leads to text expansion.

- *Ad hoc generation of meaning*: According to Kvale, the major part of the analysis is done this eclectic way. Based on the first concise impression after the first reading

one can analyse each different stage with different methods. It summarises casual and intuitive applications of various methods. Out of his thirteen ad hoc methods I quote only the ones which I employed myself: creating metaphors, summarising, dividing, counting, confronting opposites and comparing data.

Kvale also examined closely how these processes of meaning generation unite into scientific explanations. Objectivistic approaches are also tackled, which are irrelevant here, so I only considered the thoughts for use here that were in line with the interpretative approach. One of the important elements he highlighted was that local empirical data may only be acquired through filters of *local interpretations*, as the social world almost always relies on interpretations.

The researcher's task is to understand these interpretations and to turn them into *scientific interpretations*. We may have our hypothesis first and the goal is falsification; we may develop theory as a result of our research, in an inductive way; and lastly we may do the two in a dialectic, parallel way as well.

In Maxwell's "Qualitative research design" (2013) the interpretative approach is taken naturally to an extent that other forms of analyses are not even mentioned. He presents however, some new aspects of interpretative analyses:

- He attributes great importance to *memos*, they are considered to be a useful tool for preserving thoughts and ideas, and they can also have a stimulating effect.

- Strategies of categorising - a method of which is called coding - can be:

  - data comparison: if the contexts or the processes are similar or different.
  - context comparison: if the specific elements are close by or related to each other.
  - structural coding: they structure interviews with the help of codes by answering the question "when they talked about what". The codes can be both predefined and open.
  - content coding: building blocks of analysis used for grouping ideas by topic and analysis target, and they also mark the places where relevant sentences were uttered.

The difference between the last two types of coding is that while the first one allows us to compare information from similar interview topics but cuts contextual links between codes, while the second serves the purpose of twining up such strings. The latter contributes significantly to the shaping and drawing of conclusions. For a coherent analysis of targets and data Maxwell suggests the compilation of a matrix.

> I admit, that at the beginning I did not understand the relevance of the content codes. When I started to analyse the first interview, however, I automatically started to generate all types of codes including that one as well.

The fourth author, Gelei summarized all data analysis methods (see *Figure 17*) he used in his research. His categories include the indications for the attitudes of the researcher.

This chart provided assistance in synthesising the presented methods and also guided me in choosing data analysis methods. The explanations of the categories are the following:

Naturalist reading: the same as Mason's literal interpretation, close to Kvale's condensation of meaning. As I have already mentioned, Maxwell had never written about this option.

> Though I started listening to the interviews of my own research according to this "reading", the information I gained thus only served as raw material that was later processed by methods of interpretative and critical analysis.

Critical interpretations represent the entrance to the world of interpretation, they correspond to Mason's interpretative reading. The procedures presented by Kvale also display the details of preparations for an interpretative reading (meaning categorisation, structural narrative). Maxwell's operative codes also belong here, and so do a part of the content codes.

> At the stage of interpretative analysis, I intended to understand the interviewees' „life world", that means to see reality (and the research topic) from their perspective as much as possible. Therefore, I was seeking social constructions and intended to unfold hidden meanings and deeper understandings in order to tell the „whole story"

Figure 17 : Approaches and researcher attitudes in data analysis

Interpretive reading and analysis			External, structural reading and analysis
Naturalist reading	*Critical reading*		
	Subject-focus	*Context-awareness*	
▪ what s/he says (rational / content level) ▪ what his/her opinion is about the topic / question ▪ what s/he says about how s/he experienced events ▪ what s/he says about oneself and/or own role ▪ what s/he says about others	▪ what s/he (purposefully) suggests about what s/he's talking about ▪ how s/he is saying what s/he is saying (emotional / hidden level) ▪ what s/he talks about a lot or primarily ▪ what s/he doesn't talk about at all / talks only a little about	▪ what the meaning of what/she is talking about is, in light of the total interview ▪ what its meaning is, in light of all the interviews ▪ what its meaning is, in light of the broader organizational context	▪ cause-effect relationships ▪ evaluations ▪ local explanations ▪ theoretical explanations ▪ generalizability

Source: Gelei (Gelei, 2002, old.: 185) (quoted with the author's permission)

Executives' „life worlds" are generated and altered by the actions and interactions of other players. Players participate in situations while keeping their existing interpretations and contents of meaning. Individuals give meanings to the events of their environment, to themselves, to others and to others' actions, still, personal interpretations vary with regard to whether they happen in the present, happened in the past, or will happen in the future.

Personal observations, interpretations and actions in interactions also influence one another: actions and their results also get symbolic meanings. The essence of reality is therefore neither in the organisational events and interactions observable to outsiders, nor it is in general manifestations of customary structures, but in "intersubjective" and underlying contents generated by interactions. Addition to the interactions in the world of work they have other interactions in their private life. Traditions, culture, the media

and other factors also influence the "life world" as it was discussed at the issues of hegemonic masculinity.

When using critical reading to unfold hidden meanings it is important to note that the term doesn't necessarily mean a „negative" reading. Content-wise, critical reading might also be „positive reading" and the interpretation should be "empathic" in the sense that the role of researcher interpretation is then not to evaluate, but to understand. The word here indicates a suspicious attitude towards the native words, and an inquiring into hidden assumptions and meanings. The two options:

- *subject-focus*: paying attention not to what s/he is saying but, instead, to "how it's been said" (emotionally); to "what has s/he been talking a lot about" and "what's been omitted totally" (hidden level);

- *context-awareness:* when interpreting the meanings of the interviewee I considered the totality of the interview (e.g. his/her answers to other questions) as well as others' opinions about the subject or the issue and all my background information.

The goal is to unfold hidden meanings, consciously or unconsciously untold parts of stories. The subject-focussed approach pays attention to the construction of reality that is a complex process which manifests:

- in minds and in the conscious, in explicit and implicit thoughts and expectations,
- in the subconscious, as in phantasies, intuitions and dreams,
- in hearts and feelings, like in cravings, fears, anxieties, attitudes, motivations, feelings of failure or success,
- in deeds, that is, in everyday decisions and actions,
- in interactions, for example in gestures and communication,
- in language and in the usage of language.

One interviewee with a self-reflexive personality expressed similar ideas from his own viewpoint. He said:

"I'm an instinct-driven creature, I'm not always able to explain what I did and why I did it." (Interviewee 1)

Context awareness has a particular importance when we interpret the communication (words, acts) of more than one interviewees. Personal realities of interviewees show many similarities but also differences. Therefore, an important objective was to discover the extent to which there might be a common reality if at all, to the limits of the sample. What similarities and what differences there were and what caused the differences. Grodin's words should guide us here, according to which hermeneutics is the philosophy and art of understanding.

The same applies to me, that is, the one who interprets: I participate in understanding with my own experiences in the background, representing myself, whereas I also represent my own tradition and my own era. While doing the analysis I was trying to pay attention to everything and to make reflections when necessary.

Understanding happens through hermeneutical cycles. The starting point is textual analysis, where actual analysis happens in the cycle between the meaning of words and understanding the text, which is generalised by Gadamer as:

"Similar to textual cohesion, connections of life's structures are also determined by the relationship between the whole and the parts. Each part expresses something from the entirety of life, so it does have an importance with regard to the whole, just like the whole defines the meaning of the part." (2008, old.: 257.)

In the analysis we can study the actual realities of interviewees, including personal constructions, through their subjective interpretations. Social and corporate realities consist of personal constructions. The construction of those whose influencing power is greater will prevail.

External/structural analysis as presented by *Figure 17*, is the last phase of data analysis. In my understanding Mason's *reflexive reading*, Kvale's *scientific interpretation* and some of Maxwell's content codes all belong to this group, while Gelei's table clearly shows that this level of analysis is done along guidelines of external constructions.

V.2.2 A Virtual Matrix

At this point we step out of the understanding-oriented analysis and proceed further. We are looking for higher level connections, and we draw more general conclusions from earlier analyses. Our own understanding of the phenomenon examined are compared with external viewpoints and findings of other research. Self-reflection also reaches a new level here: by stepping over the interpretations of the interviews we are able to examine the traces of our own roles, personalities and attitudes in our own constructions.

In my research - as I mentioned earlier - at first I implemented the *literal* (Mason) or *naturalist* (Gelei) "reading" to develop an overall understanding. Soon after the interviews I listened to the recorded conversations. Together with my vivid memories, notes from the interview I developed an overall picture and I took *notes, memos*. The latter summarized my impressions, represented some *meaning condensation,* while also helped me to develop codes and identify narratives important for the interpretative analysis.

> Illustrating with a metaphor, these interviews and their coded content groups constitute a *virtual table or a matrix*. If we imagine that individual interviews make up the rows and thematic groups of interviews that follow a certain pattern forms columns, all this constitute a table or a matrix.

Following the recommendations at first the *"vertical" analysis* was carried out. This was the stage where I used *codes* across interviews for grouping. This was the entry point to the realm of interpretative analysis. I followed the recommendations of Gelei on critical reading including subject focus and context awareness, advices of Mason and Kvale on interpretative reading as well as the majority of Maxwell's ideas about codes.

Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, I did not ask all the questions in each interview, and as a result, some codes belong to fewer interviews than others. However, codes belonging to fewer interviews are not of less worth as they can point to important factors. Fortunately, the software I used (see details in chapter IV.5) made it possible to code segments of similar content of the audio files. It was helpful, that

Sections of recordings that belonged to the same code could be opened from the directory.

Still following methodical guidelines at phase three I returned to "horizontal dimension" i.e. to the individual interviews. This "reading" was different from the first one, as I had gained a lot of knowledge about the data between the two. I started to develop broader interpretations and even deeper understandings than before. At this stage I marked narratives that represented stories belonging to one or more interviews.

Finally, I arrived at the phase of *"external, structural"* analysis that was similar to Mason's structural and Kvale's scientific interpretation. This is the circle where we analyse in view of other constructions, with even broader interpretations than before. Comparisons are carried out and conclusions are reached at his phase.

The phases and circles did not happen in such a strict, structured order as they were presented. Ideas were developing sometimes parallel, sometimes ideas were jumping forward and backward. The final thoughts were also developing continuously during my research.

It was practical to start the analysis with the questions that were most frequently answered. Therefore, the answers for the pre-planned questions from the semi-structured interviews were analysed first.

In this stage, however, it was not enough to review the questions how they were shown in *Figure 14*, but the ideas and considerations behind them also have to be dealt with. Details in connection to questions also help interpretation, because they reveal the manner in which the questions were asked.

- The first question: *"Do you remember a woman or women from your childhood who you now think had leadership skills?"*, I chose for multiple reasons. The question is informative, supports the research objectives, and at the same time it is also good for warming up. Asking about childhood events served to get the interviewee out of their present reality and to take them back to a world most people have a lot of memories from. They could relive their memories and for a short time they could relive their child-egos, too.

114

My hopes in this matter came true in the course of the interviews. The experiences evoked by this question were relaxing and comforting for most of the interviewees. At the same time, memories, feelings and thoughts relevant to the topic also started to be activated. My other objective was to get to know the contents (were there any such women?), context (when, how, with whom?) and commentaries of the memories preserved from the socialising environment. These will be analysed after the presentation of the questions, at the end of the chapter.

- The next question was about the memories of the interviewees made about *female leaders*, if there were any, *at the time they started their careers*. This did not only target the evocation of memories but also served to elicit some general information about interviewees' beliefs about women. The questions were mostly not about their opinions but about events, situations and examples.

- The third set of questions strengthened the previous line of ideas. *What is it like to work with female colleagues and female managers?* I wanted stories. *Is it different than working only with men? Could you give some examples? Is there any difference in leadership styles?* With this question the focus opened further to the joint activities and experiences with female colleagues, later female bosses and colleagues in management. At this point I could receive information about the interviewees' definition of their leadership roles, about their measures and ideas.

- The next question took us to the time when the interviewee had started to appoint people to senior management positions. *Were there any women among them? How was the circle of candidates designated? What kind of HR functions managed this process? How was this process carried out? Were there any women among the candidates? Were there any measures in the company to discover female talents and to support them? Are there any female members in your senior management team?* these questions targeted not only the personal opinions but also the details of the corporate culture.

- The last set of questions were formulated mostly about the co-operation between men and women outside the office. *Are they involved in household's chores and child care? What is their experience about these duties? Would that be a good move that men would be more involved?* There was a question about their daughters - if they had any. *Would they support their daughter If she wanted to become a manager?* These questions were also good for closing the interviews. I heard interesting comments and views. Lastly, we returned to the family.

These questions generated the first codes, because I asked first four from everybody, and they all gave me answers. The rest of the questions relied on an emic basis. When someone had started talking about something interesting and relevant that had not been brought up, I incorporated these into later interviews. I also asked previous interviewees to respond to them too, if there was a chance for it.

For purposes of illustration I also used literal quotations. I consulted pp. 260-261 of Kvale's cited book in search for guidance in this matter. From his suggestions I found important, that citations should be edited into the main text in a way that the context would be clear to the reader. It should also be explained why the citation was edited into the text. The quotation should be proportionate to the text, relatively short and appropriately interesting. Kvale suggests reporting details from interviews in a written style, which I think is also a useful guideline. Spoken language, he writes, is hard to follow because of the constant presence of pause-fillers, humming, and diverging from the topic. For this reason, the final report has to be a transcription of the interviewee's spontaneous oral performance. I took all these into considerations.

V.3   Early Memories of Women of Leadership Skills

Firstly, I analysed the responses for the first group of questions. The first question which had been asked from everybody: "*Do you remember a woman or women from your childhood who you now think had leadership skills?"* The interviewees were open to answer my questions, and most of them – with only one exception – indeed found a woman in their childhood memories that, according to present day criteria, would be considered as born leaders.

Only Interviewee 1. (this is his number in table *Figure 16*) had not been able to find such a woman said that the more he thought about it, the more examples he could find from family, or schools, but those were all negative examples. As far as he remembered, all people in his life with leadership skills were men.

All others could recall such a woman or women; half of them found them in their families, the others mentioned some of their teachers. One interviewee mentioned his ex-girlfriend as the woman he knew with leadership skills. In the family examples, there were three mothers, five grandmothers, some aunts and a few cousins. There were examples for mentioning more than one women as one of the interviewees said that apart from his mother, his two grandmothers also met the criterion.

Family examples were not only about mothers of leadership skills but also about actual leadership positions of great responsibilities. Other mothers excelled at house- and family-keeping. Among grandmothers there were quite a few that proved their abilities on the fields of their work in addition to doing everything to make ends meet amid the turmoil of the XX. century. Aunts and cousins were also mentioned. Examples from outside the families were mostly teachers, with whom the interviewees had direct contacts. It was the way they carried out their jobs that made interviewees recognise their former teachers' outstanding leadership skills.

My interviewees, upon mentioning their examples, also talked about what feelings, what memories they had about these women with regards to their leadership skills. Upon discussing this aspect, many of the strong women mentioned are well described in the citations below. In the first one, my interviewee remembers his tough, expeditious, sensible grandmother whom he opposes with the conceptual „warm and snuggly" grandmother image, as he put it.

> *„my grandmother was terribly tough, strong-willed and very good at digging up anything she wanted to give her family. When (one family member) was about to give up, my grandmother would bug him not to give up, not to give up, not to give up, so that he eventually did not. [...] Then the war came, they moved "n" times, she found all the homes, she rented them. And above all, she played the piano, she sang [...] She wasn't that kind of warm and snuggly grandma that is a*

bit overweight and radiates warmth, but the thin, „officer in charge" kind. She was also the queen of her kitchen. Cooked very well" (Interviewee 2.)

Another interviewee talks about his talented mother who was also the main breadwinner of the family, but he still missed the kind of love from her that he received from his grandmother.

„My mum was an important professional in her field, a real manager, who also received medals, and she made our family stable with her salary. I would have been happier with some more warm feelings though. I missed that very much. Fortunately, counting my grandmother and one of our neighbours in, I had two and a half women to love me. [...] My mother was the half." (Interviewee 8)

The next example sheds light on some of the faults and merits my interviewees have seen. The quotation below is about an aunt:

„She was of exceptionally strong will. It was only her will that could get through, and this was the greatest problem. She fought for her truth, she had visions, she was target-oriented. Had many leadership traits, she, but had serious shortcomings in other areas." (Interviewee 10.)

The grandmother of Interviewee 18 widowed early had to continue the business on the family farm with threshing machine and lands. She employed a lot of people managing everything. His aunt managed the flower and vegetable gardening and greenhouses. Both of them entrepreneurial and leadership skills. As for style however they were both autocratic and autonomous.

"They were autocratic. Both of them. Decisive and stubborn." (Interviewee 18.)

As another interviewee summarised briefly, in describing one of his teachers:

„She was always called Aunt Charlie behind her back [...] and that sums up well that she had many masculine traits. [...] She could lead people, and she knew how to convince people" (Interviewee 10.)

The interpretative approach of personal focus calls our attention to the fact that the above mentioned women had serious shortcomings in several areas, according to the

118

perceptions of the interviewees. Mothers and grandmothers, no matter how expeditious they were, how much they had done for their families, always lacked a certain „warmth" that their sons, grandchildren or nephews missed. The other course is the farmer grandmamma, aunt and „Aunt Charlie"-effect that expresses the autocratic nature of that women.

In the course of my external, structural analysis, first it is important to note that when my interviewees were children, most of them lived in Hungary in the era of socialism when, in the name of full employment, all women had to work. In Hungary, the employment of women in certain fields exceeded 90% in the '70's and '80's (Pongrácz, 2001). Due to this circumstance nobody found that strange that his mother went to work every day. The consequence of this fact on constructions is that nobody said at any question that women should not work and should stay at home and take care of their children and their families full time all in their lives. Nobody said that although I know that some of their wives do so.

Furthermore, I considered the possibilities of perception biases, and analysed the materials according to men's perceptions women of great leadership skills share autocratic or authoritarian, or at least more masculine than feminine leadership traits. This fact raises the question whether a woman operating in her feminine ways, striving for consensus, actively involving the people around, and showing interpersonal orientations would be perceived by men as a woman with good leadership skills.

The interviewee below is talking about such women, however, the example is commented in a peculiar way hinting that those methods are considered manipulative by the speaker:

> *„Among my teachers. [...] there were women that knew to do buy-ins, knew how to play with people, how to make groups, how to direct those groups. I cannot say it was only subordinate women that I have met."* (Interviewee 10.)

Ideas on the lack of motherly and grandmotherly love may root in the role congruency issue that is based on the presumption of incompatible feminine traits and leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002), (Kark & Eagly, 2009) that I discussed in detail in chapter III. In my understanding, all examples above are also related to value biases on meritocracy, as

discussed for example by (Lewis & Simpson, 2010) (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011) (Terjesen & Singh, 2008).

Lastly I share two statements that were exceptional. One is about a mother who, besides raising three children, was a manager at a company, and led with feminine leadership methods as his son recalls.

> *„Mum raised three boys in full time and in the meantime she also fulfilled her role as a responsible manager. You could ask anything from her and she would answer, but otherwise, she wouldn't tire us with her work. When we went to bed, she took her work and worked for a good three to four hours at night. In addition to her profession, she built her team and was fully aware of her surroundings all the time."* (Interviewee 4)

The next citation is about a female teacher who, instead of always giving orders, had recognised the talent in her students and tried to bring it to surface. This is a uniquely leadership trait called inspiration.

> *„When she came in for class, everyone immediately felt that they were the most talented person walking on the face of the Earth. I believe this surely can be called „inspirational leadership""*. (Interviewee 11)

This is from a senior manager who has been working in Hungary for a long time now but grew up abroad.

As a conclusion I can say that the questions belonging here served their purposes well. The interviewees became relaxed and attuned to talk. The information I received was more interesting than I expected. The high proportion of memories about autocratic, authoritarian women among the ones with leadership skills provided rooms for different interpretations.

V.4   Female Managers from the First Years of Career

The second group of questions I asked from everyone was about socialisation at the workplace. What I asked first was: "*Did you see female managers around you when you were entry level, and if so, what memories do you have about them?*" This did not only

target the evocation of memories but it also served to elicit some general information about interviewees' beliefs about female managers and women in general.

The age distribution of the interviewees cut the sample into two halves. Older respondents started their careers in the 1980s, before the political changes, in the institutional framework devised by the socialist system. By contrast, younger interviewees entered into the labour market after 1990 at the time of the political changes, when the new world was taking shape. This is also reflected in memories.

The older generation almost never had female bosses, and they hardly saw female managers at all. The early years were spent in those large state-run organisations which controlled the economy, such as the National Bank of Hungary, the National Planning Office, in one of the ministries or in the affiliates of these institutions, which were led almost exclusively by men. From this generation there were only three executives who had actually seen female leaders in real life back then. One of the respondents (Interviewee 1) thought they had been incompetent, whereas he had seen many talented male leaders around him. Another who had met female middle managers when was young also held negative memories. He found that these women were good at details but could not think at a higher level. From this definitive experience he had developed a "preconception" as he called it.

> "*I would rather not say they were ideal leaders who set an example. This preconception of mine comes from the fact that women differ from us a tad, no matter what others say. And it's not just a few inches.*" (Interviewee 5)

He had started to develop these "preconceptions", i.e. negative connotations to women in those years, which kept strengthening in his later life, and also influenced his decisions:

On the other hand, having seen a clever, competent, strategically minded female manager with great navigation skills at the organisation, the third interviewee shared clearly positive memories about a woman.

> "*She had fantastic skills, and her vision was even better. Whatever we did, we had a dynamic model and a huge matrix [...] she was interested if a theoretic*

model could be made fruitful in a bureaucratic hierarchy [...] She was fantastic at economics, maths, and she also had a great deal of business acumen. She impressed me a lot as she was a real professional, and she also knew how to manage the "product", so to speak. She had a great influence on long-term thinking." (Interviewee 13)

Two of the quoted leaders mentioned the bad relationship among the few female leaders they knew. One of them made this comment on two women as it had been a natural fact:

"Of course they hated each other like s...t." (Interviewee 5)

The clause "of course" not only referred to his naturally held view that women could not get along well with each other, but it also implied that there was a unanimous consensus about this belief with everybody agreeing.

the other respondent elaborated at length on a similar observation he had made:

"Back then I only saw that they would turn to unguided missiles much easier than men. One blast and everyone is blown to pieces, no matter what they did. It was extremely hard to stop them. They represented high risk that needed to be managed. A man can never lose his head like a woman can lose hers. [...] If two women start arguing, there's nothing I can do. [...] two women can raise hell. So I drew the consequence and thought I'd better avoid these spats. Such things also came up later [...] it was jealousy, not because of men, they were sort of jealous of each other's success and position." (Interviewee 1)

For those who did meet female leaders in person at that time, some of the famous female executives of that era seemed to be very masculine. Examples were the female leaders of Taurus and Pannonplast companies. One of the respondents remarked that the famous female political leaders Margaret Thatcher, Indira Gandhi and Golda Meir also strengthened his belief that only women with masculine personalities can become leaders for some reason.

By contrast, the generation that had entered the labour market around the time of the political changes had fond memories of the few female managers they had known. They remembered that among the partners of international consultancy firms, the newly

122

established banks and the first female executives of the Budapest Stock Exchange there had been talented and competent women.

Although I did not ask the question directly, more than a third of the interviewees stated that they had taken it as natural that they could have female bosses, and when they had actually had a female boss, they had accepted her. They acknowledged the professional aptitude and leading skills of female managers, and they also bound to them emotionally. There are some who still keep in touch with them.

> *"At the place I used to work the first boss I had was a woman. [...] the other woman who was there to train me was also a female manager. [...]. We had a very good relationship, we're still in good relations. [...]. Interestingly, the first two people I met at work were both motherly figures. [...] (for both cases) we liked each other very much."* (Interviewee 2)

In order to put the analysis into the wider perspective and understand the differences between the perception of the two generations I had to rely on head hunters' observations as no statistics were available. The chief executive of the market leader firm in executive search told me that at the time of the political changes new perspectives had opened for qualified women with English language skills. Nobody had relevant work experience from a market economy, and as a result, selections were based on skills rather than experience.

The lack of language skills was, for example, much more a bottleneck than today. In the meantime, international trade companies of monopolistic privileges lost their exclusive rights and went to bankrupt. As a result, many employees of good language skills from international trade companies - with many women among them - became executives of banks and corporations. Female senior managers arrived also from abroad. The Interviewee 16 talked about that fact that the new institutions were more open towards female managers than the former ones in the old days, which had been more rigid and masculine. Most of these leaders have since disappeared from senior management.

In interpretative approach, the fact that the vast majority of respondents from the younger generation thought female leaders had been good performers as well as competent both in their professions and in management is not only important because it

proves that there had actually been such women, but also because their acknowledgement implies they – at least at that age - had been open to recognize, accept and acclaim good leadership performance of women. Upon answering further questions later in my research, I paid attention to the potential effects of this difference.

My expectations proved true, as the interviewees were thinking about the second question, they remembered many other things as well, and the number of new topics were brought up. A lot of feelings, beliefs and ideas were mentioned. I present them later in thematic groups.

V.5 Working in Cooperation with Women and Women Leaders

Knowing that the manner of asking a question may unintentionally influence answers, I was constantly keeping my eye during the interviews on the target, namely, that I wanted to assist in building bridges. I tried to ask each question in a way that they would not divide respondents. For instance, I asked questions like:

- *"What is it like to work together?"* I asked for examples from their experience.
- *"Working in teams including women are different from working only with men?"* I asked them to tell me stories related to the question.

With this set of questions, the focus expanded further, shedding some light on working experiences with former bosses and female colleagues. I grouped positive answers in two groups to be able to analyse them thematically. One group includes positive answers about female colleagues, the other group includes positive answers about female leaders. Afterwards, I scanned all the negative experiences, however, I did not make groups here, since the line between colleagues or bosses often became blurred.

V.5.1 Leaders Who Like to Work with Women

First I present those interviewees' answers to the questions who talked about the reasons why they liked to work together with women.

The joys of working together

A number of leaders talked about their positive experiences of co-operation with women colleagues. When comparing working with smart men to working with smart women, one of them said:

> *"I like to work together with smart people so the greatest experience for me is when I am surrounded by smart people and we work together. Having the chance to work with smart women, that is something [...] there is something extra there. I cannot tell exactly what [...] always better. People's eyes glitter more"*
>
> (Interviewee 1)

Interpreting his words, we can understand that according to his perceptions mixed teams gain extra inspiration from the involvement of smart women relative to only-men groups. Not only from these words of him but also from the whole interview it became clear that his leadership style is democratic, relationship oriented and transformational. That is the type of leader that builds teams of talented, inspired people, work with them in co-operation and support and acknowledge smart colleagues and good performance.

Female Empathy

Empathy is a trait that is mentioned by many. In lower positions requiring interpersonal abilities and empathy, like public relations and retail sales, women are valued highly. One of the leaders, for example believes in women's empathy so much, that does everything he can in order to make his clients accept female counterparties. Once they have accepted a woman, he knows that everything is going to be as it should, and the customers would not raise the issue of gender any more.

> *„Those women that did not have problems with working with men, could do their work with much much more empathy, will to adjust, intuition, attention and love, and could absorb conflicts, encourage others, help them improve. [...] not aggravating conflicts but solving the [...] they were just as smart as men, if not smarter"* (Interviewee 4)

Leader of a big, international consulting company thinks similarly. In his view:

„counselling and consulting. [...] are jobs where women have more advantages [...] it should be a fifty-fifty job, if we only look at the work itself. The task here is to understand others' problems, analyse them, help them. [...] women just have more advantage than men." (Interviewee 9)

He also finds that important that woman of leadership skills should get fair chances at promotions.

Based on his experience gained in several boards Interviewee 3 emphasized that female empathy provides value added not only in internal or customer relations but also advantageous when corporate mission should be incorporated.

Empathy is the one of the female merits that after „reading between the lines" and „putting it into broader perspective", has retained its positive ring. At the same time, two important warnings were formulated by researchers of this topic. One of them pointed out the potential danger of misinterpreting stereotypical „caring" leadership (Billing & Alvesson, 1997) associated with women managers. The other calls the attention to the fact that recognition of female talent is valuable only if it manifests in promotions (Wajcman, 1998).

Avoiding Risks or Lacking Confidence?

As I presented in Chapter III. researchers have been trying to figure out whether the attitude towards taking risks does or does not differ between men and women. Although there are contradicting results, they overall point towards women being more risk-sensitive, risk-conscious and avoiding, than men e.g. (Jianakoplos & Bernasek, 1998) (Niederle & Vesterlund, 2007) (Croson & Gneezy, 2009)) (Ertac & Gurdal, 2012) and (Charness & Gneezy, 2012).

One of my interviewees has not only a new approach in explaining this phenomenon, but also proves that he is aware of reality-constructing patterns as well.

„If a man makes a bad investment or speculated the wrong way, they would just scroll the bad position without ever admitting it. A chick however tends to cut it off immediately. [...] I think this is because if you accept that social idea that [as

a woman] you're not that smart, it is easier to say: I've made a bad decision, I close it." (Interviewee 2)

In his reasoning, he tried to refer to Aronson's 'The Social Animal' by unsurely naming a socio-psychological term – then figured it out that he meant self-attribution, that describes the above story well. Digging deeper, interpreting his words I understood that he had thought that the real reason for the difference was the difference in compulsion to conform between men and women. For men, it is harder to admit a bad decision as it interferes their attitude to meet the requirement of the construction of "smartness", while women tend to admit their bad investment decisions easier, reacting more pragmatically and calmly. The interviewee perceived the situation as a component of a reality-construction.

Looking at the research results we can see that the reasons for differences related to risks tolerance between the two genders are rather complex The different performance expectations and pressures coming from both in- and outside may be among the reason. The only question left is that in this framework how women of high self-esteem would behave in a situation when their investment turns negative.

Compliment or Vertical Segregation?

Several leaders expressed their appreciations for the reliability, accuracy, and analytical mind of women. Even so, many of them thought that these values of women mostly make them suitable for executive duties:

> „*I really, really love the serious, clean work done by women. I mean if they say they'd do something, you can be sure, that they will, in the cleanest, most serious possible way.*" (Interviewee 5)

In a firm that grew fast, the founder and CEO claimed that there were no differences in chances for man and women to become senior managers, but the fact is that all of them are men. He speaks about the female mid managers like medium commanders in an army, where the only job is perfect execution and no need to deal with strategy:

> "*Women do jobs typically like head of purchasing department or debt collection. They manage the armies of many women. […] They are mid managers. They do*

not have to allocate too much of their energy to strategy formulation. They complete the job that are assigned to them at 200 per cent level." (Interviewee 18)

If we look behind the nice words we can discover a connection between these views and the jobs women usually do at the workplace. These are typically support and back office jobs such as HR, PR, marketing, finance and accounting.

The literature – as I already discussed in Chapter III– calls this phenomenon „vertical glass wall", that is, vertical segregation (Eagly & Carli, 2007) (Nagy B. , 2007) (Nagy & Primecz, 2010). The metaphor refers to the fact that the invisible barriers exist not only horizontally but also vertically. This is also a reason why it is so difficult for women to become senior manager from mid manager positions. As we could see from the examples above these jobs are usually not attractive for men partly because it is difficult to demonstrate leadership skills in these positions and routes upwards are very rare (Nagy B. , 2007). The recognition of vertical glass walls was one of the reasons why the glass wall metaphor was replaced by the labyrinth.

I asked all interviewees about the reasons. I urged them to talk about their perceptions, beliefs and ideas. Besides the topic of mathematics and related ideas, that I discuss in the next section, most of their responds are well represented by the quotes above. Jackman captures the essence when saying that these views represent constructions to justify practices that are disadvantageous for women:

> „*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.)

One of the interviewees thought this phenomenon had evolutionary origins, and explained his views like this:

> „*It all goes back to the prehistoric age. [...] Men went hunting. But if we look at the net amount of protein men and women brought home [...] it can be seen that women got way more, because they did regular, recurring, monotonous [work].*

> *There are many things that women are more suitable for doing. This pattern – I guess – took tens of thousands of years to develop. And is ingrained already.''*

Construction of gender differences as products of historic processes starting as early as the prehistoric age suggest that such differences are deterministic and that fact gives exemption from responsibility for the decision makers.

Later we will see that not all interviewee shared these constructions.

It was surprising for me that my interviewees used very convincing reasoning to prove their views and their views' deep internalisation. This shows that the possibility to break out of the segregation is not only a matter of not getting access to adequate experience, but also male decision makers' idea of women only capable of performing well in those segregated areas.

Women and Mathematics, IT, Technology and Creativity

Vertical segregation has a subcategory which is widely known in our culture and accepted by the general public. The basis of this is a belief supported by statistical data, that men are predestined for jobs that need mathematical knowledge such as informatics, IT, engineering and portfolio management because their mathematical skills are better, they are smarter and more creative than women. A leader said this about portfolio managers:

> *„There is, I think, the structure-minded male brain, and where that kind of brain is needed, you're sure to find only a few women.''* (Interviewee 2)

Due to the emic approach, my sets of questions evolved through their inner dynamism. When an interviewee raised an interesting point, I kept that one in the upcoming interviews. The above statement is a perfect example of this mechanism at work.

In connection with the quotation above, one of my partners thought that structured-mindedness just like girls staying away from mathematics, IT and technical jobs might be a matter of socialisation. Similarly, to other companies, his firm is also involved in such campaigns, where efforts made to recruit young women for jobs considered to be of masculine nature.

"Our company also does it and not only because we like women but also to develop our pipeline. We need women to keep the pipeline healthy particularly on technical areas. I do believe that this largely depends on socialization."

(Interviewee 8)

Another leader talked about a project where they offered internship opportunities together with education if it was needed for young women on the area of IT security that was dominated by men at that time. The targeted 50 per cent was outperformed as they reached 80 per cent female participation.

"Once we targeted 50 per cent female participation in one of our internship programmes. We worked hard and at the end we had more than 80 per cent that is 14 women out of 16 participants. That was a big news that it was possible to find women of coding background who even were very good in communication. We were the champions in the region. [...] We used multiple channels and offered education." (Interviewee 12)

Interviewee 11 said that he was also sure that socialization is the key factor. He himself tries to overcome this and motivate his daughter towards studies in IT and coding. As his daughter is interested in design, he tries to demonstrate the usefulness and importance of IT from that aspect.

Interviewee 15 had worked on areas depending on IT. In his family the he and his wife encouraged and supported their daughter of good mathematical skills and she managed to win math competitions. Interviewee 5 talked about the fact that female intuition is a great part of his company's successes and research, and that women are not falling back in intelligence even when it comes to technology. He said he could thank a lot to his female colleagues.

By contrast, Interviewee 16 reacted, that he understands if girls are more occupied with their looks instead of mathematics, after all, they have to give birth to children.

The above ideas are examples of reality-construction about women. The first one suggests biological determination. The last one shows how contractions penetrate ideas about women's social duties. Ideas, then, turn real.

The fact that mathematical skills, IT interests and technological creativity were such dividing questions, shows more open attitude than the literature reflects. Research on this field (Paksi, 2014), (Nagy B. , 2015) concluded that all constructions, socialization processes of the families, schools as well companies are discouraging girls and do not provide them any feeling of success on the areas of mathematics, IT and technology. This is why only a very few of them choose such professions, and if they do many of them lives the area because the masculine cultures do not accept or include them (Hanappi-Egger, 2011).

The five positive opinions above indicate that constructions and socialization processes can be changed to a positive direction. Those interviewees that praised female creativity and thought that negative opinions are derogatory reality-constructions, all came from a technological field and felt positive change, which they expressed too. The positive attitude of two fathers is important because research proved that parental support plays key role (Gill, 2008), (Barnard, 2012) and (Takács, 2013).

Even if the sample is small, the fact that five out of seven interviewees promoted the view that differences are not deterministic, but social, socially constructed ones, gives some reason for optimism.

V.5.2 Positive Opinions About Female Senior Managers

Positive Statements Regarding Female Senior managers

One of my partners who worked in masculine cultures in the first half of his life, was surprised first to learn the advantages of female involvement in management at a company he joined. he summarized the disadvantages of full-male leadership teams as follows:

> *"There are no breaks in monocultures, they can go on only to one direction for a long time. [...] There are such macho things, when arm wrestling goes on for a long time, that time left would not be enough for anything, the story is falling apart and falling over, because of the fact that everybody knows what should be done and all others must be idiots."* (Interviewee 12)

After this comment it is understandable that most of my respondents mentioned the positive impact women have on committee meetings and decision making:

> *„I always think; it is better to have a woman in. [...] It forces [the committee meeting] to work as an executive board, there are no deviations from the subject...”*

(Interviewee 3)

It is not only the breaking of a homogenous male culture, however, that makes women an important part of committee meetings. Interviewee 8 has pointed out that whenever a female colleague participates in meetings, they almost always have new aspect, new ideas to consider. He deemed it important to have women involved, as women were already working at his firm, but the results turned out to be better than he had expected.

One of my partners participating in many boards talked about empathy in firm's senior managements:

> *„Women generally are more empathic than guys [...] and above this, even in a profit-maximising firm, women tend to be better, more consequent, in „mission issues””* (Interviewee 3)

Another leader, Interviewee 11 emphasized, that although they only had one female member in their committee, this small change had resulted in many positive changes already. All board members felt it to be a healthy thing that it is not only men sitting at the table, and other members thought it was a positive change, too. One of my partners said the men always better behaved if there was a woman in the companion:

> *"Men want to demonstrate more in front of a woman [...] In groups including women men behave themselves."* (Interviewee 7)

What could be a somewhat sad fact though, is that these managers talked about one woman most of the time, even though they see the positive impacts of their presence.

The leader that praised the creativity of women, Interviewee 14, felt it important to note here as well, that women help in problem-solving tremendously. It is important to note

that he meant mid management only, because there is no woman in their senior management team.

Another CEO stressed the same two points: female creativity and the ability to mediate between men and women in case of a conflict:

> *„One of my female vice-presidents [...]. radiated, that she has ideas. Female senior managers participate in every group, which make me happy, as women always bring a certain colour, a different aspect to management. If there is no female member, then guys tend to get into real fights. Interestingly, when there is a conflict between men in the management, most of the time, it's women that mediate the solution. Because if they see a conflict between two men, and it is not them having a conflict with the man, they can manage it really well.”*
> (Interviewee 13)

Consistent with this last idea that if women participate in senior management meetings and decisions, – as the below quoted leader says – the different dynamics do not let worsening interpersonal processes to end badly.

> *„From girls, we sometimes get this „boys' club” talk, which is, actually, more than just talk... It is an alarm for us, as we tend to forget in our internal dynamics, should it be friendly, partying, hugging, drinking, [...] or cock-fight things, that they are there. And they make us know that they are there. And the added value is great, when we listen to what they see, what they sense.”*
> (Interviewee 4)

With regards to these last two opinions, we can see that the leaders perceive that diversity brings benefits and synergic effects.

It matches this stream of thought what one of my other interviewees has said about his diversity-related observations. He saw the positive effects of diversity proven many times, he had the chance to observe many sources of that. Some of these sources are multinational, multicultural groups or groups of leaders coming from companies of different profiles. Still, one of the strongest source of diversity, according to him, is gender.

> *„the strongest source of diversity is the difference between men and women, because that means such a fundamental difference in their thinking. [...] there are different mechanisms. But today everyone has gone to MBA [...]. behaves just the way I am; ant watches the same TV-series on his or her iPad that I am. If a woman attends the same school and listens to the same mantra than I am, still instinctively approaches them differently, and this is very good. [...] other sources of diversity are way overrated."* (Interviewee 9)

He thought that part of the differences are not results of constructions and socialisation, but inherited, and therefore, the differences he mentioned would still be present if men and women worked together in an equal rate, both at home and at work.

One interviewee that thought women are more suitable for leadership than men, supported his point with an interesting measure:

> *„The only thing a boss can be measured in, is how much he or she is capable of bringing out of his or her subordinates. And for that, a woman is much more capable of doing [than a man.]."* (Interviewee 6)

He explains this with a reasoning based an interpretation of evolutionary theory:

> *„Because of their sexual characteristics and the important role in biological development, women are objectively more suitable to be leaders, than men are. Women are better at choosing the right people, as they have to choose fathers for their children as well."* (Interviewee 6)

He also added, that he could thank a lot to his wife, as she had inspired him to aim for and reach big goals. In his corporations, his wife was the informal HR-person, and he often discussed important HR questions with her.

In sum, it is noticeable that according to my Interviewees, the most valuable impact women do have, is the impact they have on monocultural management cultures and decision making processes. This shows mainly through new approaches, creative ideas and a higher level of social consciousness, as well as keeping processes, discussions and negotiation balanced. This perception is fruitful for my research, as this shows the recognition of structural benefits and its penetration to reality-constructing processes.

V.5.3 Disadavatages and Low Representation in Top management

When it came to disadvantages of having female senior managers or colleagues, the line is blurred between the two groups, therefore, I did not make the above used grouping either.

Exclusion from men's programmes and their informal world

One of the CEOs I've talked with, praised one of his formal bosses, when it came to her abilities to fit in between men:

> „In *social life, my boss was behaving like a man. Just as if she was a man, you could go out drinking with her, talk with her, talk about women with her, men-gossip with her. she could fit right in."* (Interviewee 10)

These sentences indicate that in certain corporate cultures if the women leaders have chance to be involved in the informal life they have to boyishly behave.

In most cases there is even no chance to participate such events. A respondent here talks about the disadvantages women have to face that stem from not being able to take part in certain social activities of men:

> *"If you've got important business partners, you have to take them to places. Tennis, skiing, bars. Well you can't really take a woman to a bar. Or hunting for that matter. If someone joined a hunting party as the only woman there, it was just not the same in the evening. Ninety per cent of jokes were out. We couldn't even talk about girls. It's not really acceptable to get drunk before sitting down to dinner, but we ought to take a shower and change clothes. [...] consequently, we don't invite female managers. That's why it's much, much more difficult for you ladies to get into informal business culture [...] You just annoy us, boys."*
>
> (Interviewee 5)

When I asked what really happens when they go hunting, he answered that they build trust and they get to know each other better:

> *It's not true what ordinary people think that we go out on Sundays and decide the fate of the world, still [...] next Monday we see things differently.*

In contrast with the previous partner who had acknowledged that men leave women out of joint leisure time activities deliberately, another interviewee regarded this matter as a "faceless" legacy of evolution.

> *"I think these things can be traced back to evolutionary causes. in all Western cultures, guys have [...] such "fraternities". We go out together to pubs and matches. Guys there can discuss their affairs with women. It's the same story - guys went out hunting [...]. and women stayed at home with old people and children."* (Interviewee 2)

One of the leaders also thought that it was more convenient to do some sports without women.

> "*In business I have never felt any difference whether there are women here or not. Sailing with friends, well, that is more bothersome. It is easier with the boys. [...] There is always something wrong [for women]. I do not like this, I do not like that, it is not OK, that is not OK. Boyish programs make sense. they are – how to say – more relaxed.*" (Interviewee 18)

He goes sailing and plays golf with men exclusively. He, however, goes to ski with his family and do not drink. Sailing is more leisure, not business – or sometime a bit that as well.

Such meetings are also important for construction processes. Talking about women in their absence, motivated by preconceptions - this can quickly lead to constructions, judgements and consensuses reflecting masculinity and patriarchal values. "You just annoy us boys" - as one of the respondents summarised.

Earlier research in other countries has revealed that the exclusion of women from male social networks is disadvantageous for them (Katila & Meriläinen, 1999), (Miller, 2002), (Featherstone, 2004), because segregated networks populated by men are generally more powerful.

Interviewee 17 agreed, that exclusion from such networks was one of the key factors of female disadvantages. Interviewee 7 said that he due to the disadvantageous situation he could accept if women formed networks and travelled abroad together sometimes. He even knew about one. For men, however he did not find that justified.

Interviewees 11 and 15 were very surprised by the question. Men never go for such a retreat alone in their companies. If they arrange corporate programmes they never exclude women and sometimes invite family members as well.

Women versus women - conflicts

The leader who said in the previous part that he really appreciated women's abilities in pace making, also remarked that he had had a hard time handling conflicts between women and making peace there.

> *"I found that once they both [female managers] get to a position high enough, and both of them have firmly held opinions, it is very difficult to find a compromise. Their relationship with men was far more balanced."* (Interviewee 13)

Earlier, when I discussed the first question there were two interviewees who shared their bad memories about women's conflicts from their early professional years. One of them referred to these women as "unguided missiles", while the other was so sure everyone would agree with female incompatibility that he said it had been natural that female managers had hated each other.

I my reading, such cases may be the consequence of a sort of „queen bee" syndrome for instance (Mavin, 2008) which occurs when a female senior executive - enjoying the unique position of being the only woman visible - is unwilling to support other women or even harm them. I believe that this phenomenon will lose its importance if the number and proportion of women in senior positions will increase.

Lack of Ambitions

Lack of ambitions is one of the most mentioned explanations when talking about the reasons of low female representation in top management. One of my partners brought an example from the world of soccer:

> *"It could be that that the boys always want to kick goals and be a forward in the football matches while girls like to be also goalkeepers. They accept that position easier they may not want to kick goals."* (Interviewee 1)

Another leader emphasized the responsibility of women in managing their life and career.

> *"Women themselves choose careers. Sheryl Sandberg points out well that women are a bit less ambitious a priori. When the question is where to go: shell they go to the direction of the tough, warrior cultured front office or to a more comfortable place."* (Interviewee 9)

Other Interviewees like 15 and 17 agreed with this statement.

This issue is correlated with a number of others. The front office is not only tough but also riskier as performance is measured there in a more transparent and direct way than in the more peaceful support areas or back offices. It has been discussed already that women are more avoiding risks than men. Furthermore, self-esteem of women is often lower than that of man due to constructions and socialization processes.

Children and husbands

To my surprise only five interviewees mentioned children as a hindering factor for women. One of them, Interviewee 14, claimed that the major disadvantage for women was their husbands' behaviour. He found that husbands rarely cared for their wives' career ambitions, only their own careers motivated them, so women were left with no opportunities to become leaders. At the same time, he believed that mothers should stay with their children until the age of three, meaning a compulsion to stay many years away from work. His company therefore does a lot to help women in returning to work and bringing up children, he said.

According to the Interviewee 13, the low probability to have female majority in senior management is a consequence of the fact that bringing up children make mothers lag behind in their careers. Both Interviewee 15 and 17 considered motherhood as an issue but none of them thought that it would be impossible to catch up.

Another leader emphasised that his company values allowed women to return and reach a high position if they performed well. At the same time, he also admitted that occasionally he had to fight the mechanism, the operation of opposing principles inherited from the past that would apply disadvantageous rules on women in a rigid way.

> *"We have to fight continuously to enforce our values declared, we have to fight for changes."* (Interviewee 9)

Scandinavian examples were mentioned that will be discussed in a following section.

It may be concluded that motherhood is a real issue because of the time need for example, however, different constructions were formulated on how to handle that. Measures to support mothers, help them in returning, flexibility of working conditions are closely related to corporate cultures. This statement provided some information about leadership styles and corporate cultures. The way Interviewee 14 presented the issues showed signs of a paternalistic approach and culture. The approach of Interviewee was more of technocratic 9.

"*Women want to look up their husbands*"

Some of the Interviewees mentioned that they thought that it was important for women to be able to look up to the man they lived with. From this concept they drew different conclusions on female career opportunities.

When asked further questions to clear this up, he answered that he did not think it would have been beneficial for a woman to be career oriented, because then she would not be able to look up to her partner. Interviewee 5 said the promotion of women is dangerous for their relationship with their husbands. A wife with higher position than her husband could not respect the men enough.

Based on his own experience Interviewee 8 said that an ambitious man can live in a harmonious marriage with a less ambitious woman, as the wife is does not prevent the man from doing all his duties, travels and relocations. This is why it is challenging for him to imagine an ambitious woman who has an equal status husband, that is also issue in his view that a woman would have higher position and could not loop up to her husband.

Interpreting these opinions, we can see constructions that suggest the beliefs or wishes for voluntary subjection of women. Another layer of understanding is the idea that hierarchical structures of organizations play dominant roles in private life even within marriages. As if hierarchical position were the only respectful value in life.

Globalization, compulsory relocations

One executive brought up international mobility and relocations, a by-product of globalization, as a disadvantage for women. It is easier for a husband to move with his wife, this is why *portable wives* are important, as he remarked. For women it is still more complicated: if the wife goes to different countries the husband will not always find suitable jobs there. He also called attention to a risk for the family and the children, because, as he put it: "*What if the guy misbehaves?*" Diplomats might find it easier to solve this problem, but he could not bring up any examples from the private sector. At the same time, he mentioned two factors that might decrease of the importance of this effect. One of them is the following:

> *"I don't think this matter would be too important. [...] barriers would have been effective by then. [...] It's rather because if there is one ambitious guy [...] he'll go abroad anyway."* (Interviewee 8)

By this he meant to say, in line with the previous opinion, that family moves should be defined by the husband's ambitions.

The other reason why the leader claimed that this whole expat business was not of great importance anymore is that the task is rather to develop local talents to cut down operation costs.

The negative perception of female "self-advertisement"

Two leaders remarked that they had met female managers who had been talking about their success for way too long to his liking. Due to the facts presented below, only from their statements we cannot judge what happened. Earlier research in the topic came to the conclusion that:

> "*It is a proven fact that self-advertisement may have a kick-back effect on women. Women will get more acclaim for their success if they are modest, while men will only get theirs if they call attention to themselves.*"
>
> (Eagly, 1997, old.: 58.)

This phenomenon is a practical example 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.

Do women talk too much?

On the note of different personal characteristics (i.e. men are generally more introverted and women more extroverted) and communication habits, one partner who has been a mentor of several women and has helped them in getting high positions remarked that:

> "*Most men are afraid that women talk too much*" (Interviewee 3)

It is a fact he experienced that this fear is one of the causes of the reluctance to promote women or to appoint them to be board members.

In my view this observation means two things. One of them is double standard - those who have been to board meetings all know that men can talk much, too. The other factor is that there is a stereotypical difference between female communication and male communication due to their diverging aspects, attitudes and leadership styles as well as words and structures. This is, however, more of an advantage than a disadvantage in decision making, as we could see in earlier sections.

The Perceptions of Masculine Female Leaders

There is yet another fear according to most respondents: female leaders tend to become masculine. We could see that some of their memories from their early years contained female leaders who seemed frighteningly masculine, both in the world of global politics and Hungarian senior corporate management.

Interviewee 4 for example remembered the sock he had experienced when one of his clients, a female senior manager, had treated him in what he had felt a patronizing manner. Another one recalled how one of his nice and feminine colleague had gradually become more masculine after her promotion:

> *"Generally, if a woman climbs the corporate ladder in the banking sector. [...] she will work together with a lot of men. I noticed that my deputy executive simply wanted to become a man. She didn't act naturally, but instead, tried to act like a male manager. If there's something I hate, it's people acting artificially."*
>
> (Interviewee 5)

This phenomenon may originate from at least three sources, one of which may be the circumstance that the selection mechanism has a preference for women with a masculine character. If only these women are thought to be good leaders, and as a result, the ones who get appointed do have masculine character. However, the masculine aspects of selection are not necessarily obvious, even for those who appoint, as we have seen in chapter III, where I presented the value biases of meritocracy which can be disadvantageous for women.

Another source of this perceived masculinity, with observations of masculinisation strengthening it, is that after promotion, women try to meet the requirements, both actual and presumed, of a masculine environment, and they start acting more masculine indeed.

The third reason, which might have been the most prominent in the above case, is that the manifestations of the theory of role congruity started working in the background. The more competent a woman seems the more markedly she will lose her feminine character. This can be most strongly perceived by the appointers themselves especially if they think that a female character implies doing what men want (Rudman and Glick, 2001).

Height of the entrance threshold

Finally, an interviewee whose clientele consists of senior managers added the following remark, hiding behind others from his own preconceptions:

> *"Just look around, these people here won't accept a woman's opinion anyway"*
>
> (Interviewee 4)

He was the executive who explained at length how good it was to work with women in the consultancy sector. He had to face the following dilemma:

> *"We basically deal with the soft side of organisations. And I had this dilemma with selecting employees - it was simply much easier to sell a man, I didn't have to convince my clients who'd explicitly asked for a male consultant."*
>
> (Interviewee 4)

However, he still made efforts, specifically for the reasons he mentioned earlier about women's advantages. the experience is that if a woman, having stepped through the entrance threshold, mostly generated positive experiences. Shortly, clients were pleased and they no longer bothered about working together with women.

Another partner talked about his own experience that when searching for senior management members even his own mother firm disregards leadership skills and prefers experience on the field of competency. He disagreed because believed that leadership talent is more unique while field knowledge is usually easier to learn. He could see that this requirement was disadvantageous for women who could have become good senior executives.

"In our firm it is required that if someone applies for a position he or she should have formal education degree on that area. [...] If there is no, nobody would be interested in the person's soft skills or management knowledge."

<div align="right">(Interviewee 7)</div>

Interviewee 17 confirmed the experience that in most executive search assignments more importance is attached to formal education of the competence area than to the personal attributes, skills and leadership experience. Charismatic style, relationship orientation and transformational abilities are not appreciated enough and that is disadvantageous for women.

V.6   Fathers Involvement in Family Life

By the end of the interviews it has become clear that the fourth set of questions provides a good opportunity to synthetize my experiences and formulate the final interpretations serving the goal of my research. Originally I thought that the fifth set of questions would have a relaxing, chatting atmosphere preparing us to say good bye to each other. The information collected through these questions, however, exceeded my expectations.

This is why I decided that in the course of the analysis Ito replace the two set of questions to be able to incorporate these interpretations into the synthesis. Therefore, I present the fifth set of questions now, in this chapter and the fourth questions afterwards.

The last set of questions were formulated mostly about the life outside the office. *Are they involved in household's chores and child care? What is their experience about these duties?* There was a question about their daughters - if they had any. These questions were also good for closing the interviews. I heard interesting comments and views. In the end we returned to the family.

A part of the questions had already been answered by many of the leaders by the time we got to this point. Sometimes answering other questions had taken so much time that we did not even get this far. Earlier quoted Kvale (2005), who suggests that semi-structured interviews do not necessitate the researcher to ask all the questions. So, if an

interviewee starts talking about something else and it is important and interesting, we should let them do so.

Diversity of the sample was reflected by the fact that different opinions were formulated on the topic. During the conversations about childhood memories I noticed that some of the fathers had been involved in family life or implemented "feninin" leadership style. The father of Interviewee 4 for example, was the leader of thousands of employees at a company, but at the same time loved to cook for the family. The father of Interviewee 4, just like his wife, was a senior manager, yet he built out a lean structure and implemented relationship oriented leadership style. There was also mention of a father that lived his whole life as an intuitive artist.

Regarding their own experience, Interviewee 13 said that before his promotion he had been a practising father himself. He still remembers frustrations such as:

> *"I had some lucky years: I wasn't a manager but a mere expert and I was very active at bringing up my children. I used to take them to nursery school and kindergarten, and I can still recall how bitter I felt that they could call me in for a meeting just like that, say, at four in the afternoon, and nobody would care that I had to pick up my children from the kindergarten."* (Interviewee 13)

With this memory seared in his mind, he has never organised meetings after four in the afternoon. He also allows people to work from home if they have a family reason. These have all become integrated into corporate culture. What he does not like is people late for work at nine o'clock in the morning who do not call in to excuse themselves in advance. He does not approve of managers working from home permanently because he thinks it hinders team development which necessitate ad hoc meetings every now and then.

Since he has become an executive has always taken care to spend enough time with his children:

> *"I always tried to make sure [...] to take Saturdays and Sundays off so that I could be with my children, even to their teenage years [...] I often read at night instead."*

It is no coincidence that he still has a very good relationship with his children who are now adults:

> *"My son lives abroad, but we talk in every two or three days" He needs it. Me and my daughter, we're close too. Our family keeps very much together. [...] I think you can't build it up later. I'm pretty sure that if you don't spend enough time with your children in the first 15-20 years, you can't really expect a close relationship."*

<div align="right">(Interviewee 13)</div>

His wife also took her part in this - since the husband's promotion she has done a bigger share of household chores than before.

Another leader told that men working for the mother firm of his company are much more involved in child care, child raising and family life. A lot of men take advantage of the legally provided opportunities and go on child care live.

> *"Men may go on such lives and couples share that opportunity fifty-fifty"*
<div align="right">(Interviewee 7)</div>

On the contrary, some others, like Interviewee 5 thought, that this would make men look like dodderer henpecked husbands, and their wives could not look up to them anymore. Interviewee 8 mentioned again that ambitious men can only live in peace with such women who are only moderately ambitious and can keep an eye on the children. Interviewee 16 said that he was worried about the tendency that female and male roles had been blurring. He though that men decreasing ability to fertilize may be a consequence of this fact.

The leader who is a patron of female managers and whose mother was also in management, lives in what he calls a more "traditional" family model. He, Interviewee 4, goes "hunting" while her wife runs the house and works around the family. There was a time, however, when it was in a different way, but it left him with bad memories. His

mother had been a manager, he said, but she had also done most of the housework and taken care of her three children.

Responses we could see are mostly in harmony with the previous views, Those, who advocate fathers' involvement in family life are mostly the same who support female participation in senior management.

Similar answers came when I asked executives about the occupation, position and career they would like their daughter to have. They all agreed that they wanted their daughters' career dreams to come true. Those with older or adult children emphasized that their daughters should be able to take care of themselves and their children if necessary.

One interviewee said that he was happy that her daughter seemingly inherited talents from the ancestors, but he worried a bit about her autonomy and lack of modesty and humility. Still, he will support her in her ambitions.

Interviewee 9 finds his daughter very talented. Beyond pride he is worried as well:

> *"First of all, I am worried. What I can see in this world is that being a talented woman is one of the worst things. She is cursed for several reasons. Talented women have similar ambitions as talented men. The probability, however, that she can fulfil her goals is lower, especially if she would like to have children. I am sorry that my daughter has to go through the hard way. I will do everything to help her to be successful."*

None of them felt that becoming managers specifically would be important, but if their daughters wanted to be a manager they would support her. Occupations mentioned as examples were, however, mostly around art or teaching.

I have already quoted Interviewee 11 who said that he tried to turn his daughter's interest towards IT because he thought that in ten years' time it would be inevitable to use computers no matter what career his daughter might choose. If her daughter wanted to be a manager he would support her of course, but he would rather not encourage her to choose this profession. He also brought up recent American findings (Zimbardo & Coulombe, 2016) according to which boys seriously lag behind girls in both school

performance and social activity. How it will transform society and senior management structures within remains a question to answer.

One of the executive concluded our interview by thinking out loud about future gender roles in a hundred years' time if trends continued. He supposed that strengths that are attributed to men are disappearing in the course of technological development while strengths attributed to woman are appreciating.

Views about their daughters' future were mostly dominated by careers as teachers or artists as assumed that these areas provide better opportunities for female self-realization, than management jobs. The quotation of Interviewee 9 summarizes the fears attached to the latter. Still, all of the said that they would support their daughter in cases. The pessimistic visions about the futures of boys and men are based on extrapolation of current trends. If these trends prove true tendencies, adaptation processes can be expected, that may result in closer co-operation between women and men in senior management and in the families as well.

Executives from the consultancy sector were clearly of the opinion that women offer special contribution and synergic advantages, while their activities also promote their self-actualisation.

We have seen in previous chapters that while some executives are pleased with female representation rates at their companies, others would like to see the figures increase, too. That old-line corporate systems do not work along declared values promoting women was illustrated by an interviewee with a story. For this reason, the system needs constant correction, leading sometimes to conflicts.

Hungarian branch leaders and regional executives of large international companies all claimed they are constantly motivated by the parent companies to increase female representation in senior management.

The real content of motivation varies from culture to culture, and it is not independent from the cultural environment of the central branch. There are executives who, seeing that the central branch is lagging behind them, focuses on other issues instead. There

are, however, examples of companies that greatly increased female representation in their regional managements and boards.

Some executives recounted good experiences in connection with mentoring. There is consensus over the fact that success is largely influenced by the company management's commitment to take mentoring systems seriously, to assure that the right people get involved and to create opportunities to offer genuine assistance.

Other executives placed the emphasis on assistance with family tasks. Measures include workplace kindergartens, nurseries, or providing opportunities for telework whenever the child gets ill.

V.7 Appointments and promotions

The fourth set of questions is presented at last because it provides a good opportunity to synthetize the research. In this chapter we reached a new stage of the relations between the parts and the whole as represented by the hermeneutic cycle (see *Figure 18*). So far I conducted analyses in vertical direction of the virtual matrix (see details in chapter V.2.) using codes to compare information from similar interview topics and analysing them by contextual and object focussed interpretations and other methods. At the current phase I also included analyses carried out "horizontally" in the direction of the imaginary lines and I returned to the interviews.

This was, however, a completely different reading. The structured analysis employed in the previous phases is followed here by a synthesis to outline a broader image from personal realities, partly through the presentation and interpretation of personal or multi-story narratives. Since I already analysed some in my thematic analysis, conclusions drawn there will only be given brief references here

The fourth set of question I asked from everyone referred to whether the interviewees, having got to a level where they could appoint managers, had actually appointed women. Some examples are: *How are the processes of high-level appointments arranged? How HR management supports that? Is there any focus on female talents? Are there women in the senior management team?*

Figure 18: The general logic of hermeneutic cycles

Megértés:
a hermeneutikai kör (univerzális)
logikája

EGYEDI   ÁLTALÁNOS
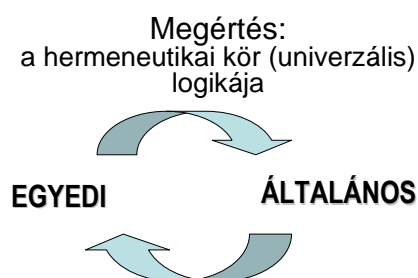
Source: (Gelei, 2006, old.: 24.) (quoted with the author's permission)

As I had already received a lot of information from my partners I did not expect any big surprise. I thought that those who always believed in female talent or learned to believe in it, of course appointed female managers. And those who only hold women competent for supporting tasks do not trust them either, would not appoint them. Reality has been proven to be more complex and I heard some surprising answers too.

In line with the current phase of the hermeneutic circle in order to establish a framework of synthesis I reviewed some important characteristics of the Interviewees. 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. Finally, I identified three major components, their appointment practices, attitudes toward women and other constructions. According to the interpreted constructions and the appointment practices I formed five groups of the eighteen interviewees (see *Figure19*).

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 base population we should focus on the content and not the numbers. All of them are equally important. Although there are two cells where we can see only one and one Interviewee, according

to my experiences with the Hungarian corporate culture they represent an important segment.

Figure19: Interpreted constructions 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

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

- Supporters: positive, optimistic constructions 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 constructions, appointing one or two women, still have some doubts

- Theory constructors: positive constructions expressed, not appointing women to senior positions, theories are constructed to support these practices

- Reluctant and rejecting group: negative constructions 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

In the following sections I present the detailed characteristics of these groups.

V.7.1 Supporters

Constructions: positive, optimistic views on female leaders, and trust in young talented women.

Appointments: has appointed already more than two women to senior positions and has positive feedback about their performance.

A Mentor

We could see so far that Interviewee 3, who gained his experience in several boards appreciates skilful and talented women. He is convinced that women in boards provide added value for several reasons. As I have quoted already he said, that board meetings are more efficient if women attend partly because men are more focussed less deviate from the subjects than when they are men only. He also found that also important that for a woman human losses would never be only numbers she would see the human dimension as well. Women are more aware of the company mission than men.

Following his experience in the he concluded that women are more honest than men:

> *"I would prefer a woman manage my wealth than a man because women are much more loyal than men."*

The fact that he thinks that the ultimate cause for low representation of women in top management is male/female differences in reproduction urges him to support women of leadership skills. He recommends women to high position and through his wide network of contacts he help them.

Corporate Culture incorporated in Performance Management

Although Interviewee 15 started to work in the area of technology and IT, already at his first firm he worked together with a lot of talented, skilful woman. therefore, he has been kept an eye on them and involved them into leadership as well. He had chance to meet with some internationally recognized female leaders that has strengthened his engagement. The global firm where they belong, considers female participation in senior management as a top priority.

This engagement is related to the fact that leadership styles are monitored and the loyalty and satisfaction of employees are incorporated to management evaluation system, that is the only example in the entire sample of my research. This system appreciates the "mother hen style" as he calls what we call relationship oriented, transformational style and what appreciates stereotypically feminine characteristics.

Culture from the Mother firm

At the beginning of his career Interviewee 7 learnt the tricks of his profession from a mentor who was a senior woman. They are still in good relation with each other. From that time, he recognized and supported talented female colleagues. He works for a multinational firm where the corporate culture has further strengthened his engagement to detect and recognize skilful women. Not only the expectations but also the culture influenced him such as the parental leave available for men and the equal chances at all fields. What he finds the main female disadvantage is the not sufficient self-confidence.

Real and Virtual Advantages in the Consulting Sector

Interviewees 4 and 9 see it proven every day that women colleagues and female leaders are just as capable, if not more, to stand ground and perform like men in their business. It is not only for fairness, but also for business reasons, for their customers' satisfaction, that they strive to raise the participation of women in senior leadership. They believe that they promote a chance for self-realisation for their own female colleagues as well.

The two leaders of this sample – of whom has/had creative, talented mothers and similar fathers – sometimes apply special solutions or even go into conflicts to protect their female colleagues. Examples for this are starting men-women paired counselling and supporting women at appointments or fighting for them at promotions.

The firm lead by one of them employs numerous female partners. Although their turnover and the income they generate lag behind men's, they still have a stable clientele. Their lower performance can basically be put down to maternity leaves, when they had to stop their activities for a while. Some of them had built their clientele carefully on purpose, because they expected having children some time later.

Efforts made by the other consultancy firm cannot reach 30 per cent of female representation and even smaller rates in management despite all the official corporate programmes to promote them. The leader of the Hungarian branch thinks the reason behind a mere 25-30% of female application might be the amount of work and that of working hours, both of which women perceive as being too much. He calls this ironic because he claims rivals demand more night shifts. Their corporate images suggest otherwise though.

He believes that in the 21st century the amount of work and the number of hours should not be such important factors. It is not really about effort; it is more about how well one can "pump up" their work so that the amount appears more than what they actually did.

> "On the one hand, the assessable working hours count a lot [...] it's not a big deal if someone can do something in eight hours, it counts more to demonstrate ten hours of work. Men are much more comfortable with this than women."

As he sees it, this flaw of corporate culture makes the company itself less competitive. This is hardly an unknown phenomenon; earlier research has also found similar examples for so-called masculine merits. (Schein E. , 2004) Actually one the advantages of this sector should be the possibility of flexible working time arrangement.

One of them spoke about the phenomenon of "similarities attract" first critically, then self-critically. This phenomenon exposes women to severe disadvantage in the male-dominated corporate world when it comes to promotions:

> "The Latin saying "similis simile gaudet" does work, you'll like someone who resembles your ten years' younger self. And of course for a man it's harder to see in a woman. I also feel this way at times and it takes effort to suppress. This is one of the reasons why decisions on applications aren't made by only one person."

Research calls the results of the similarity-attraction paradigm "homosocial reproduction" (Kanter 1977a) and (Byrne & Neuman, 1992) in senior management. We can see that a man with positive attitude can recognize this usually unconscious bias and able to remove himself from the negative effects.

Both Interviewees agree that one the advantages of this sector should be that it is easier to return and the activities are also more compatible with the chores around children. As a matter of fact, these colleagues are usually very loyal.

The controversy between the values they declare and practice is well exemplified by the case below, where the appointment of the female employee sparked debates in the local company of an international firm:

> *"A Hungarian graduate from a renowned university, smart, intelligent, comes back for 60% part-time after maternity leave - just the policy we advocate. She reached fantastic results. [...] At the very end there is her assessment, and some guys say: very well, but we still expect you to do this and do that. [...]. Finally, we could push her through for promotion. [...] it clearly showed that even though we believe and we tell, the system still says [...] it's not enough."*

Finally, he could convince the other decision makers by stating that a woman with a child could also be successful and set a positive example. From this they all understood.

In summary, we can say that those leaders who believe that equal chances should be provided to female talents, who recognize the benefits of mixed management teams, they can overcome many obstacles. If this is the lack of a network of relationships, they can help, or if this is the old reflexes appearance at promotions, they can do against it. A positive attitude will help them identify and overcome the negative constructions, as in the case of "similar attracts similar" bias. The construction that women are not fighting for positions sufficiently can be interpreted not only to blame, but rather as an incentive to help it work. It is also clear that positive corporate cultures have a high impact on women's talents recognition and appreciation. We could see how this can influence by the foreign parent company's values as well. The finest example is that positive corporate culture, the values of which have been incorporated in HR processes in the framework of the performance management system. Where the system monitors and evaluates not only men and women, but also the leaership style applied.

V.7.2 Developing Group

Constructions: initially negative or neutral but as a result of a learning or developing process it turns positive

Appointments: appointing more than two women, mentoring and in some cases talent management

The Role of Men's Self Confidence

A typical case of this group is the story of Interviewee 1 who had never seen talented leading women neither in his childhood, nor in the early part of his professional career. Those he saw were either frightening (masculine politicians for example) or alarming (quarrelling, untalented women at a former workplace). After these, it is not surprising that when he had the chance to comply his team, women only participated in vertically segregated positions.

Once in a critical situation, he, as the Chairman of the Board - temporarily – had to appoint a female CEO, similarly to "glass cliff "situations (Haslam & Ryan, 2008), (Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010)), The crisis has been successfully resolved, on the basis of good experience from the cooperation, the appointment was extended and the woman received a permanent appointment. Following this situation, he was more willing to appoint women to leading positions and is working successfully with them up to this date.

It is important to note, that the company he had led for a long time had been already different from the ones of general corporate culture. Most of the leaders, who were all men, had high emotional intelligence, empathy and good communication skills. These capabilities were important in their business and seemed to be important for him, as a leader. The leadership style was transformational and relationship oriented.

He said he had always liked to work with smart people, he had also been glad to be with people smarter than him. He thought that his own added value was being a good integrator, unlike many executives, which feature he thought was a matter of self-confidence. It also needs self-confidence to appoint talented women, he said:

"I like to have myself surrounded by people who are smarter than me. [...] so I think I might be quite self-confident [...] This doesn't mean that I never have any doubts, because I do, but it never reaches a point that I would employ someone who's less smart just to feel safer. Those who are afraid of appointing women don't have this attitude I reckon. For people who have this uncertainty will find it difficult to tolerate a woman who is smarter than they are. Much more difficult than tolerating a man. Anyway, it's just a concept."

This idea was a novel approach. I have never encountered a similar one, not even in research papers. The interviewee 17, who has followed a number of nomination process, agreed with this statement. It resemblance to the rivalry phenomenon of what has been revealed at lower hierarchical level research. As far as I understand it, at this level, men are not worried about their position, especially not due to a woman, but rather the prestige can work in the background.

Approaching the story interpretatively, there is a certain possibility that behind this process, there is his own self-confidence and his trust towards women is a result of it. After experiencing that working with a woman is inspiring and fruitful he had more confidence to do so. This interpretation is also supported by the point, that when talking about risks, he said that he learned that women were more emotional, which had to be taken into account, but also made certain motivational methods possible.

This leads me to believe that men with high emotional intelligence do not find difficult to work with, appoint or promote women after learning the definite advantages of such co-operation. This also means, that although could group other, highly intelligent men around themselves – as Interviewee 1 had done initially – they do not stick to this very practice anymore.

A gradual process

The first female manager Interviewee 13 met - as he told me about his childhood - was Aunt Charlie in his school. As an early stage of his career, however, he could work in the environment of a highly respected female leader. He pointed out that working together with female managers in his leadership position had been a gradual process for him.

157

He became a senior manager later in his professional career. After his appointment, it took him five years until appointing female deputies. He has experienced the advantages of working with them and learned to manage their different emotional energies. He realised that this energy, after reaching an agreement, means tremendous sources for reaching certain targets, therefore – as he said – he always took enough time to discuss future plans with his female partners in leadership.

When the mother company began to promote the appointment of women to senior manager positions, he was already ready for this and still works together with women in different boards successfully. His is a good example for the case that when working with women successfully becomes an internal belief, then the request for increasing the participation of women in senior management is not interpreted as an outside pressure. This is why this is not implemented in pseudo-solutions, but also as a result of voluntary choice.

When asked about meritocracy, he told that upon promotions or appointments he looks for vision in the respective field, people skills, professionalism and cooperativeness.

> *"When I choose people I try to go for professionalism, and leadership skills, because when you lead, you lead people, it accounts for about fifty per cent, maybe more, of this job. Ability to cooperate, that's also important in top management, and the fourth thing I'm after - actually, it's the first, because it's also my creed - that some people have vision while others don't."*

The global company whose subsidiary he works at expects executives to compile a diversified management team with special respect to female representation. They expanded the Hungarian board, the HR manager also got included, for instance, and as a result, many women became board members. In regional management, two out of five leaders were women at the time the interview was recorded. Today there are female board members in nearly all the countries of the region he administers.

Getting Involved in Female Talent Management

This group also includes Interviewee 12, who arrived to a global firm after working in masculine cultures. The company partly due to political correctness and partly due to

customers' compliance operated a serious talent management program, which gave chance to young female talents. Some of them built a serious career later in life. Although the performance evaluation system rewarded the number of women leaders, but he was not only motivated by that. The results convinced him, he has become an active participant in the process and worked for its success.

The principle was political correctness, but it turned out that customers also expected that from the company. The talented young women were given a chance, if they performed well, they were taught and trained. They could participate in regional and even global training sessions. A senior woman plays an important country-level responsibility today for example, "grew up" through this program. He was surprised that a for-profit, publicly listed company sometimes kept an expensive foreign woman leader here until another woman was found instead.

> "*Being an Anglo-Saxon company in the spirit of political correctness the female issue was imbedded in the company culture from the beginning. These "women leadership" programs already existed, pipelines have been built. [...] One of today's leading senior woman became from a trainee to leader in this way; first she attended a cluster program, then a regional, one in London and then she took the global women's leadership training program several times. [...] The structure of the processes has been built, while the women had to perform. [...] A very good performance was required year after year in the areas assigned to them, and then always other new opportunities were given to them.* "

All this was done while often there were no female members in the senior management of the company or at most one, the bank's global senior management was often do not grow or at most just one. Furthermore, as the interviewee had heard from a contact, that senior female leaders on the top were annoyed not only by the lack of women's toilets on the executive floors, but also by other daily irritations. That said, the program went ahead. At the same time there was also a sexual harassment case, which revealed that some male leaders did not considered all the women politically correctly. If there was some male cynicism around the program, it still generated significantly more opportunities for women, than ever before.

It has become his professional conviction. He believes that it is unstoppable global tendency:

"As the whole economy is going in the direction that services are growing and production is increasingly done by robots [...] human added value 'service' is what expands, then [...] to manage these things soft skills are increasingly needed to make it possible that these things are achieved. "

New Role, New approach

Interviewee 18A 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.

Interviewee 18, who has built up its own companies has not appointed women to top management position has recently started to deal with venture capital investments. In his new capacity I refer to him as Interviewee 18/A. Gaining new experiences in the world of start-up companies, he learnt that only good business performance and strategy matters but gender does not. Nobody cares who is man or woman. Talking about a woman whose company he invested in said the following:

"I am almost sure that the being a woman in the Hungarian business community is not a disadvantage. We are dealing with quite a lot of start-up companies such as X, Y, and Z companies, everyone loves them. She has good ideas and also cash positive. Now its international expansion begins. "

The first two groups some Interviewees talked about good experiences with mentoring support. It was agreed that the success is largely determined by the question whether the company's management take the mentoring system seriously enough, whether the appropriate persons are involved and whether there is a real opportunity for them to provide support. Similarly, some of them saw the added value of local women's networks and clubs, which on the one hand offer personal support, on the other hand, shape the organizational culture.

We could see big changes in constructions and attitudes in this group. If we look for the key causes, corporate culture is one of them. Even coming from a masculine culture it may make a radical change. Positive interpretation of global tendencies is another factor. At the same time, all three leaders in this group have high emotional intelligence that provides flexibility and helps inclusion. Seeing positive examples or experiencing them -either due to a glass cliff situation (Haslam & Ryan, 2008), (Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010), or because of a new activity - have a very strong impact. Self-confidence of the decision makers can be also important. Positive changes of constructions result in positive decisions, such as application of gender-neutral selection criteria in line with meritocracy, full-hearted support of women leadership programmes or investment in women led start-ups.

V.7.3 Uncertain Group

Constructions: mostly positive opinion on the leadership skills of women, but there are reservations, doubts or inconsistencies within their values

Appointments: appointed already a woman, satisfied with the performance but usually do not want to go further

Trust in "Our Daughter"

Interviewee 8 has appointed one women to the board. He thought that this would have a positive impact on the many women working at his firm but the result has exceeded his expectations with all the new aspects and viewpoints. He also noted cautiously, that he did not know whether the reason for this was the particular field, or the manager being a woman.

The fact that the woman who has become a member of the board of directors is a man's daughter, who has worked at the company for a long time, is raising the question of confidence. It seems that this extra condition was necessary, loyalty or cultural reasons. The uncertainty around the perception of the good performance, in my understanding, is related to the phenomenon that the "token" women are judged very severely (Kanter 1977).

The title of the metaphor expresses something of what was on my mind throughout the interview, when the interviewee talked about wives who like to look up their husbands to the only female director. It recalled the approach of Collinson and Hearn (1994, p: 13) who identified five competing concepts of around the issue of masculinity and management.

Some of his traits are similar to one of them called *Paternalism* where power is based on the moral basis of co-operation, personal trust and the protective nature of the authority. Familial metaphor, the rule of the father, who is authoritative, benevolent and wise. They seek to differentiate themselves from women and identify themselves with other men. Maddock and Parkin's metaphor is the „gentlemen's club". Women are protected and supported as long as they meet the notions of traditional female identity and do not have more ambitions than that.

Masculine Face of Meritocracy 1

This group includes Interviewee 11, who is perfectly satisfied with the only female board member whose contribution each director appreciates. He does not feel the need to expand this circle. Talking about meritocracy he pondered that if they set the condition to fit in a team and a culture might be actually more favourable for male candidates, since their corporate culture was dominated by men.

> *"Most of the time we don't specify the gender of the ideal candidate when we advertise for manager [...] What we ask for is „good fit" and „good chemistry" with the existing team. Which is made up of men, predominantly. This is indeed true."*

At the same time, he also observed that although the values they considered important - for instance team spirit or readiness to cooperate, both female stereotypes - were not true for all women, there were even counterexamples among the female senior managers of the parent company. In fact, there were cases when men complied more easily with the requirement to fit in.

162

Although more women have been shortlisted recently, they never managed to get the job. He could not find a reason for this, apart from less working experience with smaller companies in some cases.

> *"In the previous five searches there were three occasions we had a female candidate. [...] That we didn't choose them wasn't because they weren't clever or because they were women, it was simply because they weren't experienced enough. [...]. I know it's a vicious circle, without getting opportunities they will never have enough experience."*

My interpretation of the stories is that selection must have strongly relied on a task-oriented basis, and the documented working experience of the candidate seems to have been decisive. Research findings, in line with comment of the Interviewee, point to the fact that since women advance more slowly in their careers than men, they are also slower at showing up documented experience.

He also said that the central target was YY per cent of female representation, but as the parent company did worse than this branch, he "*focused on other objectives instead*".

In the article of Collinson and Hearn (1994, p.: 13) there is another concept that is somewhat similar to Interviewee 11 and called *Entrepreneurialism*. It is a hard-nosed, very competitive approach. Prioritizing performance level, budget targets, penetration to new markets, profit, efficiency at the expense of all other criteria. Only those women who are accepting the male breadwinner employment patterns are appreciated.

Masculine Face of Meritocracy 2

Interviewee 16 who for most of his life worked in HR as a board member at a multinational company told that the increase rate of female representation was centrally targeted each year. The motivations why the company promotes growing female representation in senior management have changed throughout the times:

> *"There were two easily separable stages. When it began, it was basically a socially induced thing. It was about equality and equal opportunities, and that women shouldn't be excluded. [...]. About 6-7 years ago it all turned round and people started talking about research findings which stated that companies*

163

where the rate of female managers was more balanced got more successful. [...]
so it has an economic advantage."

Since then the two approaches became equally important, although according to him, the second one is difficult to prove. He sees it as a chicken-and-egg dilemma.

At the same time, it was a principle that even though women got all the support they needed, upon selection they had to comply to get the job. Furthermore, he acknowledged that the values required upon selection are slightly masculine.

"If you approach it in theory and establishes a scale between extreme masculine and feminine values, or what to attribute to them [...] then I say that our selection to the values they hold more masculine, but not extreme. I would say it is slightly masculine. However, there are a lot of things we search, that are more feminine."

He said that he helped organising programs helping women to „get to the right place" (female network, mentoring) in order to make them eligible for the given requirements. There were a few that were successful in this somewhat masculine culture.

As I have already quoted hem, he is worried about the global trends: there are fewer and fewer children because of infertility both on male and female sides. He thinks that this is the result of even stronger female ambitions, and as for men, he fears that their gradually more active participation in household chores makes them more feminine and might lead them to lose their masculinity.

Disappointments

Interviewee 17 expressed his disappointment about the female leaders. According to him, he has done a lot for the development of talented women, and finally they were not loyal to him and the company. Recently he better reconsiders whom to trust.

V.7.4 Theory Constructors

Constructions: at first sight positive about women's abilities to lead, but this is the area of the conscious and unconscious biases, most of them creates several negative

constructions on grounds of evolution, biology and history that suggest that these factors will be valid for ever

Appointments: do not appoint women to leadership positions

Managed by Men Only

Founder and owner of a domestic market leader company Interviewee 18. His ancestors were farmer women of autocratic style. He feels it unfair that his female colleagues say that only men are leading the company. He did not think that mattered whether someone was a woman, but he admits that there are only men in senior management.

> *"The women always had the feeling that the "boys" manage the company. I did not know what to do with this. [...] I did not share their view. It is true that there was not a girl. in the top management "*

He says that the company started from scratch and has grown together with the top management. The sales have been done by men. Women could not get into the front line. As an excuse he said that during a takeover process he used to meet top leaders of ta foreign company. He saw no women among them.

Women, who are clever "Sergeants" have led operations that employ a lot of women. This fact reminded me of the young widowed grandmother and her sister who managed the farm in a Sergeant style"- as their grandson described them.

In my interpretation this attitude could be called unconscious bias. When someone says that it does not matter whether somebody is a woman or a man, but employs women only in vertically segregated management positions and there are only men in the top management. He has a completely different construction of women when deals with start-up firms and invest in some even if are led by women.

From the five concepts in the article Collinson and Hearn (1994, p.: 13) mentioned above I find that some traits Interviewee 14 are similar to *Paternalism*. More information is written about this in the section *Trust in our daughter* and in chapter III.

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Blame on Husbands

Interviewee 14 thought that although women are indeed creative and able to solve problematic situations, the reason for them falling behind with promotions is men's selfish wish for a career that makes it impossible for wives to serve in high positions. At his company there were more female than male managers at the mid-level, however, there were no women at all in senior management. Salaries are the same for the same jobs.

Because of this, he deems helping and supporting women very important, and considers it to be a long-term investment. He thought that in the short run women might have a lower performance because of their children and husbands focusing on their own careers, but it was strategically important to invest in female labour force and female managers.

This reasoning lies on actual social grounds but still should not be regarded as true for all women. Because of its generalising nature, this is similar to the case that women are not even asked about jobs requiring 24/7 availability, as it is presumed they would not be able to fill them anyway (McKinsey & Company, 2012). Due to this fact I interpret this construction as an unconscious one. Someone based on a limited sample constructs a general idea about constraints and acts accordingly. Similarly, to the previous some traits of Interviewee 14 are similar to the masculine construction *Paternalism*.

Female instincts

Many respondents shared explanations which they placed in a broader context. These explanations usually trace back the reasons to evolution. I have already referred to Interviewee 6 who stated that women's success in spotting talent was due to their role in evolution seeking fathers for their children. For this reason, he thought women to make much better leaders than men. He added that the cause of having few female managers was men's ambitions for power:

"What makes men worse leaders are things they get their ambitions from. [...]. the sexual role of a man is to make as many children as possible, and compete with other men for this to happen. [...] constant rivalry with one another has an important advantage in evolution."

It is surely a highly competitive corporate culture where that candidate become manager who performs better as a game cock,

"Women have a much more important task, namely to choose the one she wants to have children with. That's why women are much better at spotting talent. Now this is the most important skill a boss should have. So, women would make better leaders, but the male instinct to compete wins out in the end."

The interviewee that admires women's great eye in recognising and motivating talents, never appointed a woman to a leading position. This is so true that the HR-leader, a woman, could only be appointed to the senior managers' team only after he left the operative managing at his firm. He also thinks his wife is a great manager who motivated and supported him to reach high goals.

He finds the reason to be evolutionary why women – in his view - are not ambitious enough to reach high positions opposite to men who always compete. The evolutionary reason deems this unbreakable and static, and provides excuse to the appointer. I gave a deeper interpretation together with the analysis of the constructions of Interviewee 2. in the next section.

From the five concepts of Collinson and Hearn (1994, p.: 13) I find him similar *Entrepreneurialism*. More information is written about this in section *Masculine face of Meritocracy* and in chapter III.

Driven by Hormones

In the company of Interviewee 2 the founders believe that women are smart and skilful therefore female medium managers enjoy unlimited trust along the vertical segregation and in that framework, no woman, however, has been appointed to senior management position. In their paternalistic, caring culture they pay attention for example to women

who are returning from child care leave. One of them was entrusted with the administrative management of a small company is to find her earlier status again.

I find that some traits of him are similar to *Paternalism* Collinson and Hearn (1994, p.: 13). More details are written in section *Trust in our daughter* and in chapter III.

He finds similarity between to his earlier example for the quick close of the loss-making investments and issues of top leadership. He believes that the final reasons are partly rooted in patriarchal traditions and values that set different expectations for women and men. Most women intend to meet the expectations and has less ambition than men do. Hormonal differences also contribute to the explanation, according to him, because due to their lower testosterone levels women do not want to compete for power:

> *" there are professions that require testosterone, and, unless a woman is also motivated by testosterone, she won't be doing her job well. If she does manage to get it right, she still won't be accepted and she won't be able to keep her position."*

Leadership, he suggests, is also such profession.

This construction reflects such concept of leadership that is based on competition and fights. As if it were the only responsibility of the decision maker to announce the winner of the cockfight who has high level of testosterone hormone.

Earlier research revealed that women in highly masculine cultures often have to contend with criticisms that they lack the toughness and competitiveness needed to succeed. In such cultures, it is difficult for women to build relationships and gain acceptance in influential networks (Timberlake, 2005). With the multiple disadvantage the construction operates as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Other theories call (see details in chapter III.) the attention to that fact that when a woman begins to act like her aggressively competing male colleagues, that is also hard to accept for the environment. *The status characteristics theory* (Webster & Berger, 2006) (Ridgeway, 1991) (2009) provides an explanation on the background of these phenomena The theory argues that unequal societal status is assigned to the genders, with men granted higher status than women (Nagy & Vicsek, 2008) Status differences

influence not only perceived competencies and expected performance but also the expectations on appropriate behaviour in a group (Meeker & Weitzel-O'Neill, 1985). In case of persons of different status, however, if a woman of lower status behaves in such way would not be considered competent as it is contrary to expectations. In such group women may be assumed by other group members to be acting from motives of competitive status enhancement, which is not legitimate since he or she does not "deserve" higher status. Contribution of persons of low status may be ignored that further decreases their status (Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992).

The consequence is that women must prove that they are both competent and well-intentioned before either they or others expect or accept high levels of task behaviour from them. They are advised to apply sophisticated methods such as the emphasis on devotion for common goals, co-operative and group-focussed behaviour. However, in highly competitive company cultures, these strategies may remain unnoticeable.

The previous interviewee referred to evolution and on the heels evolved instincts, and my current partner found the different hormones at an explanation as to why there are so few women in top management companies.

These arguments can be interpreted in different ways. One is that some male leaders consciously or unconsciously seek explanations, which are consistent with their own intellectual orientation and independent of them, thus exempt them from responsibility for the imbalance. Reference to the natural sciences meets this goal because it is assumed to be objective and unchangeable.

Subject to further interpretation issues related with the unconsciousness arises. I wonder to what extent these constructions are unconscious structures. If a smart leader really wants to understand the causes and thinking about the questions, why not turn to the social sciences such as sociology, organizational culture research or management studies.

The patriarchal traditions based reasoning of one interviewee is closer to explanations identified by the social sciences research. The different expectations about women and men decrease women's senior management ambitions. Of course it's not true for everybody, there are still ambitious women. The question arises as to whether the

recruitment system has filtered them out, the corporate cultures has changed them – as explained by the status characters' theory –or they have left the companies. Or see what happens with those women who still would like to deserve top leadership positions with greater responsibility.

Another construction question is that if you a leader is serious about that fact, that talented, smart women who could perform well in top management jobs are at a disadvantage due to reasons beyond their control then why not helping them with for mentoring or other support. As the leaders of the first two groups do.

V.7.5 Reluctant and Refusers Group

- *Constructions:* not trust in female leadership skills
- *Appointments:*
    - very few appointments relative to the size of the company
    - companies with no women in their senior management teams,

The fifth group is made up of the two interviewees who have a low opinion of women's leadership skill. One of them has never appointed a senior female manager, the other one has taken this long for the corporate environment, but his opinion has not changed. Although this group is small in the sample, the interviewees' constructions, leadership styles and their companies' corporate culture represent an important segment in Hungary. The constructions that the interviewees formulate are extreme, knowledge of which is important in terms of research.

Wife Perception as Construction

Interviewee 5 is one of the few of my partners that worked with women even at the early period of his professional life. Since then he has always thought that women are better in analytics, but worse in strategic thinking, than men:

> *„My experience is that, either I was the boss or an employee, it was always like women were better at analytics, but – those that I met at least – were a bit weaker in synthesis, that is, they don't see the big picture, the relations, they cannot raise above as a helicopter, to see things from that perspective."*

He said that that in shaping his opinion about women, his wife might have played a great impact:

> *„Usually, normal guys have moms and wives. And your wife here is very important. Usually, ninety percent of women are great mothers and wives. The family chores get divided. We talk it through. The woman does what she has to, and the guy is there in the big deals, money, synthesis, logistics.*
>
> *I wouldn't give my wife a serious synthesizing task. She probably wouldn't even do it. When I tell her what to do she does it really well, she's accurate, I don't have to overlook her."*

Proceeding further, he realised that his ideas of preconception were based on his wife's qualities and their division of work. This self-reflection, introspection is reality construction in the making. I saw a process in front of my own eyes, through which a one-dimensional image of a woman was building up.

> *„There's this feeling – this just came to my mind now – this preconception, this stereotype towards women, that roots in the idea that my woman at home is like that, so all women must be like that, because she is my ideal, my model."*

The self-reflection at this point, however, turned into self-justification. My interviewee started to talk about thinking this was only natural that his wife was like that, otherwise, he would not have married her in the first place.

> *„To be honest, I wouldn't want a businesswoman for a wife, we would kill each other in two weeks [...]. I, for example, would never in my life have married [name of a businesswoman, a famous businessman's wife]."*

He continued with stating that women usually said that it was important for them to be able to look up to the man they lived with. When asked further questions to clear this up, he answered that he did not think it would have been beneficial for a woman to be career oriented, because then she would not be able to look up to her partner.

Stepping further in identifying women with wives, he claimed that the majority of men expected a woman to take care of their family homes – no breadwinning, no family

logistics and no working into the night. So to speak, he believed that the way he had made his ideas and opinions up was correct, because most of men would have thought so too. Making his construction general, he said that men, „except for a minority of marginal error" had similar wives, therefore, they must think a similar way.

My interviewee completed self-reflexive way, a part of my interpretative analysis. He came to the conclusion that when constructing women, his wife provides the model, and his wife was not chosen on the basis of her leadership abilities but other characteristics. He admitted this might have resulted in a certain preconception., There was, however, a strong urge of self-justification: he was trying to create a general norm based on his own construction. What is good for women and men is, if the world is the way he constructs it. Husbands make decision, wives implement while the wives are looking up their husbands.

Given the above, it is not surprising that admits that he is less confident in women than in men:

> *"If a woman does get appointed in the end, then in the first period I monitor her through a much bigger magnifying glass to see if she's really competent."*

In line with what he said earlier, such promotions do not happen too often:

> *"If a woman is nice and pleasant and I like to work with her, then for me it'll start to feel as if - and now do not get me wrong - as if she was my wife. She gets close to the female ideal, but from that point I can't hold her competent for senior management."*

As a living proof of *role congruity theory* (Gherardi, 1996), (Rudman and Glick, 2001), (Eagly & Karau, 2002), (Kark & Eagly, 2009) he said that the woman, who was one of his deputies for a long time, according to his perception became more and more masculine. This is even more confirmed his constructions, that he called "preconceptions".

His words recalled me one of the five competing constructions of masculinity and management in Collinson and Hearn's classification that they called *Informalism* (1994, p.: 13). When Interviewee 5 says that women cannot participate in social events

like hunts because they don't invite women his reasoning is that women disturb guys. When men are not alone they have to stop joking, talking about girls and cannot get drunk – he said. These are similar to the shared masculine interest identified by Collinson and Hearn such as sports, sex, humour, car and women and drinking alcohol. Maddock and Parkin's appropriate metaphor is „locker room" culture.

When widening the horizon and regarding this interview in a context with the other 17 ones, we can conclude that he was the only interviewee who could interpret most of his own constructions. He has pointed out himself: he does have preconceptions about women. Not very much later, though, he tried to interpret this fact in such manner that he could prove why he was right, but still, he did have a few moments when he could rise above his own constructions.

Now, after listening his words many times, I interpret the wife-character as a metaphorical one, that would make his prejudices about women a bit nicer. He has a conscious bias that is labelled as "wife construction" but – in my understanding – means a whole set of negative assumptions and feelings. The way for example he talks about the exclusion of women from social events or when talked about his early female bosses saying that they *of course* passionately hated each other, suggest that his is masculinity in itself. Masculinity, that is producing constructions to keep its hegemonic and dominant position.

Commitment as a Disadvantage

There is no a single woman in the senior management team lead by Interviewee 10. He has a bad opinion of women's leadership capabilities and, therefore, he considers the situation appropriate. According to him he does not trust women because he believes that all women have the tendency to be committed to certain issues too much. That means that they would not give up these issues even if those are considered infeasible to their boss. He evokes the example of his former woman supervisor from the early years of his career, who could even socialize with men. She fell behind in the career advancement because – according to him –was not pragmatic enough.

> „There was a time or two, when she didn't draw the best card. She built an
> alliance and stuck to it even though you could see it clearly, it was not going to

> *work. Or fought something that was of no sense, as she opposed XY, even though he was the son-in-law of Z. [...] I could accept the points of my actual boss."*

In his view cleverness is not the most important leadership attribute. He mentioned his wife as an example, that she, although is smarter than him, would not be a good leader. He said that it is a typical problem of women that they get overly involved in issues, and this makes them inflexible and sometimes even biased. In the case of women, he thinks that:

> *„There is a difference between the management and the specialist. The expert gets a job he or she can get involved in [...] A manager unfortunately needs to do many things that he or she cannot totally relate to, cannot get involved in"*

To quote a court judge, he says:

> *„To be totally honest, women shouldn't be allowed to be judges only lawyers, as they tend to get too involved, or attached to one of the persons involved"*

Admitting that his generalized construction is based on a very small sample, mentioned an experience that – according to him - proved the judge's words:

> *„Of course, I tend to generalise [...]. For many years, one of my closest colleagues was a woman. Sometimes she could even cry if she thought she could get something out of it for an issue. [...]. I just had to say no, if the case was like that."*

In a leading position, he deems it even more important, that one should not get too involved:

> *„When you're a leader, you cannot get too attached to a thing, you cannot fall in love with an issue, you need to know how to throw things away easily."*

To sum up his views on women getting overly involved in issues, he says, that for the aforementioned reasons, he deems women not to be appropriate for senior manager jobs. This view of his is so strong that even if he has good opinions of a woman, he still cannot trust her completely:

174

„In my experience, that kind of neutral position, when I do not get feelings towards anything I'm working with, is much harder for women to do. [...] And even if they can do it, you can never be sure whether it's only a temporary thing or not."

About women being cooperative, he said that women are not cooperative for the same reason. Issues are more important for them.

I was trying to understand the root of the problem so asked him, why he thought it was such an unmanageable problem. Did he mean this like women tend to not get integrated in loyalty chains? He answered, that he understands what I meant „Who's whose", but did not agree with me, as loyalties in corporate terms he considers only temporary. New situations make the structure change immediately, and breaks these chains up.

He also told that as a senior executive his task and internalised goal was to increase shareholder value. He said there were no women among the 48 members of the European Round Table of Industrialists. He quoted Yorma Olilla, the once legendary executive of Nokia, who had told him: "There is only one female top manager at Nokia, and she's Turkish." My interviewee thought that family enterprises might have female top executives if there were no competent men to inherit leadership, he added.

Mentioning Nokia was surprising because the unexpected, sudden failure of this company was attributed to an inadequate development strategy that had not taken the large scale diversity of users into account. They thought narrow-mindedly, that people only wanted phones to make and receive calls, and they lost market to the much more innovative firms like Apple.

He thought that patriarchy could have been built into the genes:

"Well, we're not the same. This is genetics. In so anyone can say anything, there is also a genetic part. After a time of social conventions, habits, they certainly do not just go [...] If you're taking a person out of there and you put him or her in a very different society it is likely to have been inherited certain things. So they had inherited. Geneticists have been able to find one or two genes, have been

able to find a gene, about which is surely known that has been transformed for a few hundred years.

We agreed that he probably thought of the gene of famine. Which is actually quite far from genetic heredity of patriarchy. This construction that is without any scientific evidence – in my interpretation – intends to support the biological legitimacy of masculine superiority.

One more negative argument about the leadership incompetence of women:

„Women are much afraid of solitude. For example, when getting a divorce, a man does not leave to get married again. A woman however, leaves when she thinks she can get married again. But leaders are lonely.”

This statement in itself reveals that his leadership style is such that lives him lonely. That suggests autocratic, task oriented and transactional leadership style. Loneliness of the leader – I myself can also prove this – is eased with trust in other senior managers, the good relations within the team, the positive culture of motivated and co-operating people. With whom you can discuss issues. It is true that no matter what, loneliness is always there to some extent, but leaders can keep it small.

The Interviewee considers his career successful his in his own life reality. The pragmatism he keeps himself away from emotional attachment has been proven to be successful – opposed to his first female boss that he saw falling behind because of her attachment to certain issues. The fact, however, that he considers the extension of this attitude to be the only criteria to comply to leadership, and the opinion that no women can do this, shows strong prejudice.

Commitment as a negative construction in itself is strange. All leadership styles recommended by research, studies and empirical evidences emphasize the value and importance of commitment. He himself does not believe in it. When he says *too much commitment* he formulates a strong opinion for all women. we have arrived again to prejudices.

According to literature, for women – probably for socialisation reasons – rigidly hierarchic structures are not appealing (Wicks & Bradshaw, 1999) and they prefer

participation (van Vianen & Fisher, 2002) (McTavish & Miller, 2009). This attitude could make a leader unsure, if he feels that the structure he deems important, gets rejected.

In my understanding, this is mostly about the importance of pragmatic obedience. He wants to work with people with whom he can be sure that individual cases are not more important than his actual decisions. I believe, that he thinks women are more autonomous in their ideas about their roles and duties. There are issues they feel their own, and to which, they will be committed because of their inner conviction. This, for him, means that women are not appropriate for senior manager jobs. As I have just said all this is the opposite to the management recommendations that urge for strengthening of commitments within the environment of rapid changes and the multichannel information dumping.

His constructions show strong similarity to the ones of Theory Constructors. There is a theory here as well called "female tendency to over-commitment". Interviewee 10, however is more open about his views. We cannot assume that the idea about the genetically transmitted patriarchy is an unconscious bias.

His constructions show similarities to a light version of *"Authoritarianism"* in the classification os masculinity constructions prepared by Collinson and Hearn (1994, p.: 13). The main characteristics that are applicable here – at least for women - are the intolerance of dissent or difference, rejection of dialog or debate and unquestioning obedience. Maddock and Parkin's (1993) metaphor, the „barrack yard" culture seems a bit exaggerated for this case. What is still similar that women are stigmatized as "weak" and not considered as leaders.

VI   Research Quality

I have already addressed the questions of research quality in some previous chapters as I understand that in qualitative research the conscious and transparent design and implementation of the whole research process ensures quality.

VI.1 Validity

I followed four guidance concerning validity. Kvale says:

> *„In a broader consent, validity pertains to the degree that a method investigates what is intended to investigate."* (1996, p. 238)

While Mason advises the following:

> *„The validity of method and interpretation could be demonstrated by meticulously reconstructing the way through which we have reached them"* (2005, old.: 182.)

According to Easterby-Smith and his colleagues in case of qualitative and interpretative research the point is whether the researcher gained full access to the knowledge and meanings of informants (1993, p. 41). In addition, I have considered checklist for Maxwell validity (2013, p.: 125.-130.).

I believe that my research fulfils the requirements set forth by these. Following Mason's advice, I introduced my reasoning behind my decisions at each point. In the spirit of Kvale and Easterby-Smith and his colleagues I decided for example, that the decision makers working in Hungary should be the focus. I chose my research method according to the research target and validity of data. This was the case when deciding upon the philosophical approach, where I chose the subjectivist approach (see chapter II), or the methods chosen from the toolbar (see chapters II.5. and IV.2). In case of the latter, I chose semi-structured interviews and emic approach, as most important ones.

My comments to Maxwell checklist are the following:

- *Intensive, long-term involvement*: according to his approach, which emphasizes the benefits of previous knowledge and experience, we can talk about the 15-20 years of participation.

  - *Rich Data:* beyond the previous knowledge, interviews recorded by a dictaphone and their analysis which could analyse not only verbal information but also a part of the non-verbal information. Addition to this there I had background talks as well.

  - *Respondent validation:* I have asked a number of questions during the interviews about my understandings and interpretations asking for interviewees feed backs.

  - *Intervention:* during the interviews I did not to ask questions that suggest answers, because the goal was to learn about the life realities. A number of interviewees said that a few days earlier they had wondered about the topic. During the interviews a number of them said that they were talking about unspoken ideas, feelings and beliefs. My answers to their questions made them thinking about their positions and actions. At the same time, I reflected in such cases, so their effect was transparent, which was also taken into account in the analysis.

  - *Discrepant evidences and negative cases:* no relevance as this is an exploratory research

  - *Triangulation and comparison:* Although Mason and Kvale criticised triangulation harshly, I was still happy to have the chance to make comparisons with former research findings in the course of my analysis, which also had a certain validating role. My background knowledge also helped tremendously in analysing and validating the texts.

  - *Numbers:* In my research I repeatedly called the attention to the fact that due to the sample selection method is not the number of occurrences is determinant, but the phenomenon detected and the information content.

Also in order to be as valid as I can, I tried to clearly differentiate between what the interviewee has said and what I understood. I also shared my insecurities or alternative understandings with the reader. I had the chance to consult with my co-

researchers to verify my methods, my experiences and, during hermeneutical meetings, also different interpretations. For expelling possible mistakes of selective perception, biased interpretation or biased expression, one must discuss the risky points with the interviewee.

VI.2 Reliability

Regarding reliability, when assembling my sample, I started off with thinking about whose life-reality is worth getting into, according to my research targets. I took into consideration, who are responsible for management decisions, promotions and appointments. This is why I chose CEOs and board members. I also considered the fact that it is mostly men that are present in these circles and the representation of women is only slightly above 10%, so made interviews with decision making men. As my research was based on such a small sample, I could not strive for statistical representativeness, but still, I tried to balance the types and profiles of firms of the interviewees questioned. I chose people of different ages, character and style, coming from different corporate cultures. The chance to analyse voice recordings also negated the possible distortions of transcripts.

Finally, on the question of Easterby-Smith and his colleagues – Will similar observations be made by different researchers on different occasions? – the answer is that it is likely in case of researchers of similar background.

VI.3 Generalisability

Easterby-Smith and his team describe the issues of generalizability with the following question: *How likely is it that ideas and theories generated in one setting will also apply in other settings?* Maxwell talks about *internal and external generalizability*. While Kvale says is that the generalization can give answers to questions that: *what is? what may be? What should be?*

Starting with Kvale's questions my research is of exploratory nature therefore the question primarily sought an answer is: "*what is?*". In this regard, within the framework of the sample five groups were determined on the basis of constructions and actions

related to the appointment of female senior management. The groups shed light on various segments of today's Hungarian reality. For the questions "*What may be*?", and "*What should be*?" I so far managed to find such answers, that are groups where the constructions on women in senior management are positive and where there are women in those positions. We found another group where either changes in culture or the personal development of the decision maker lead to such situation. Already today, these groups can be found in Hungary, and show a possible development path. This fact also partially covers the inner generalizability.

As for the external generalizability on the one hand, experience and interpretations were born that have been experienced and interpreted elsewhere already. While these findings provide important information about the today's situation in Hungary, the reason why they may be interesting in international point of view, is the fact that only a few previous research was based on interviews with male senior managers.

On the other hand, some findings represent a novelty even if related to same earlier research results. These range from the exploration of cultural differences live side by side to never experienced constructions, interpretations, such as the involvement of the wives or the diversity of constructions referring to evolution, hormones and the genes patriarchy. These issues and their importance, however, will be discussed in further discourse with the scientific community.

VII   Summary and Main Conclusions

'It is very important to do 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 9.)

In the spirit of the above quote from an interview, this chapter provides an overview of the research as a whole and particularly deals with the results of the empirical research. Beyond the answers to the specific research questions it presents the conclusions, which were born in the final synthesis and provide some answers to the high level research questions as well. Finally, it summarizes some directions for future research. The tone of this thesis is personal and self-reflexive. In alignment with this tone, I revealed the route I have chosen to walk, and the outcomes of my decisions throughout my research.

VII.1   Research Goal and Methods

The purpose of my research is to develop the dialogue on men and women's roles in senior management and to reach better mutual understanding based on respect for each other. The goal is to explore the construction processes related to low female participation in senior management in the profit-oriented private sector in order to enhance positive communication about the topic and improve the situation. My vision is a world where men and women mutually acknowledge each other's strengths and human qualities free of prejudices, where all people, regardless of their gender identities have an equal chance for promotion and appointment, and senior managers work together for mutual benefits.

Due to the complexity of the topic it is examined from a range of angles simultaneously. I chose to approach from the side of leadership studies and management research, using this particular field's terminology and methodology. I intended to explore the constructions of dominantly male decision makers on female senior management in an age when the management schools recommend leadership styles that are close to stereotypical feminine attributes and values.

In light of the fact that almost 90 per cent of the decision-makers are men I found very few research that involved senior manager men. Knowing the beliefs, feelings and discourses of men and the relations of those with corporate cultures and management styles are important for further dialogs and discourses. The importance of these issues is also arises from that fact that their influence on public construction processes is much stronger than that of women. The research questions were formulated focusing on male decision makers. The main questions are: 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 for the performance of the companies in the competitive private sector? What kind of beliefs, feelings and ideas and metaphors they have? How are these constructions are related to the corporate culture and its changes? What is their relation to the management styles? How does the unconscious bias work?

I have carried out a subjectivist, interpretative research, the main method was a series of semi-structured interviews. The experience a gained during the decade and a half that I spent in the private sector firms in various senior management positions helped in my work. I was able to compile a diverse sample of interviewees. The latter means not only the sectoral, and generational diversity, but also differences in leadership styles and corporate cultures.

I present 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 and their life reality 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.

I built the database in emic way, analysed by the interpretive methods while results of previous research were also taken into account. In order to ensure research quality. I carried out a transparent research design and implementation that assure the reliability, credibility and generalizability.

VII.2 Results, Conclusions and Further Questions

In this chapter first I discuss my presumptions formulated when preparing the research. Then I present the research questions and my responses. Finally, I share the conclusions based on the synthesis of the research data.

VII.1.1   Presumptions and Reality

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 and not hypothesises. 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. Fifteen out of eighteen interviewees allowed me to record our talks by a dictaphone. Knowing the field, I could verify their words. They also knew it. I believe that they talked honestly and frankly.

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).

184

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.

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, has 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'.

VII.1.2 Research Questions and Answers

Reviewing the literature, I found a disproportionately small number of research which would have drawn men in studies like mine, I have decided to focus on male decision-makers, who account for nearly 90% of the top managers.

Research questions:

> High level approach: What is the reason for the low female representation in senior management of the profit-oriented private companies in the competitive sector.
>
> Specific questions:
> - What reality-constructing patterns relate to the low representation?
> - How do male managers construct the questions? What kind of beliefs, feelings, associations and metaphors do they have?
> - How does unconscious bias work?

In the course of the analysis focused on of research questions revealed diverse constructions on female participation in senior management. Not only the constructions are different but the appointment practices as well. All these have exceeded my expectations.

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

- "Women are more empathic than men even at company level." One of the examples 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."
- "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.)

Going back to the platform of special contribution of women we can see that the constructions above somewhat exceeded the traditionally valued empathy and consensus. New added values are recognized such as creativity, new views and good problem solving abilities. I consider that fact very positive that the majority of the interviewees thought that girls' attitude towards mathematics and IT can be changed with better-targeted education. In their views family socialization has also 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 smarter or cleverer than they are. In my interpretation this "prestige jealousy" is a form of the fear from female competition experienced at lower levels of hierarchy.

From an external, critical point of view of the analysis it is important to declare that due to their diverse 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 traits.

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 my interviewees never appoint women to senior manager position because in his views all women have the tendency to get overly committed to issues, and this makes them incapable to be senior managers.

In my interpretation commitment as a negative construction in itself is a strange. All recommended leadership styles emphasize the value of commitment. Another issue is that the sample he refers to is certainly too small to formulate such a strong opinion for all women.

- His theory is that patriarchy could be genetically transmitted; just like famine, it builds into our genes and we pass it on.

The two constructions together hint that the real meaning is masculine superiority whatever context and wording is applied to deliver that.

- "Women are better at analytics, but weaker in synthesis, that is, they don't see the big picture there is no "helicopter" perspective".

When he started to explain the reasons he realized that his construction was based on the perceptions of his wife. At the end, however, he said that all women should be like his wife otherwise nobody would marry them.

- Although I never asked the interviewees about their wives, four of them mentioned them by themselves. To some extent 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.

- "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 mutal respect does not exist between married couples and that the whole world is hierarchical.

- 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 emphesized the fact that this meant career disadvantage. Others claimed that women are disturbing them in male talks but they denied any disadvantage stemming from this fact. One interviewee thought that it was an evolutionary heritage.

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 and evolutionary reasoning there were other biological, hormonal or evolutionary 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, but as they do not enter inter 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 continously 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 (Eagly & Carly, 2007).

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). Some of the other explanation are the "lack of fit" model (Heilman, 1983) (1995) (2001) (Haslam & Ryan, 2008), or the "similarity-attraction" paradigm (Byrne & Neuman, 1992), Kanter (1977a) that explains the reasons of the so-called "homosocial reproduction." Masculinity aspects are discussed in relation to hegemonic mechanisms (Connell, 2005) and management constructions (Collinson & Hearn, 1994) See them all in detail in chapter III. at the literature review.

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

- "Women have been doing regular, recurring, monotonous work since ancient times. This is why they are better in support functions This pattern took tens of thousands of years to develop."

This reasoning has a social dimension, refers to social patterns and behaviours. Does not clam that the situation could not change.

- "Due to different social expection and self-attribution women close 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 is 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.

The exploration of the constructions also led me to recognize further issues. I have realized that the appointment practices were not always in line with the opinions expressed. My first conclusions are shown in *Figure 19*. However, further analysis leads us to the high level question.

VII.1.3   The High Level Research Questions

While looking for the answers to the research questions I happened to find some answers to the high level question i.e., the reasons for the low female participation in senior management as well. According to the hermeneutic circles of qualitative research I have arrived to the last circle to the last conclusions.

According to the interpreted attitudes and the appointment practices I formed five groups of the eighteen interviewees (see *Figure19*). 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.

The number of the 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 as follows: Supporters, Developing group, Uncertain group, Theory constructors and the Reluctant and rejecting group.

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.

Management Style

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 and appointments, they shared their views about decision making and motivation.

During the analysis of the individual attitudes and appointment policy 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 Interviewees.

The style of the four leaders in the *Supporters'* group is less task and more relationship oriented, they are mostly democratic in decision making and more transformational than transactional leaders. Their emotional intelligence is high, and two of them have strong entrepreneurial spirit.

In the *Developing group* there are three leaders who are rather similar to the members of the first one. 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 are of technocratic orientation, had more task than relationship 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*.

In the group of *Theory constructors,* the general attitude is technocratic, they mostly lead in transactional and task oriented styles. Most of them are rather paternalistic and two of them are leading at least partly their own companies. 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 with 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.*

All in all, what we can say 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 and skilful enough. The above mentioned masculine constructions are partly or fully exclude women from management. We can see a clear trend here as well, those interviewees who are somewhat similar to any of the five constructions belong to the last three groups.

Corporate culture

Going back to the interviews there is two more factor to analyse. One of them is the corporate culture including gender issues about which they shared a lot of information. Corporate culture consists of values and behaviours that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization. represents the collective values, beliefs and principles of organizational members and is a product of such factors as history, product, market, type of employees, management style, and national culture. Culture includes among others the organization's vision, values, norms, symbols, language, assumptions, beliefs, and habits (Schein, 2004). Most of these components are invisible. This is true for those elements as well that are related to gender issues. This is why the metaphors are "glass" – ceiling, wall or cliff.

Gherardi and Poggio (2004) called the attention to the fact that many components of the gender differences are results of gender construction at the workplace, where corporate cultures, rules and the limits of fairness in gender relations are formed. This difference is constructed by the fact that when we do business we do gender as well.

Based on the information available the two key elements of the organizational culture relevant to my analysis are the nationality of the firm and the type of activity, the industry.

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. They talked about their experiences in a very positive manner. The most enthusiastic of the leaders in this group was the head of a consulting firm. He said that his attitude is supported by positive results as well.

The rest of the group, the other two companies are Hungarian. In one of them the personality of the leader is of key importance. 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 they built the firm. He always worked together with women who became leaders and who were always very successful in their businesses.

Every interviewee in the *Developing 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. 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 interviewee 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 carrier 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 see that corporate cultures at most of the Hungarian firms in the sample are not inclusive. Either openly or in hidden ways, conciously 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 close to Hungarian ones.The culture of the American firms is not only supportive for women but attention is paid to female talant management. The Scandinavian and Dutch cultures that are also positive about female leadership.

Finally, 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 comitment. 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.

The Way Forward

Overall, the corporate cultures, management styles and individual decision-makers are all examples of great impact on women's opportunities to become senior leaders. Their development can move the still very low female participation in senior management in Hungary to a favourable direction. There have been some examples of positive situations, and also, that anyone who opposes today, tomorrow may become a patron of women's talents. I experienced that the importance of inner conviction is greater than what can be seen in the appointment decision. Those who have appointed women to senior management only because external pressure but otherwise uncertain, usually satisfied with mostly one appointment and do not shape the culture inclusive.

Getting to know the constructions I came to the conclusion that communication about the social roots of female disadvantage as well as bout the positive examples play key role. Together with other measures it helps to provide more opportunities for self-realization for skilful and talented women as well as more chances for companies to utilize female contributions in senior management positions.

Appendix

1. Basic model: an interactive model of a research design

Figure 1: Research design
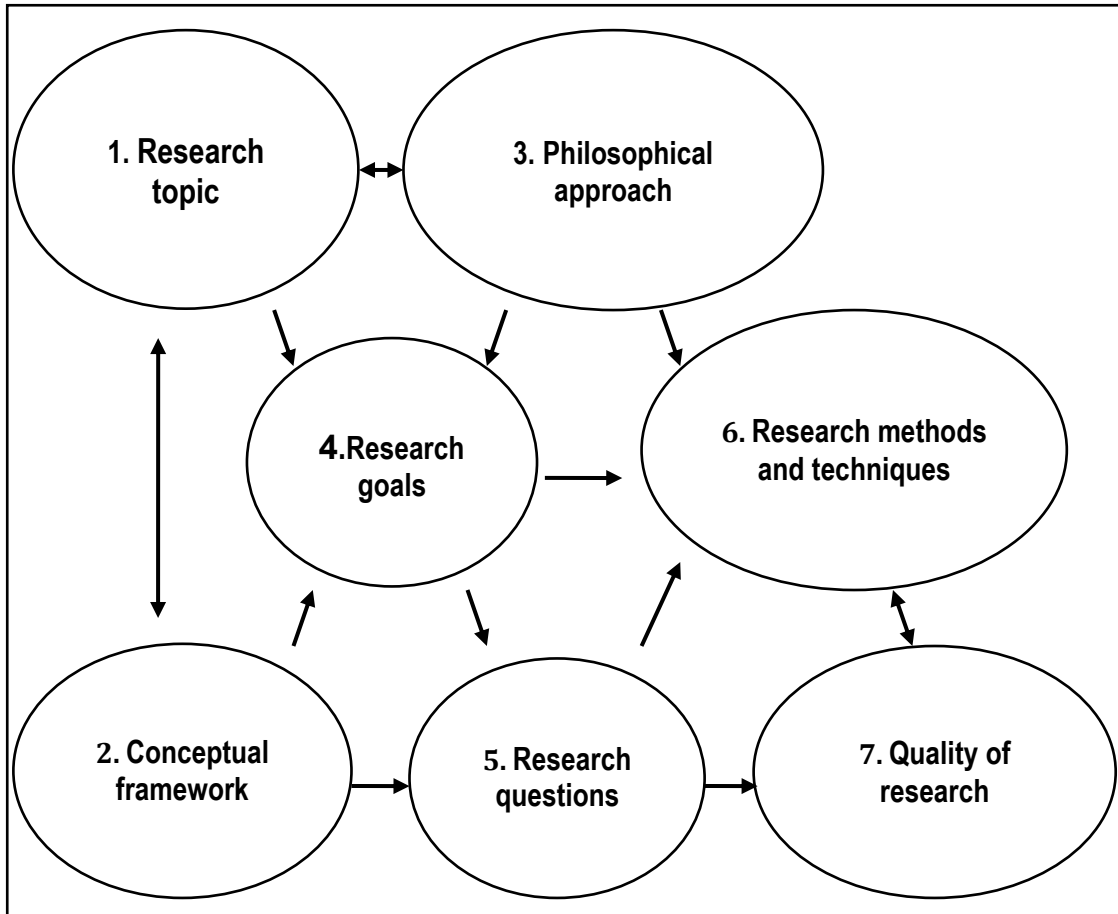
Source: (Maxwell (**2013**) reviewed and revised by Gelei (unpublished draft, reference with the permission of the author) revised by the author

2.   Risk Disclosure Interview Summary

The interview was similar to the already mentioned „identity memo", and it targeted my choices, motives, goals and the interviews. It was prepared at the beginning of the research. During our conversation he made a memo, a note about the issues he deemed risky, so that I should be careful with them.

- That time one of the greatest risks was my overly ambitious „I want to accomplish everything in this research" attitude.

Upon preparing my thesis plan I realised that beyond this particular research, some other aspects and viewpoints could be examined, like quantitative research methods, and analyses relating to globalisation and organisation economics, but in this research, only the qualitative-interpretative method got a green light.

- The other risk Attila pointed out to me was that he felt a certain „I want to save the world" attitude during our conversations. He stressed the importance of neutrality in order to sustain validity. He also stressed that whenever certain negative experiences or views get pronounced – like women do not improve the productivity a certain group – I should turn towards them with an understanding attitude. He also warned me to keep an open mind towards alternative female gender identities and strategies.

Thinking what he had said through, I did not feel this risk to be that serious. I understood that I might have said things that gave rise to his concern, but I thought my identity matched the task at hand – I defined my role to be a researcher, not a political activist. As for women, I learned through my active years in management that women, too, are of different character, even if they work in the corporate sector. Some of them carry stereotypical attributes, some do not. Since researchers' duty is to understand, not to judge, I made it a clear aim to be open and understanding.

- He also called my attention to the possibility that no matter how banal my interviewees sounded, it would still be important to understand that they revealed   their personal realities and that was just the way they constructed their realities. This, he said, had a different meaning to those who had already delved

deep into a subject and to those who only lived on the surface, to whom this was all peripheral. Attila was also afraid that my intellectual attitude might force the interviewee to say „smart" things instead of wording their own, possibly schematic views. He also asked me if I seriously thought they would confess their offensive views to a woman.

This warning was of exceptional importance. By that time, I had already realised that my research required a certain kind of open understanding, and I had also been practicing this attitude, but as Attila pointed out, this acceptance had to include the acceptance of clichés, too. I agreed with what he had said, that if a personal reality would give rise to schematic views, I had to go with that, as it was exactly the thing I was researching. To his question, however, I had already known the answer, and I am going to discuss it later on.

- He also pointed out that although previous connections might prove useful in conducting my research, the main goal should be not to keep these connections, but to realise my research targets.

Clearly, the goal was to realise my research targets, it could not have been anything else. I chose to write a PhD thesis of my own free will. The desire to show something I am capable of, with my connections, my professional past, my mediation skills regarding the subject, was strong.

- His last point was rooted in a previous discussion of ours, that is, he had warned me during my PhD studies that there might be some difficult periods in the process of writing my thesis and it was better to face them and turn them into creative energy than to suppress them.

I agreed and stressed that research indeed is a creative process, with lots of satisfaction, reward and happiness. It is not a bad thing if we do not suffer during the writing of a thesis but „feel the flow". I tried to do everything in order to have this feeling: I chose a topic that interested me, one in which I can create something new, one that I learned,

studied, read, wrote, interviewed a lot about. I was hoping that this positive, creative feeling would last until the end.

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