WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE WOMEN'S CAREER SUCCESS

Female leaders' reflections on their career development and leadership

Lahti University of Applied Sciences
Degree Programme in International Business

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine women's possibilities to advance to leadership positions. This thesis is based on the fact that there are less female leaders than male leaders, both globally and in Finland. The thesis aims to find the influential factors behind women's career and ways to increase the number of women in leadership positions. The thesis was commissioned by Havis Amanda Junior Chamber - Helsinki.

The theoretical part of the study consists of the following topics: what is meant by female leadership, female leadership in a global context and in Finland, why it is important to promote female leadership and what are the underlying influential factors in women's careers. The information was gathered by literature and previous studies related to the topic. Also, the author's own knowledge and experience were used in creating the theory.

In the empirical section of the thesis, qualitative research methods were used. The data was collected by interviewing four women in leadership positions in known Finnish organizations. In addition to the interviews, an internet-based questionnaire was sent out to more women in top positions.

The results of the study show there are many direct and underlying factors regarding women's underrepresentation in managerial positions. Three levels of influential factors were defined as societal, organizational and individual factors. By studying these levels, it was found that traditional gender roles, organizational culture and women's perceptions and competences all have a role in women's managerial career development. Organizations were seen to have the most power, as they make the direct decision on promoting female leadership by recruiting and offering career advancements. Also, it was found that women's possibilities to become leaders vary in different sectors and that the strong division of the Finnish labour market by gender slows down equality and women's career development.

Key words: female leadership, career development, leadership position, influential factors

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoitus on tutkia naisten etenemismahdollisuuksia johtoasemiin. Opinnäytetyö perustuu siihen ilmiöön, että naisia on selvästi vähemmän johtoasemissa niin Suomessa kuin maailmanlaajuisesti. Opinnäytetyö pyrkii selvittämään naisten urien taustatekijöitä sekä tapoja edistää naisjohtajuutta. Työn toimeksiantajana toimii naisjäsenistä koostuva Havis Amanda Nuorkauppakamari - Helsinki ry.

Teoreettinen osio sisältää seuraavat aihealueet: mitä tarkoitetaan naisjohtajuudella, naisjohtajuus Suomessa ja maailmalla, miksi naisjohtajuuden edistämin on tärkeää ja millä tavoin sitä voisi edistää. Teoria kerättiin viittaamalla kirjallisuuteen ja aiempiin tutkimuksiin. Myös kirjoittajan oma tieto ja kokemus aiheesta oli mukana luomassa teoriaa.

Opinnäytetyön empiirisessä osiossa tiedon löytämiseksi käytettiin kvalitatiivisia tutkimusmenetelmiä. Tiedot kerättiin haastattelemalla neljää suomalaisten tunnettujen organisaatioiden johtoasemissa työskentelevää naista. Näiden haastattelujen lisäksi tietoa saatiin myös toteutetusta verkkokyselystä, joihin osallistui muita johtoasemissa toimivia naisia.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat että naiset ovat aliedustettuina johtoasemissa monien eri tekijöiden vuoksi ja syyt ovat moninaisia. Tutkimuksessa määriteltiin kolme eri vaikuttavaa tasoa, jotka ovat yhteiskunnalliset, yrityslähtöiset ja yksilölliset syyt. Tutkimalla näitä eri kolmea tasoa huomattiin, että esimerkiksi perinteiset sukupuoliroolit, yrityskulttuuri ja naisten omat näkemykset ja taidot vaikuttavat naisten johtamisuran etenemiseen. Myös naisten uramahdollisuudet eri aloilla vaihtelevat paljon ja Suomen työmarkkinoiden vahva sukupuolinen jakautuminen hidastaa tasa-arvokehitystä ja naisten uramahdollisuuksia.

Asiasanat: naisjohtajuus, ura, etenemismahdollisuudet, johtoasema, taustatekijät

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1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

When talking about working women and women in leadership, the concept glass ceiling often comes up. In this context, glass ceiling refers to a barrier which women face, or have faced, in the business world. A glass ceiling comes across in an organization at the top of the hierarchy and prevents women from achieving the same positions as men. (The Glass Ceiling Effect 2001.) Some argue that the glass ceiling has been already shattered and others argue otherwise. Maybe instead of a glass ceiling, women are now facing a glass labyrinth. Women have the possibility to rise to higher positions but they face many obstacles on the way, instead of getting ahead straightforward as men often do. (Tanhua 2012, 69.)

In Finland, equality between men and women is considered far developed. Finland was the first country in Europe to give women the right to vote in 1906. In 2011, according to research, Finland was the third most gender equal country in the world, regarding health and education. Both men and women are well educated and women can choose to have both; a career and a family. However, there is still a salary gap between women and men's earnings and women who choose a career rather than home life, often face negative attitudes and discrimination. Also, the number of female leaders is surprisingly low.

The right for women to work, get the same pay as men and be leaders is still a very current issue. Even though the situation has been getting better slowly, concepts as the glass ceiling and quotas for women still exist. The author decided to research this topic as she is a woman herself and has always been interested in the issues of equality. Also, the issue concerns the author herself as well as all other women wanting to get ahead in their careers.

1.2   Thesis objectives and research questions

The objective of the thesis is to study the background factors of women's career success and women's position in leadership. The factors that influence women's careers will try to be identified to understand the low number of women in

leadership positions. The objective is also to examine the benefits that women can bring to organizations and what are the ways to promote female leadership. In order to reach these objectives, the following research questions were identified.

The main research question is:

1. What are the main factors that influence women's rise to leadership positions?

The sub-questions are the following:

2. Why are women underrepresented in senior management?
3. What are the ways to grow the number of women in leadership positions?
4. What benefits do female leaders bring to organizations?
5. Is leadership gender neutral?

1.3 Research methods and data collection

Qualitative research method was chosen as the research method to this thesis. The nature of the research is explanatory. By using qualitative research methods the author is able to use interpretive practices when researching the topic. It also allows the use of multiple sources such as interviews, published data, documents, observations and so on. (Davies 2007, 10, 151.)

Figure number one demonstrates the chosen research method, research approach and data collection. The researched data will be collected from both primary and secondary sources. For the empirical part of the thesis, primary sources such as interviews and the author's observations will be used. Secondary sources such as literature, Internet sources and articles are used for the theoretical part.
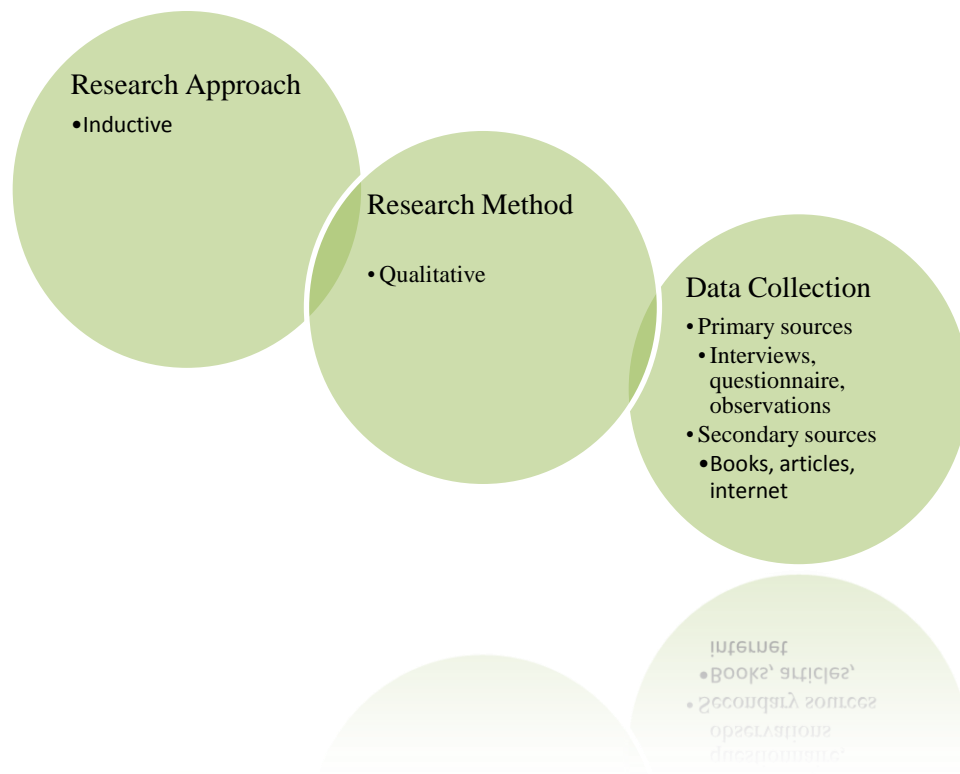
FIGURE 1. Research methodology

The research approach of the thesis is inductive. Inductive research starts from a specific observation on a specific subject area. Data is collected and analyzed and on the basis of that analysis, theory and conclusions are made. The theory and conclusions of an inductive approach are not certain nor the only conclusions. There may also be several conclusions and not only one. The conducted theory is probable and can alter, as it is based on the researcher observations on the data collected. (Davies 2007, 238.) Thus, the results of this study represent possible answers and theory concerning the topic, as they are based on the author's understanding of the issue and the observations made during the process of the study.
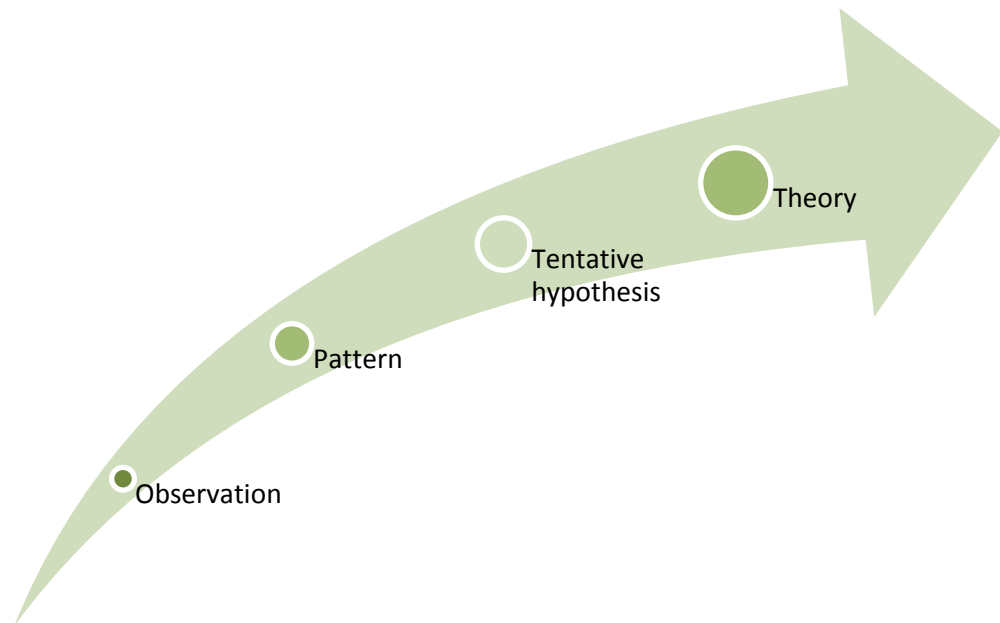
FIGURE 2. Inductive research

Figure two shows the model of inductive research. An inductive research approach moves upwards and starts from something specific and ends in general theory.

1.4   Theoretical framework

To understand this study and give a platform of knowledge for the specific objective of the thesis, the theory of leadership is included. However, as the concept of leadership is vast, the concentration will be on the theory of female leadership. Basic concepts such as leadership, femininity and masculinity are explained in relation to the topic in order to examine whether leadership is gender neutral or not. Also, the meaning of careers will be explained as it is an important concept of this thesis and its objectives. To form the theory part of the thesis, data will be collected from secondary sources, such as books and internet.

Some statistics are used to show how female leadership has progressed in the recent years and the state of female leadership internationally and especially in Finland. For the statistics, reliable internet sources are used. The theoretical part

will also include demonstration about the benefits of female leaders and why it is important for companies to aim at diversity.

1.5 Scope and limitations

The research will focus on women in leadership positions in companies and organizations. The research will not regard the proportion of women in politics nor in other governmental positions.

The author does not research female entrepreneurship, even though it would be interesting to study female leadership in that context. However, the purpose of this thesis is to examine women's possibilities to move up in different organizations, especially in organizations of larger-scale. This way, the author is able to examine career development related to promotions rather than self-employment.

Some statistics are given about the situation globally in order to gain a baseline for the situation in Finland. However, the thesis handles the topic primarily in a Finnish context, thus looking at the situation in Finnish organizations, culture and society. As there are large and notable variations between countries, the subject would be too broad to handle in the thesis. The author chose to concentrate on Finland, as the topic is current in Finland and there is a lot of updated information available.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of a theoretical part and an empirical part. Chapter 1 introduces the topic and the research problem. Chapter 2 and 3 forms the theoretical framework of the subject which is being researched. The empirical part of the thesis is dealt in chapter 4, which handles interviews of four female leaders.

1	• Introduction
2	• Defining female leadership
3	• Looking at the influencing factors
4	• Interviews
5	• Conclusions
6	• Summary
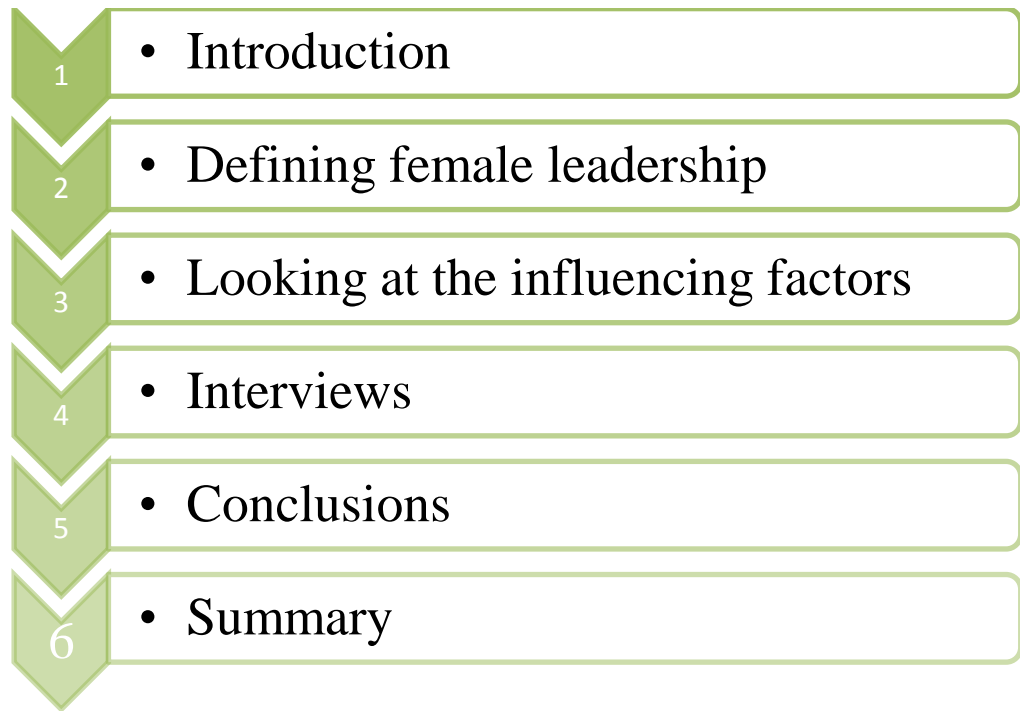
FIGURE 3. Structure of the thesis

In chapter 5, the author concludes the study by looking at the findings. In that chapter, the research questions outlined in the beginning will be answered according to the findings. The thesis will be summarized in chapter 6. All in all, the thesis is divided into six chapters and the structure of the thesis follows the order shown in figure three.

2 FEMALE LEADERSHIP - WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN?

Leadership itself is a very broad concept, and various theories and styles of leadership exist. Female leadership is just one branch of this concept and can also be defined in different ways. Some understand female leadership as the fact that women can be and are leaders, others may define it from a feminist point of view and as a matter of equality and the right to have the same opportunities. Some say, it refers to certain feminine characteristics which are valuable in today's organizations. (Palmu-Joronen 2009, 172). Others think that leadership should not be differentiated as female leadership at all.

2.1 Leadership and career

Leadership is culturally binding and changes over time, so it is hard to give one definition of it which applies to all leadership. However, to understand female leadership and what is meant by it, the fundamental nature of leadership will be explained next.

The concept of leadership comprises of three aspects; people, goals and influence. Leadership is influential action and is used to achieve goals. Leadership is people-driven and the ability to inspire people helps to achieve the set goals of an organization. (Daft & Kendrick & Vershinina 2010, 565.) Leadership can be seen as a tool or a process of motivating people. The motivation aims to achieve particular goals by the action of those people. The different styles of leadership derive from different ways of motivating people, different kind of goals and the nature of the organizations. (Hannagan 2008, 40.)

Hence, leaders set the direction for others to move forward to future and motivate them to reach the set goals by certain way of functioning or acting. Great leaders do not just lead and say where to go, they have to participate in it themselves as well. Leaders need to act on their visions, as they are easily judged by their action, not by what they say (Hannagan 2008, 40). Leaders should have responsibility and authority, and they must have vision for the future and be confident enough to lead everyone there.

2.1.1 Is leadership gender neutral?

Female leadership is most commonly defined by the differences between femininity and masculinity. The characteristics that are considered to influence decision making, problem solving and achievements are often compared. The aim of this discussion is to emphasize the value and benefits of feminine characteristics in leadership today and the benefits diversity brings to organizations and businesses

Women and men are biologically different from each other, and usually culture and society shape and strengthen gender roles. The traditional role of men is to support their family and the role of women is to take care of children and home. Traditionally, men are considered to be more aggressive and women nurturing. Different stereotypes of women and men's characteristics and roles in the society still exist strongly. (Piha 2006, 89.) However, everyone has their individual characteristics and strengths and that is why stereotyping should be avoided. By stereotyping men as more efficient and achieving in work life, the important and valuable characteristics that women have remain undervalued (Piha 2006, 92). Stereotyping slows down change and can act as a major obstacle when it comes to women's career possibilities.

There are certain characteristics of leadership that are described as feminine characteristics and masculine characteristics. Some of the characteristics often found in male leaders are competitiveness, focusing, goal orientation, inventiveness, performance orientation and having the desire to be the best. Feminine characteristics include social skills and social interaction, conversational style of communication, acceptance of differences, being multi-skilled and working well in groups. (Piha 2006, 94.) These characteristics do not imply the gender of the leader, they merely represent different kind of leadership behaviour which can be applied by both women and men.

Ignoring all the details of stereotypical characteristics of women and men, it comes down to the differences between perception, according to Palmu-Joronen (2009, 174). Women and men think about things in different ways, emphasize different aspects and approach problems in certain ways, generally speaking. Of

course, women can think in a masculine way and men in a feminine way. Even though leaders do not consciously make decisions based on their gender, the different way of perceiving things is still present.

Masculine way of thinking is focused on something specific and putting all efforts towards that specific aspect in a certain moment. Men have the quality to know about something specific very much and understand it clearly. The problem that might occur when things are perceived in a masculine way, is that something else relevant to the situation is not noticed and the view on things is restricted. The progress is often very logical and moves forward step by step and the end result is achieved by following the process. Masculinity is also connected to planning and setting and reaching goals in many aspects of life. Tasks and the result are important. The pre-designs of a process to achieve goals are followed. (Palmu-Joronen 2009, 176.)

The feminine way of perceiving entities is broader, and more aspects that might have an influence are taken into consideration. It is typical for women to see the relations between different things and hence have a clearer vision of the bigger picture. Intuition plays a part in this progress and the entity is discovered quicker. The feminine way of perceiving has its downside too. Because of the amount of information and different aspects that are identified, it can be easy to get stuck or slowed down. Achieving goals is important in femininity as well, but the way of achieving them is equally important. Experiences, creativity and intuition are important in the process of achieving goals. (Palmu-Joronen 2009, 176.)

There are many other differences between the masculine and feminine behaviour such as communication, the way of understanding reality and authority. Feminine way of communicating is horizontal, which means that it strengthens the relationships between people, creates team spirit and equality. Masculine way of communicating is vertical, involving the idea hierarchical relationships and giving information from top downwards. This way of communicating accentuates authority. Masculinity is connected with an objective view of reality, which means that the general truth is more reliable than that of a person's own. Rules, science and agreements, for instance, are important as well as intellect. Mostly abstract things are trustworthy as well as things that can be clearly explained. Feminine

view of reality is more subjective, so more emphasis is given to a person's own experience and views on truth. Intuition, feelings and life are important and base the foundation of perception. (Palmu-Joronen 2009, 177.)

TABLE 1. Masculine and feminine perceptions. (Palmu-Joronen 2009)

	Masculinity	**Femininity**
Communication	Vertical	Horizontal
View of reality	Objective	Subjective
Perception of entities	Detailed	Comprehensive
Achievement of goals	Goal-oriented	Process-oriented

Table one summarizes the common features of masculine and feminine behaviour which are related to leadership. As mentioned before, these characteristics and behavioural aspects can appear both in women and men. For example, Eva Nygren, who was chosen as Sweden's most influential woman in business in 2012, stated in an article that she has had experience on male leaders who act in a feminine way and vice versa. She thinks that gender is irrelevant and that it is more about the person and his or her style of leading (Rahkonen 2013). This argument is often heard when talking about leadership and gender neutrality. After all, every leader has his or her own way of leading that has been shaped by the persons on values, beliefs and character.

Why leadership has traditionally been considered to be a man's job is because the nature and style of leadership has been very masculine. Leadership used to be vertical and more hierarchical. Emotions were not part of leadership and reaching of goals was the most important thing. In the traditional way of leading, there has not been room for feminine behaviour which has always been connected to women. However, leadership is changing and many feminine characteristics are

becoming more appreciated. The situatiton is different now, because genders are not as bound by certain ways of behaviour as before.

As male leaders are the majority they often emphasize the benefits of masculine ways of behaving as it is more natural to them and femininity is often seen as a weakness. Unfortunately, many female leaders also choose to behave more like men to gain authority, credibility and be accepted. In Finland, the characteristics of a good manager are usually matched by masculine characteristics and many women in high positions use a masculine style of leading (Palmu-Joronen 2009, 181; Heiskanen 2013, 38). In that sense, certain aspects of femininity are still seen as weaknesses or inappropriate in the business world.

2.1.2   Female leadership without the word female

There is leadership and there is female leadership. This specification of leadership is used often and it refers to women being leaders or sometimes to a specific style of leading. The use of the prefix divides opinions. Some would prefer it not be used and others do not see a problem with using it. The disbenefit of its usage derives from the question: why should it be specified as such? After all, most professional titles, such as dentists and lawyers, are left without the prefix that specifies the gender of the person. (Piha 2006, 131.) If leadership is differentiated into women's and men's leadership, then it would mean that leadership is not gender neutral.

Arguments against the use of the words female leaders or female leadership are based on the idea that it does not make a difference whether it is a man or a woman who leads and that leadership is gender neutral. Many women think that the prefix enhances the belief that there is a huge difference between female leadership and male leadership, even though there might not be. It is considered, that being a woman does not affect the capability of executing certain tasks or what kind of jobs one can have. It is merely a characteristic among others and that is another reason why it should not be emphasized. (Piha 2006, 131.) Since the 1980´s, the focus has been on emphasizing female leaders' traits and their benefits in organizations, rather than proving women's humanity and capability to work in higher positions (Tanhua 2012, 72).

Those favouring the prefix or thinking it is harmless, say that it actually represents change. Specifically emphasizing femininity in leadership, means that it is recognized that there have been and still are less female than male leaders and that it is changing. In that sense, the word female is seen to work as sort of a reminder of the fact that there have not always been female leaders. According to Piha (2006, 132), some women want to use the words female leadership purposefully, to bring out the competitive advantage that different skills and capabilities can create, this way bringing up the advantages of femininity. Sometimes being a female leader and representing minority in some sense can be beneficial as some organizations may consider a woman as a more interesting choice or as a new asset.

Especially in Finland, the prefix is starting to be a bit out of date. The prefix female might derive from the fact that leadership is changing and the role of women as well. It also concentrates specifically on the growth of power and influence of women in business life which has not happened before, and that is why it is accentuated. Surely, it has also positive value but emphasizing it means that the change is still going on. It indicates to us that it is still not a norm that women are leaders and that there are less of them. When the goal is reached and there is a sufficient number of women in leadership positions, there is no need for the differentiation anymore. (Piha 2006, 132.)

2.1.3   It all starts from your first job

As this thesis concentrates strongly on leadership and career advancements, it is worthwhile to examine the meaning and importance of a career. After all, to become a leader experience is needed, which is usually gained from earlier working and life experiences.

Career constitutes of different events and activities. Career is a lifelong process, on which education, different working experiences and positions, family and different activities happening outside of work all have an effect. (What is a career 2013.) As organizations change, also the structure of careers changes. Traditionally, career had a more straightforward structure, people being loyal to a company or a position and building a career inside an organization. Today, careers

have a more flexible structure. Other activities, such as communal activities and different kind of life roles also contribute to the formation of a career. It is possible to move up to higher positions and then go back to a less demanding positions, and again later move up again. People do not only want a job or a career for the sake of it, but also experiences and the possibility to fulfill themselves (Airo & Rantanen & Salmela 2008, 10).

As life experience and different activities outside working life have an influence on one's career development, motherhood is especially important for women. Instead of only seeing motherhood as an obstacle on women's careers, the skills that women acquire through it should be emphasized positively. After all, motherhood develops many skills which are important in working life as well. Some those skills include patience and organizational skills, not forgetting multitasking.

Educational choices are important, as they guide one's way to a certain working sector. Also, the amount and nature of education play a role. The first job after graduation is often coincidental as graduates tend to apply to many different kind of jobs. It might not match the education completed or the person's idea of an ideal job. People also have very different views on what they want to do after graduation and how they want to pursuit their careers. Some may aim high from early on, and some just want to gain working experience before pursuing more challenging positions.

Career has different meanings to organizations and individuals. These two dimensions can be divided to have a subjective meaning and an objective meaning. The subjective meaning of a career refers to the individual's process in work life. An individual creates a professional identity for him or herself by moving from different levels of organizations to another, usually hierarchically. The meaning of a career is created by the individual him/herself. The objective meaning of a career refers to organizations' operational model regarding careers and what kind of structures careers might have in those organizations. (Aaltio-Marjosalo 2001, 188.)
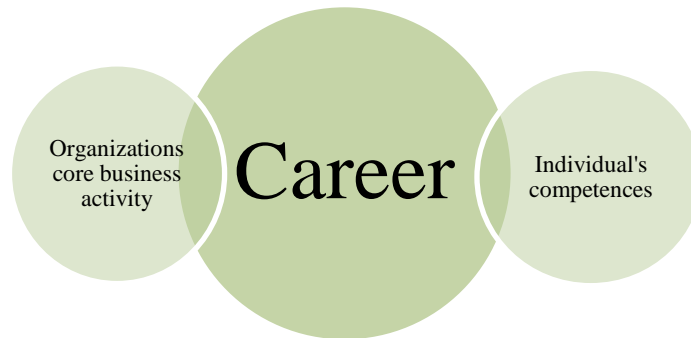
FIGURE 4. Career in relation to individuals and business activity. (Aaltio-Marjosalo 2001, 188)

A career is a lifetime process, which is affected by the choices made by an individual. Both the individual and the organizations benefit from careers, and they both play an important role. The individual's competences and aspirations and the organizations operational environment are important for career developments. (Aaltio-Marjosalo 2001, 188.) The figure above demonstrates the relationship between a career, individual and an organization.

2.2   The state of female leadership

Women's educational level is high in many parts of the world today in which women are outperforming men and thus women do not lack competence or know-how when it comes to demanding positions. Nevertheless, the number of female leaders is low in many parts of the world. In this chapter, the author will demonstrate what the situation of female leaders is globally and in Finland, and how it has changed. Also, women's educational level will be discussed and its meaning to the increase of female leaders.

2.2.1   Women and leadership in a global context

In global context, the number of women in senior management has risen, but only slowly. From 2004 to 2012, the percentage of women in senior management has risen five per cent at most. Between 2009 and 2011 the number fell from 24 per cent to 20 per cent, and in 2012 it stood at 21 per cent. In 2013, the number of women in senior management rose again to 24 per cent globally. (Women in senior management: Still not enough 2012, 2; Women in senior management: Setting the stage for growth 2013, 2.)
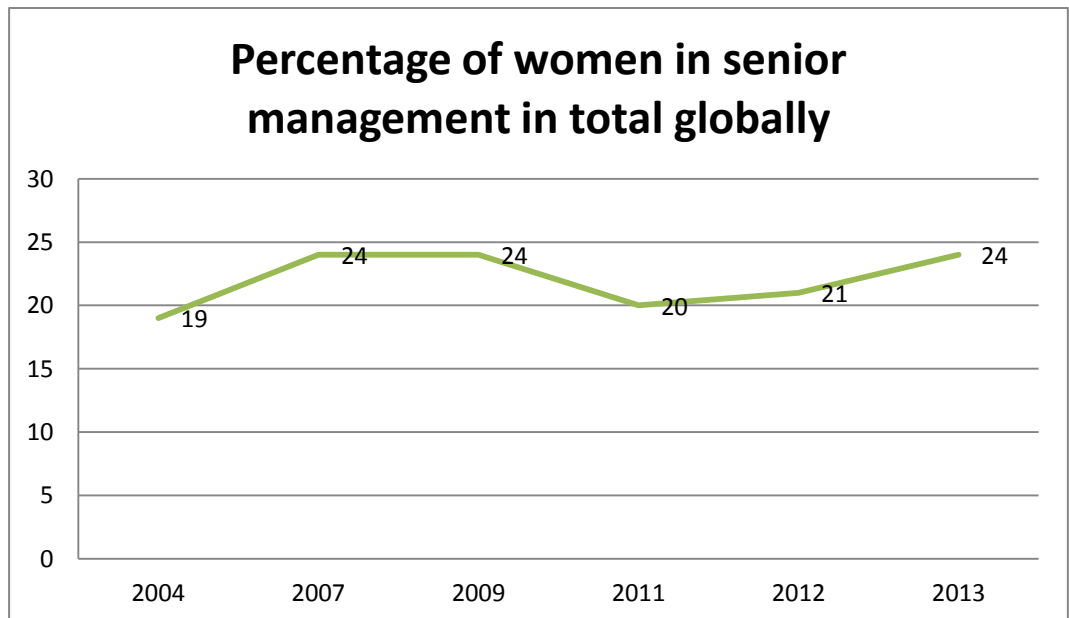
FIGURE 5. The percentage of female senior managers globally 2013. (Women in senior management: Setting the stage for growth 2013)

From figure five, it can be seen that between 2004 and 2009 the number of women in senior management rose steadily until it started to fall back almost to the same level as it was in 2004. Country specific variations exist, but the global average level has not progressed much in the recent years. In 2013, the global average of women in senior management rose back to level it was in 2009.

Countries, which have the least women as senior managers, are Japan with only seven per cent, United Arab Emirates and Netherlands with 11 per cent and Switzerland with 14 per cent. Female senior managers are found most in China where 51 per cent of senior managers are women. Next is Poland with 48 per cent, Latvia with 43 per cent and Estonia with 40 per cent. (Women in senior management: Still not enough 2012, 5.) Figure six represents the countries with the most and the least of female senior managers.
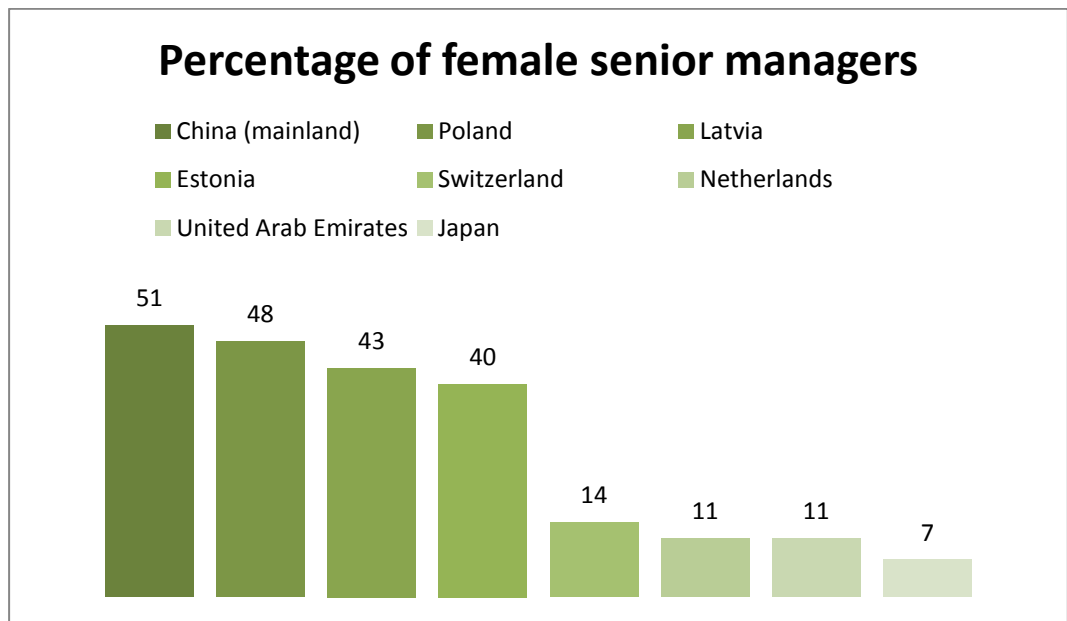
FIGURE 6. Percentage of female senior managers globally 2013. (Women in senior management: Setting the stage for growth 2013)

The number of female senior managers in different countries changed a lot between 2012 and 2013. In 2012, Russia was leading with the most female senior managers but in 2013 the number fell from 46 per cent to 31 per cent. The high number of women in senior management in Russia was explained partly by the gender ratio and the rise of service sectors. China on the other hand increased its number of women in senior management notably. In 2012, 25 per cent of senior management were women, whereas in 2013 women constituted 51 per cent of senior managers and thus claimed there place on the top of the list. Women's

talents are more appreciated nowadays in China, especially in positions of higher-level. Countries like Japan and United Arab Emirates are highly patriarchal cultures and societies and thus the number of female managers is slow in those countries. (Women in senior management: Setting the stage for growth 2013, 5.)

The number of companies with a female CEO showed a positive increase. In 2012, the global average of companies with a female CEO was 9 per cent and in 2013, it rose to 14 per cent. Globally, there have not been this many female CEO's ever before. (Women in senior management: Setting the stage for growth 2013, 9) In 2012, most businesses led by women were in Australia where 30 per cent of business have a female CEO. Second came Thailand with 29 per cent and third was Italy with 24 per cent of female CEOs. Botswana, Brazil and Japan share the last place. In the latter countries, only three per cent of businesses have a female CEO. (Women in senior management: Still not enough 2012, 8.)
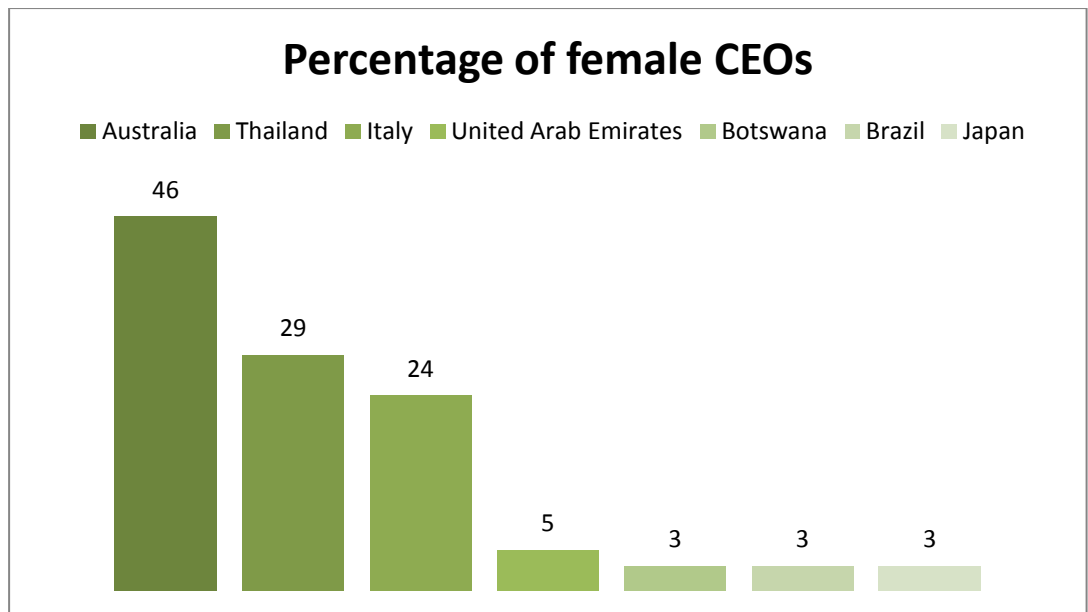
FIGURE 7. Percentage of female CEOs globally 2012. (Women in senior management: Still not enough 2012)

Figure seven represents the three countries with the most of female CEO´s and the four with the least of female CEO´s in 2012. The culture and traditional gender roles of a country have an effect on the number of women in working life and

hence their possibility to become leaders. For example, Japan has a very patriarchal and masculine culture. In a masculine society, gender roles are more clearly divided, men emphasize material success and assertiveness and women focus on the quality of life and modesty (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, 112).

2.2.2 Women and leadership in Finland

Contrary to the global trend, the number of women in senior management in Finland has decreased for the first time in four years (Talouselämä 2013). In 2012, women constituted 27 per cent in senior management and in 2013 the percentage of women in senior management was 24 per cent. (Women in senior management: Setting the stage for growth 2013, 2)

Only nine per cent of businesses in Finland have a female CEO which was also the average of female CEOs globally in 2012 (Women in senior management: Still not enough 2012, 5,8). The number of women in listed companies in the board of directors is 23 per cent. In addition, there is only one female CEO leading a listed company (Heiskanen 2013, 37). However, compared to the European standard, Finland is way ahead other European countries in regard to women's portion in listed companies, excluding Sweden. In the European level, only 12 per cent of the board of directors in listed companies are women.

What is surprising about the low numbers, especially regarding the decrease which has happened in 2013, is that Finland ranks as the number one country in regard to flexible working hours. According to the Grant Thornton International Business Report (2012), 89 per cent of business in Finland offer flexible working hours and yet Finland is behind many other countries which have less opportunities for flexible working when it comes to women's positions in managerial positions. Thus, it can be said that flexible working hours do not always help women to move up to managerial positions.

Less than 10 per cent of the Finnish respondents of the Grant Thornton study (2013), said that they will hire more women to their organizations top positions in the next year. Meaning that, more than 90 per cent of the organizations will not be changing their method of recruiting or aiming at better diversity. The future will

show whether this will have yet another decline in the number of female leaders in Finland.

2.2.3 Education is the key

Women in Finland are more educated than men, and the number is growing. Especially younger women might be more confident to pursuit higher positions and positions which match their educational level. The high level of education of women in Finland has been even described as the "engine of the silent revolution" (Kallio 2013, A04).

Statistics show that in Finland, women are more educated than men. Circa 47 per cent of working women aged 25-64 have completed a higher education degree. The same figure among working men of the same age is 35 per cent, making the difference between women and men 12 percentage points. Finnish women are well educated also in European level as they are more educated than women on average in Europe. In Finland, circa 47 per cent of women have a higher education degree, whereas in Europe 30 per cent of women have a higher education degree. (Education 2012.)

In 2012, 63 per cent of all polytechnic degrees were completed by women. The number increased 4.4 per cent from year 2011. The most attained degrees were from the fields of social services, sport and health, which are fields dominated by female students. Degrees from the fields of technology, transport and communication were attained the second most. Third most degrees were attained from the fields of business and administration and social sciences. (Women complete more than 60 per cent of polytechnic degrees 2013). The same phenomenon can be seen in the number of attained university degrees, regardless of the level of the degrees. (Women and men in Finland 2011). The figure below presents the number of polytechnic degrees attained by women and men, over an eight-year period.
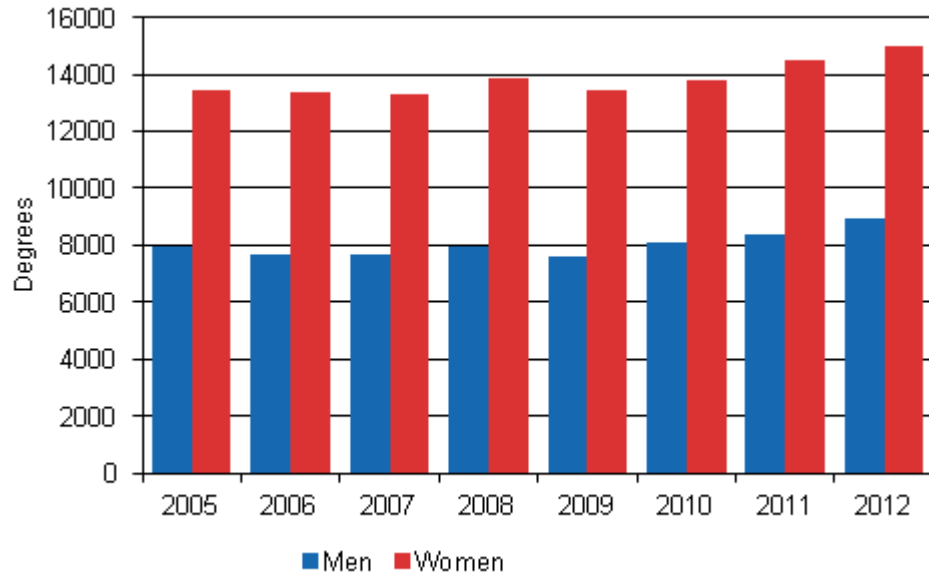
FIGURE 8. Comparison of completed polytechnic degrees by gender (Statistics Finland Completed polytechnic degrees by gender from 2005-2012)

As can be seen from the figure, the number of women and men completing polytechnic degrees is quite steadily increasing from year to year. However, the obvious difference is in the number of completed degrees when comparing women and men.

2.3 Why is it important?

Female leadership is a current issue and it has reached quite a lot of attention in the media as well. Some may wonder though, why it is important to have more female leaders. There are multiple reasons why female leadership should be promoted, and many studies have been conducted to prove the benefits of female leadership to organizations through organizational diversity.

2.3.1 Equality and benefits for organizations

The reasons why there should be more female leaders can be divided into four themes. They include equality, women's contribution as leaders, the importance of women being able to speak out and meritocracy. In regard to equality, women and men should equal possibilities to get ahead in their careers and rise to higher positions, especially when it is not a question of incompetence anymore.

Meritocracy, on the other hand, refers to the importance and primality of competence and skills leaving everything else (such as gender) less meaningful. Many companies are missing available resources by not using the potential women have. Having more female leaders and bridging the gap of gender division in leadership would bring new ways of operating and more insight to organization. (Aaltio-Marjosola 2001, 133).

Hence, bringing benefits to organizations by using the expertise, skills and knowledge female leaders possess is extremely important (Tanhua 2012, 72). Female leaders are mostly underutilized, considering their educational level and the value they can bring to organizations (Piha 2006, 123). Studies have proven that organizational and financial performance are linked to each other. Studies also reveal that organizations which have more women in the board of directors or in senior management perform better. (Women matter 2007, 14.) According to research, the higher proportion of women in senior management has been proven to positively influence the growth of stock market, returns on invested capital, returns on equity and sales for example (Women in senior management: Still not enough 2012, 2).

2.3.2 Diversity leads to better company performance

A study conducted by McKinsey & Company (2007), researched the effects of having more women in management in relation to organizational and financial performance. The study identifies nine criteria to measure organizational performance. They are leadership, motivation, vision, capability, accountability, work environment and values, coordination and control, external orientation and innovation. As can be seen from figure nine, companies which hold more than three women in management perform better in every criterion, than those that do not have any women in management. The positive effects of gender diversity can be seen most prominently in the work environment, values and vision. (Women matter 2007, 12).

To what extent is your company effective in each of the 9 organisational dimensions?

Percentage of employees with positive evaluation*

Companies with no women (n=45)
Companies with 3 or more women (n=13)

Work environment and values: 48 / 55 (+7 pts)
External orientation: 64 / 67 (+3 pts)
Vision: 51 / 57 (+6 pts)
Motivation: 63 / 66 (+3 pts)
Coordination and control: 56 / 61 (+5 pts)
Capability: 70 / 71 (+1 pt)
Leadership: 68 / 72 (+4 pts)
Accountability: 64 / 65 (+1 pt)
Innovation: 52 / 53 (+1 pt)

* Analysis conducted on a sample of 101 European companies, or 58,240 persons surveyed

FIGURE 9. The nine criteria measuring organizational performance. (Women matter 2007, 14)

All of the companies with more than three women in their management had better effectiveness regarding the organizational dimensions than companies with less women in management. According to the study, work environment and values, vision, coordination and control were affected the most by companies having more than three women in their management. Innovation, accountability and capability had only one point difference and thus did nt have that much difference between companies with less or more women in management.

When measuring companies' financial performance, 89 listed companies were chosen from Europe with high gender diversity. To get the results which are demonstrated in figure ten, the financial performance of these companies was compared to the sector average. The figure shows that the average return on equity is 1.1 per cent higher in companies with more gender diversity compared to the sector average. Earnings before interest and tax are 5.3 per cent higher and the growth of stock price is 17 per cent higher in companies with more women in management. (Women matter 2007, 12).
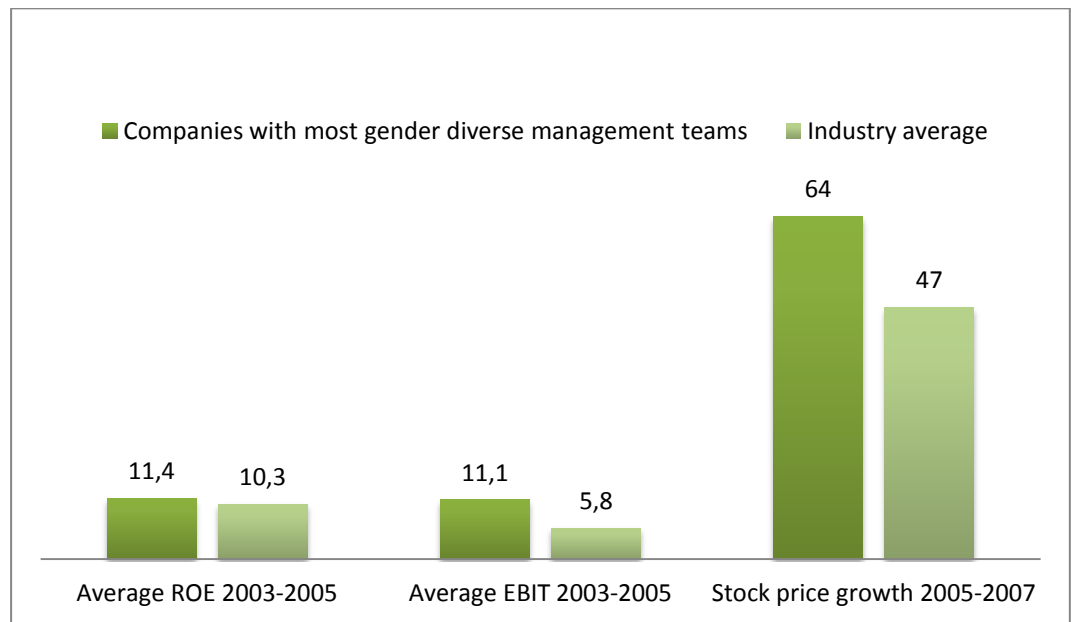
FIGURE 10. Economic performance of the companies with most gender-diverse management teams compared with their industry average. (Women matter 2007)

When looking at the factors that influence company performance, a difference can be seen between companies regarding their number of female managers. These results indicate strongly that having more women in management affects companies' performance positively. However, the correlation does not necessarily or fully prove the cause. (Women matter, 12). There might be other factors as well, but the study gives some indication of the positive effect of diversity in organizations.

2.3.3   What women can bring to the table

It has been mentioned before that the involvement of women in senior management and decision-making improves organizations' performance. Based on the report Women Matter 2 (2007, 1), one prominent reason is the style of leadership women exercise. As discussed earlier in the thesis, there are feminine and masculine behaviours but the application of those characteristics by gender

was not examined. In this sub-chapter, we will examine how certain leadership behaviours are used by women and men generally.

By converting the nine dimensions of organizational performance to nine dimension of leadership behaviour, McKinsey & Company (2008) compared the use and influence of these behaviours among female and male leaders. The nine behaviours are participative decision making, role model, inspiration, expectations and rewards, people development, intellectual stimulation, efficient communication, individualistic decision making and control and corrective action. These behaviours are proved to have a positive effect on organizational performance. (Women matter 2, 6).

According to the study, these nine behaviours are generally used differently by women and men. Intellectual stimulation and efficient communication were the two behaviours which female and male leaders equally use. The behaviours which women apply the most, and more than men, are expectations and rewards, people development and role modeling. They also apply inspiration and participative decision making slightly more than men. On the other hand, men use individualistic decision making, control and corrective action more than women. On average, women use five of these nine leadership behavíours more often than men, which are people development, expectations and rewards, role model, inspiration and participative decision making. (Women matter 2, 6).
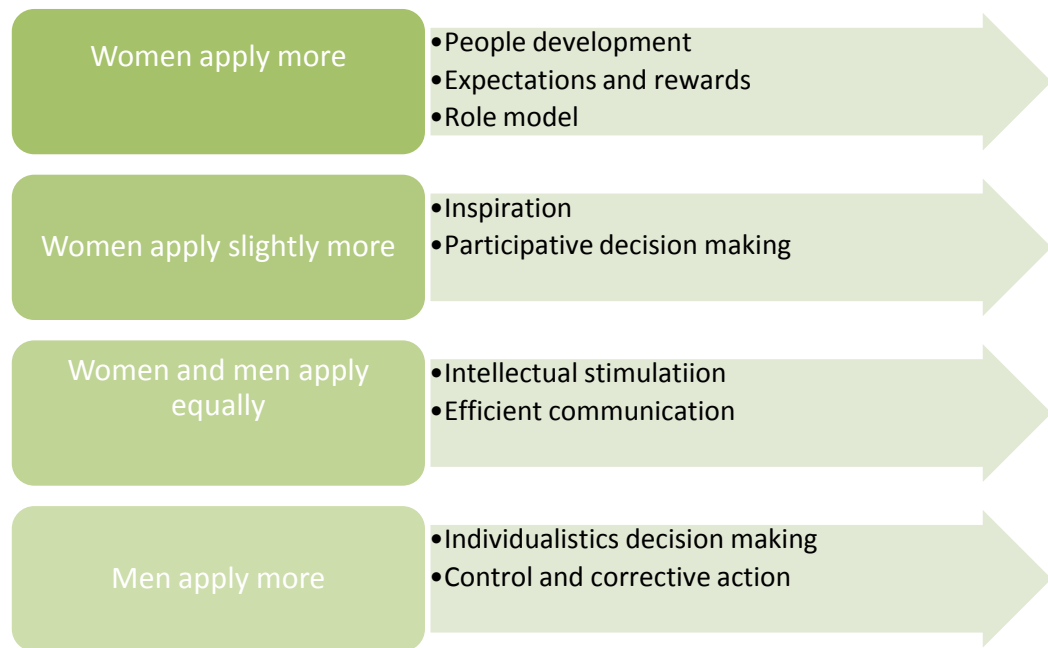
FIGURE 11. Nine dimensions of leadership behaviours. (Women matter 2 2008)

Figure eleven shows the nine behaviours and how they generally used among women and men. As mentioned before, all these behaviours have been proved to enhance organizational performance. What is important to understand about the figure is that all of these behaviours enforce some of the organizational dimensions mentioned in chapter 2.3.2. This goes to prove that diversity in organization is highly important and that women and men bring different ways of thinking and practices to the management of organizations.

By using this information, organizations should aim to hire managers with different skills, regarless of gender. Every organization has its own culture and the skills expected from managers should match the organizations values and future aspirations, especially when wanting to improve organizational performance.

3   BEHIND EVERY SUCCESSFUL WOMAN, THERE IS...

In 2013, Talouselämä magazine conducted a survey on women's careers, interviewing 128 women in high positions. Most of the women answered that the most important factor that has advanced their career has been their own determination. They answered that the lack of sufficient networks and supporters is what makes women depend on themselves and have the will to get ahead with their careers. The second most significant factor was the support of their managers. Other career advancements were the division of work at home and a supporting spouse, education, the right networks and connections and women's own attitudes.

The results of the study were partly surprising and they gave some light on how women experience their career obstacles and developments. When thinking about which factirs influence women's careers, negatively or positively, there are different levels to look at it from. The factors that influence women's career development are divided into three main categories: societal, organizational and individual factors.
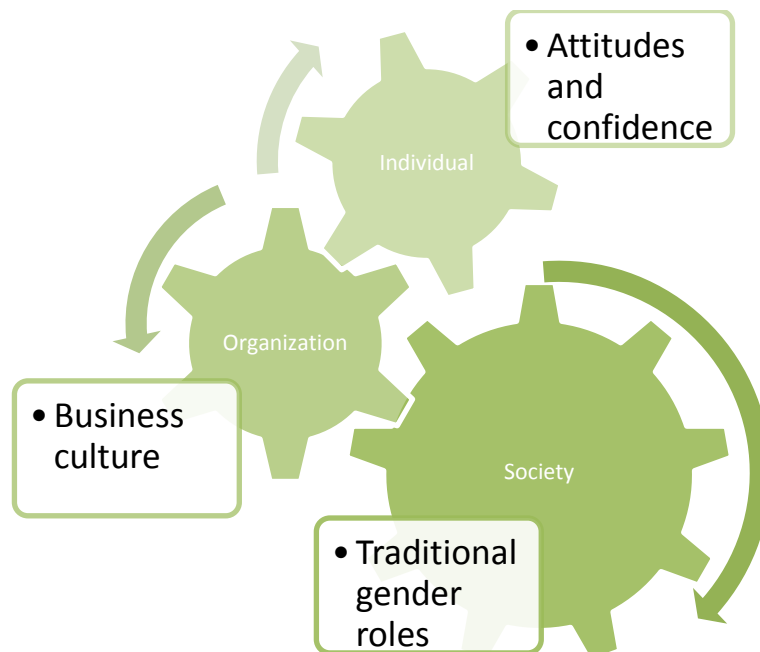
FIGURE 12. Factors which have an effect on women's career development

Figure twelve represents the three different categories mentioned above and also some of the key issues they withold.

3.1 Society

Societal factors are indirect factors, which influence both organizational and individual behaviour. Society sets standards, expectations and customs to organizations and individuals and thus affects female leadership. Societal factors are the most difficult and time-taking factors to change as they have an effect on various dimensions of life and cannot be easily controlled.

3.1.1 Traditional gender roles and expectations

Traditional gender roles are still alive and strong and even those who try to avoid falling for stereotyping, often find themselves acting according to their "role", in some level, whether it is at work or at home. People are affected by the dominant gender roles throughout their lives and gender roles often have the effect of a self-fulfilling prophecy. In this case, the stereotypes that women work less than men or in less demanding positions or earn less, are very much alive. (Sandberg 2013, 39). When something is taught so deep, pursuing or wanting to work in demanding positions does not come naturally to all women. Also, hard-working and career oriented women are often pictured as cold, stressed and greedy. The stereotype of these horrible bosses has inspired many book titles about female leadership, for instance Caitlin Freemand and Kimberly Yorio's book "The Girl's Guide to Being a Boss (Without Being a Bitch). When female leaders were in few they had to prove themselves by being hard and cold in order to be gain credibility and authority.

Women who choose careers over family or want to be leaders and still have a family too, are often labeled as somehow different, greedy or even strange. Stereotypes and prejudice still affect women's career development strongly. More than 70 per cent of women who answered the survey by Talouselämä (2013), said that traditional gender roles and certain expectations of women make women's career development slower. They noted, however, that in addition to men women themselves have certain perceptions that make getting ahead more difficult.

Nevertheless, women often have to prove themselves much more than men and women managers or leaders who make mistakes are judged much more easily. According to a study on stereotypes of women, female leaders are expected to act differently than men and adapt their behaviour to what is expected. However, they should not be too different but rather to be able to act according to situations and expectations and use both masculine and feminine traits. Hence, female leaders are expected to act differently than men and be more willing to change their behaviour according to other people's expectations and still be themselves. (Heiskanen 2013, 38).

Those objecting that women do not have the same possibilities to become leaders, often argue that it is about women themselves and their lack of interest in leadership or running a business. However, even though there are women who are not interested in leadership, there are those kinds of men too. Both arguments, that women do not want to be leaders and that women do not want to have careers after having children can be questioned. (Piha 2006, 116.) Though, women's own expectations and perceptions about gender roles affect their careers and opportunities to become leaders. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, people tend to live according to traditional gender roles and make decisions based on them, consciously or unconsciously. For instance, the gender division in educational fields is a good example of how gender defines career choices. Women are applying more to fields, such as social care, which are traditionally regarded as women's fields. On the other side, more men are applying to become engineers, for example, an industry which is very much male-dominated.

3.1.2 Division in education and in the labour market

The projection of traditional gender roles can be also seen in the growing gender division in educational fields and in the clear distinction between industries in which women and men want to work in. For instance, almost 90 per cent of students in the fields of social and health education are women and men dominate the fields of technology and transport. In natural sciences, the number of female students has decreased and thus the division is deepening. Nevertheless, the number of women in some "men's industries" such as natural resources and

environmental studies has slightly increased, whereas the number of men in "women's industries" has not increased with the same rate. Women are nowadays more diverse in their choice of educational field than men. (Education 2012)

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, some educational fields are still distinctively divided by gender and changes have been slow. Women stand out in the fields of social welfare and health, whereas men in technology and transport. The division in education reflects to the labour market and deepens inequality and differences in salaries. In comparison to other EU countries, the division of labour market in Finland is extremely high. Finland holds the fourth place as a country with high gender division after Estonia, Bulgaria and Slovakia. (Työmarkkinoiden jakautuneisuus 2011).

The Finnish labour market is divided into men's and women's markets horizontally and vertically. Horizontally divided labour market refers to the nature and quality of the tasks. Women and men do different kind of jobs and tasks and many organizations' cultures and work communities are dominated by the other gender. Vertically divided labour market means that the structure of decision making divides the labour market. If organizations have a hierarchical structure of decision making, the higher the hierarchy goes the less there are women compared to men. (Aaltio-Marjosola 2001, 15.)

The division of labour market causes differences in salary between women and men, and also slows down women´s careers. (Työmarkkinoiden jakautuneisuus 2011). This division also means that all available resources and know-how cannot be used in the fields which are suffering, either from the lack of women or men, and thus companies cannot reach their full potential and diversity cannot be reached. The trend in Europe and in Finland is that from all female leaders, many of them work in women's fields, such as health and educational fields (Johtajuus ja urakehitys 2011).

Parental leave is another thing which creates an imbalance in the labour market. Maternity leave and parental leave slow down women's career advancements and maintains a pay gap. Statistics show that returning from a parental leaving has a negative impact on women's career developments and also in their salary level.

The length of the leave has an effect on the development: the shorter the leave, the easier is for women to catch up the time they missed in the labour market and vice versa. The reasons behind this effect are logical. Women who do not take a parental leave gain more months or years of experience, opposite to those who take parental leave.

In Finland, working women with family get 5-15 per cent less salary than working women without family (Luoto & Kauppinen & Luotonen 2012, 21). When comparing that number between women and men, the differences are even more noticeable. The salary gap between women and men without family is seven per cent. The gap rises to 22 per cent when women and men with at least one child are taken into consideration. *(OECD 2012.)* From these numbers, we can see that having a child influences negatively on women's salary level and widen the gap between women's and men's salaries.
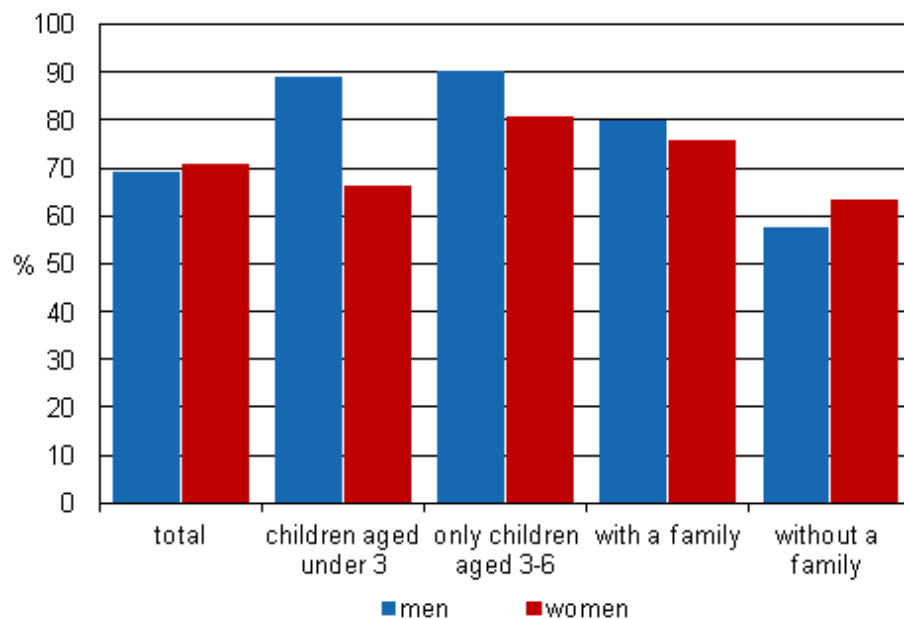

FIGURE 13. Employment rate of persons aged 18-64 by sex, family status and age of children in 2011 (Statistics Finland 2013)

Figure thirteen shows the employment rates of women and men by their age, sex, family status and age of children in 2011. In total, women's working rate is higher than that of men and so is the number of working women without families. The most noticeable difference in employment is between women and men who have children aged under three, with women's employment rate falling under 70 per cent and men's being almost 90 per cent. What is surprising is that two-thirds of women with children aged under three are working, and that women without a family have the lowest employment rate, even though higher than that of men without a family.

3.1.3   Governmental reforms

Parental leaves can leave an unwanted gap in women's careers and weaken their position in the labour market and slow down their career advancements. Parental leaves are long in Finland and available for both women and men. The law states that when returning from parental leaves, the person is entitled to return to his or her old positions and have the same tasks. However, this is often not the reality. Losing one's job or getting less salary are still some risks for those returning to working life after parental leaves. (Ukkonen 2013.)

Maternity leave is about 18 weeks and after that it is possible to take about 26 weeks of parental leave. Parental leave can be divided between the father and mother.(Kela 2013.) After parental leave, it is also possible to take child care leave and work shorter hours in the end of the parental leave. As stated, parental leave is entitled for both mother and fathers, but still 92 per cent of all parental leaves are used by mothers. (Finland: Towards a healthy balance between work and family life 2013.)

The negative effects of returning from a parental leave are even more common in the traditional women's fields, for example in the field of education (Ukkonen 2013). In addition to the action that the government should take in order for the rules to be applied, parental leaves should also be divided more equally between women and men. If more men took advantage of the leaves they are entitled to, taking care of children and home would be distributed more carefully, and women would be able to enter working life earlier and with more flexibility.

Quotas can be used for many purposes by the government. Gender quotas ensure a certain number of positions for women, for instance in political parties or companies. Gender quotas have their advantages and disadvantages and they can be considered as positive discrimination. (Piha 2006, 118.) When referring to quotas for women, the author refers to the policy, in which companies must employ a certain number of women to their management teams.

All companies in Norway have to have a quota for women. Both genders, more importantly women, have to constitute at least 40 per cent of the board of directors. If the quotas are not fulfilled, the companies will have to face a sanction. Also in listed companies 40 per cent of the board of directors must be women. In Finland, the number of women in listed companies' board of directors is quite low and only one listed company is led by a woman. (Piha 2006, 118; Heiskanen 2013, 42.)

Quotas for women are not used in Finland at the moment, but instead governmentally owned companies are encouraged to have women in their board of directors, with the amount of 40 per cent. No penalty is implemented if the goal is not achieved (Piha 2006, 118.) However, there are many who support quotas and who try to promote them and apply them. In May 2013, Paavo Arhinmäki who is the Minister of Culture and Sports and also responsible for the matters of equality in Finland, expressed his worries about the small number of women in the board of directors in listed companies. He stated that if the situation has not improved by summer 2014, quotas will have to be taken to use. (Kauppalehti 2013.)

Many female managers and leaders in Finland are against quotas and point out that they would not want to be chosen because of must but because of their skills and abilities. They say that a manager or a leader should be chosen by their competencies not by anything else. Labeling is feared by many as well and the attitudes towards 'quota' women. Women can be seen as getting the positions easily and that they don't have to work for it. It also strengthens the idea that women are not possible to do it on their own and need help. This also leads to the belief that quotas slow down or diminish equality, rather than advance it. (Piha 2006, 119.)

Those favouring quotas or those who are not quite sure what to think of them, usually think that it is the only way to make the situation better. Quotas are often seen as a tool to improve the situation or start the change, but not as a cure. People who speak in favour of quotas, do not always see it as a threat to women because they know that women are just as adequate and skilled as men to be in the board of directors in listed companies. However, quotas are becoming more recommended to be implemented in companies like in Norway, but just in governmentally owned companies and listed companies. (Piha 2006, 118.)

3.2   Organizations

Organizations play a big role in promoting female leadership. After all, it is the organization which hires or does not hire a female leader. Organizations and their internal culture affect women's career possibilities and organizations have the possibility to act differently in order to increase diversity and support female leadership.

3.2.1   Business culture

Business culture or organizational culture refers to expectations, beliefs and values which the leader practices. These core values of the leader affect employees' attitudes, operations of the organization and the overall nature and culture of the organization. (Lussier & Achua 2013, 358.) Organizational culture is something commonly shared in the work community and holds it together. Hence, the leader's own values, vision and way of operating make nature of the organizations by practicing them either consciously or unconsciously.

The cultures of organizations vary a lot. Organizations can be small, large, local, global and they operate in different industries. The cultures can also be defined in different ways and have different characteristics. The culture can be for example, feminine or masculine, individualistic or collectivistic or low or high-performing cultures (Lussier & Achua 2013, 370). Organizational culture may change, if the organization faces new trends, changes in the business world or a change of leader for example. Organizational culture has a strong effect on the performance of the organization as well as on the people in the organization.

According to a survey published by the Corporate Gender Gap Report (2010), a masculine/patriarchal corporate culture is the main barrier for women to rise to senior management in Finland. The survey was targeted to the managers of the human resources department of various companies. Many Finnish companies are still considered to prefer masculine way of leading and performance.

When Talouselämä (2013) conducted a survey on female leaders' perceptions on the same issues, the results were similar. 128 women in senior management were asked what they considered to be the most significant obstacle in their career development and according to their answers, the most significant obstacle in women's career development and their advancement to leadership positions is the (still existing) male-preferring business culture. Men are more prone to help other men than women to get ahead with their careers. The women, who answered the survey, reckoned that it is not always intentional, it is rather a 'safe choice' and women are often considered to be exceptions or disturbance. They also said that cronyism between men still exists and that masculinity in leadership is still preferred in Finland. (Heiskanen 2013, 37) Cronyism means favoring a friend, or in this context men favoring other male colleagues, during a hiring process for example. Cronyism refers to a situation when that person might not be the best competent for the position but by a friend's favourism is able to get the position.

3.2.2 Choosing diversity

What organizations can do, is to widen their search when looking for the right people to lead. According to the Grant Thornton International Business Report (2013), 15 per cent of the report respondents globally were planning to hire a woman to their senior management. Hence, there is room for improvement when it comes to organizations decision to hire female leaders. Organizations can use equality planning in order to enhance their organization's diversity and also female leadership.

As discussed earlier in the thesis, having women in management, hence a more diverse organizations, leads to better company performance and advances women's career possibilities. There are various ways which organizations can use to improve their diversity. One of the first steps is to set concrete goals aiming to

decrease gender division and enhance diversity and equality. Organizations should also dedicate themselves to follow the plan. Organizations should also encourage both women and men to get ahead in their careers and give that possibility (Tanhua 2012, 76). For example, Stora Enso made an internal study in 2002 and a plan to promote women's careers in the organization. They aimed to improve their gender diversity and actively followed the plan.

Organizations can use recruiting and developing their recruitment process as effective ways to have more women in their management. Recruiting and headhunters can often be the bottleneck for women, especially in male-dominated industries and organizations (Tanhua 2012, 77). Especially in those fields, the process of recruiting should be extended outside the organization and have an equal amount of male and female applicants. Competences and experiences should be evaluated, rather than gender or only recommendations. Women might not have sponsors and networks of the same extent as men in male-dominated industries, where those would be needed even more.

3.2.3   Organizations' input in mentoring and coaching

Mentoring has been proved to be an efficient way to enhance one's career development. Mentoring means that a more experienced person takes a less experienced person under his or her wings, so to speak. The mentors give support and coach, provide challenges and try to enhance their mentee's career. The mentor can be from a different organization and a woman or a man. Mentoring is not a new concept, but most companies do not do it officially. Mentoring often happens between people who want to help each other and it is a good way of giving information that can only be learned by experience and inside of an organizational community. (Piha 2006, 135.)

Many female leaders consider mentoring to be a positive and helpful tool in encouraging women to pursuit managerial positions. In fact, in female leaders' opinions, it is the number one way to advance women's careers to leadership positions (Heiskanen 2013, 39). In 2012, The Finnish Chambers of Commerce launched a mentoring program for female leaders. The program included seminars, company visits and networking events. Many mentors in the program

contemplated that mentoring is both beneficial for the mentor and the mentee. (Kauppakamari 2013.)

Companies which have provided mentoring officially, have got good results from it. Providing mentorin has improved the companies' working environment by creating a feeling to the employees that the company wants to improve their skills and that the appreciate them. (Piha 2006, 135.) A company which provides mentoring shows that they offer career possibilities and that they want to train their employees for more demanding positions. Mentoring is considered as one of the most important tool to advance women's careers and thus organizations should put effort on offering it equally to women and men, and officially as well.

3.3   Individual factors

Individual factors in women's careers are affected by the societal level as well as the organizational level. As discussed earlier in the thesis about the traditional expectations towards women and men, women themselves have certain expectations and ideas about what they should be and do. The business culture might also affect how an individual feels and acts in that organization, and whether the individual's career is supported by the organization or not.

3.3.1   Glass ceiling or a glass cage

Women are said to be confining themselves into a glass cage, rather than facing a glass ceiling anymore. As discussed earlier, women themselves can stand in the way of their way to leadership, or at least make the progress slower by questioning their abilities. This phenomenon derives from the traditional expectations that both society and culture set on genders and individuals.

According to the survey by Talouselämä (2013), women's own attitudes were identified as the second most influential obstacle when getting ahead. The respondents noted that many women lack confidence and will. This belief is supported by many others as well. Some people see that women do not even want to be leaders and are not willing to work for it as much as men and consider it being the reason for the low number of female leaders. Some women, not all, do

not have the same confidence and will as men when aiming to leadership positions which makes them not even try. Also, starting a family inevitably affects women's career development and many make the choice to cut down hours and prioritize family over career for example.

In contrast to the negative influence of women's own attitudes, they can also have a positive effect. According to the survey conducted by Talouelämä (2013), most women answered that the most important factor that has advanced their careers is their own determination. Thus, women's own attitudes can have a positive or a negative influence on their career aspirations. The respondents argued that the lack of proper networks makes women have to succeed on their own and this increases their determination.

It is misleading to say that women do not want to be leaders, as there are those kind of men too. It is more about women's underestimation of their own skills and in some cases, pressure from traditional views about what women should do or not do. Women seem to lack confidence and often under evaluate their skills and competences when it comes to leading. They might need more reassurance that they are suitable and competent for a position, whereas men more commonly more aggressively pursuit or demand a positions suitable for their talents. In a positive note, women's own determination and courage are often what gets them ahead, especially if one does not have sponsors or proper networks.

3.3.2   Building networks

Networking means building relationships and knowing people. It has been proven to be an efficient career booster as it can help gain all kinds of benefits, such as information benefits and job opportunities. It can also widen one's influence, power and recognizability. (Lussier & Achua 2013, 161.)

Networking is highly important for any leader, but even more so for women. Networking allows people to share experiences and knowledge, and even support each other. There are both female and male based networks and also "mixed" networks. Often, having a mixed network of both women and men is seen more beneficial as it brings more different perspectives and makes the network more

advantageous. (Hirvikorpi 2005, 123.) Why networks should include both women and men, is based on the idea that it could increase diversity and even the division of men's and women's fields. The effects of gender division in different industries can be seen in the structure of networks as well. In order to change the male dominating business culture and structure, women have to make themselves known in men's networks as well. The distinction in networks leads to the situation that men get more possibilities to rise to leadership positions. If men have their own, wider networks than women, and if they do not know any competent women to recommend, the opportunities will obviously go to men.

However, many women working in management already have good networks, especially among each other. Social skills play a big part in networking and research supports that they both are many female leaders' strengths (Aaltio-Marjosola 2001, 102.) The networks can be official or unofficial, but in any case they play an important role as places to share, learn, develop and support each other. The importance of knowing the right people and having contacts has helped many female leaders in their careers. Good managers and other people standing behind you in the beginning of your career creates a good base for the future. Later on one's career, the networks also provide a good place for female leaders to guide and support those starting with less experience.

3.3.3 Promoting confidence

Building confidence and changing attitudes that also women can be leaders without sacrificing their femininity or having a family should start from an early age. Both girls' and boys' way of thinking about career opportunities should be broadened by offering possibilities for them to visit and familiarize themselves with different business sectors, which are either male-dominated or female-dominated. By doing this, the gender division seen in the labour market might even in a long-term and it would open more doors for women to advance to management and also diversify leadership in male-dominates sectors.

One-third of all entrepreneurs in Finland are female entrepreneurs. Many women might see more opportunities to be leaders by founding their own business and organizational culture, if other organizations do not offer advancement

opportunities, flexibility or acknowledge their skills. This way, the organizational culture and flexibility would match women's own values and beliefs and one's competences would be used in the right way. Piha (2006, 100) comments that women have better possibilities to fulfill themselves in less formal organizations, as women are more often interested in having responsibility, challenges and creating rules rather than having power and titles.

Even though entrepreneurship is a good way for many women to become managers if they do not get the proper possibilities in another organization, women should be encourages to challenge existing organizational cultures. Women should be encouraged to take more risks and trust themselves and their skills. It should be also emphasized that women should not have to give up their own personality and change according to the organization, they should rather try to change the organization.

4   CASE: FOUR MANAGERS AND THEIR STORIES

The empirical part of the thesis consists of interviews of four women in managerial positions and of an internet based questionnaire to which three women in managerial positions participated. The four interviews make up the main case of the thesis and the questionnaire was conducted to get more insight on what women think about women's possibilities to rise to leadership positions. In the following chapter, the collected data will be analyzed and brought together.

4.1   Structure of the interviews

The interviews were based on open-ended questions in order for the interviewer to get extensive answers and more comments from the interviewees. The purpose of the interviews was to get first-hand information and women's own experiences and reflections on the issues at hand. The interview was divided into three themes. The first part included questions about their current positions and the company they are working for. The second part of the interview was about the interviewees' career developments, such as educational background and experience in managerial positions. The third theme, consisted of questions about leadership and women in leadership positions. They were asked to give their opinions and experiences on the issue. All in all, the interview consisted of 15 questions which can be seen in appendix 1.

4.1.1   Interviewees

To give sufficient background information of the interviewees relevant to the study, such as working experience and level of education, the interviewees will be introduced next.The interviewees were Arja Suominen from Finnair, Kristiina Hautakangas from Mainio Vire Oy, Karola Söderman from SLS (Svenska litteratursällskapet I Finland r.f.) and Carina Geber-Teir from OP-Pohjola Group.

Arja Suominen is the Senior Vice President, Communications and Corporate Responsibility for Finnair. She started in the position in March 2011, after having worked in the management of Nokia about 24 years. Altogether, she has 26 years of working experience in management. Suominen has an MA from the University

of Helsinki and an eMBA (executive Master's degree in Business Administration) from the Turku Business School. Finnair is an airline company, which employs more than 6,000 people and it net sales were 2,4 billion Euros. Last year it flew more 78,000 flights around the world.

Kristiina Hautakangas is the CEO of Mainio Vire Oy, which offers care services all over Finland. Mainio Vire Oy has a turnover of over 80 million Euros and 1300 employees. She has a MBA degree from the University of Jyväskylä and has worked as a teacher of home economics in the University of Helsinki. Hautakangas has 16 years of experience being a CEO in different industries, of which 11 years in the field of social services. She has 27 years of experience in management in total.

Karola Söderman is the CIO in SLS, which is a scientific association which aims to enhance Swedish cultural heritage. Söderman has a degree from Hanken School of Economics and has been studying the ITP-program in the Aalto University School of Economics. She has also completed a two-year leadership program when she worked for Skanska and the Gillwell course for scouts. She has worked in management for 15 years now. Since graduation she has worked in the field of information technology, from small companies to multinational organizations.

Carina Geber-Teir is the director of communications for OP-Pohjola. OP-Pohjola is the leading group offering financial services in Finland. Geber-Teir was appointed to the position in 2009. In addition to being in charge of communications, her areas of responsibility also include brands and marketing and social responsibility. She has a Master of Social Sciences from the University of Helsinki. She has worked in management in financial services for 12 years.

4.2   What they had to say

In the following chapter, the interviewees' thoughts and opinions on leadership and women's possibilities in management are discussed, as well as the interviewees' own career developments.

4.2.1   Career development

The interviewees were asked to describe what has advanced their careers the most and the answers were following. Karola Söderman described it as a long progress of taking part in more and more demanding projects, but with no particular events that had stood out. She mentioned that she did not always work in the top, but that at times she worked in less demanding positions as well. Arja Suominen saw good timing, good reputation, hard work and good business networks as major career advancements.

> *I have always recognized an opportunity when it has arisen. At the same time I have always tried to do my job well. Good reputation carriers far. (Suominen 2013)*

Constantly gathering know-how and having courage to seize opportunities were important for Kristiina Hautakangas and she stated that companies play a role as well, and the possibilities they have to offer. Carina Geber-Teir mentioned that the key in her career has been finding a good spouse. She also said that good managers and networking are very important as well as having courage and challenging one self.

None of the women had experienced any specific obstacles worth-mentioning on their way to managers, but there were some minor issues. One of the interviewees experienced changing jobs from one sector to another as speed bumps. Other minor obstacles included a bad manager, an occasional lack of self-confidence and a layoff. One interviewee pointed out that her degree did not support her career. Most of the speed bumps mentioned were not dependent on the women themselves, but because of external reasons. The career obstacles were not easily identified. The interviewees did not give much value to them and they were easily overcome.

There were some common factors which stood out in the interviewees' responses. Networking and having good managers were considered important, as well as own courage and ability to seize opportunities. These factors which were seen to have a positive effect, were very similar to the earlier findings of the study. Knowing the right people and getting support when needed is clearly important for women during their career and influences career success positively.

4.2.2 Opinions on leadership

The interviewees' definitions on leadership were very similar. Leadership was seen as giving others a goal and helping them reach those goals together. They also had very similar ideas about what a good leader is like. Suominen (2012) stated the following:

> *Good leaders have vision, can show direction and they care and coach people. A good leader pays attention on what and how. They don't focus on their organization only but are also aware what happens in the society as well.*

Geber-Teir said the same: a good leader has vision. She added that a good leader should have good communication skills, take responsibility and be fair. They all thought that a good leader should be able to see the big picture of things. Comprehending entities, having people skills and being fair stood out as the most mentioned characters of a good leader.

Even though the interviewees saw some differences in leadership styles between women and men, most of them did not want to accentuate the differences. They rather emphasize the individual, meaning that it is not about the differences between women and men, but about the individual's way of leading and his or her competences as a leader. Diversity in organizations was considered very important, and gender being just one part of it. Nevertheless, some generalizations of differences between women's and men's characteristics were given. Women were considered to be more capable to understand meaning behind words, use their feelings and have better social skills. Men were stated to be more brave and deal more with facts. Different skills and characteristics just increase diversity and creativity and do not make anny other skills less important.

When asked, whether they believed that it is easier for men to get ahead in their careers than it is for women, none of them had experienced this themselves, but they pointed out that it depends a lot on the industry and that they know that in some cases it can be so that men have more possibilities.

> *I think the change is coming, but slowly as there are elderly men in the boards of very many organizations and it's very difficult for (young) women to get into the male networks. (Söderman 2013)*

Also, they all noted that they have not experienced their gender being an obstacle but quite the opposite. They saw that being a woman has even helped their careers sometimes. For example, when a company has been looking to become more diverse being a woman was given an opportunity and one of the interviewees stated that she gained trust from customers because of being a woman. Also, having good organizational skills attained by having been with many children was seen as a positive thing. Geber-Teir emphasized the importance of a good spouse which enables better balancing between work and family.

The interviewees were also asked whether they thought that purely professional skills should be emphasized or was gender relevant when considering managerial positions. Söderman (2013) stated that professional skills should always have an impact but that reasons behind choosing a leader may vary depending on the culture of organizations. According to Geber-Teir (2013), professional skills, social skills and deep know-how are all very important in today's working environment. She also mentioned that emotional intelligence and ability to combine things is becoming more and more appreciated. Suominen (2013) was in the same lines with Söderman that professional skills should always be the most important factor when choosing a person for a managerial position but also other elements of skills related to leadership have an effect. Skills and competences are highly important, but they might be seen differently in different organizations. When one company may be looking for innovational leader, another may be looking for a performance-driven leader.

4.2.3 The future of women as leaders

All the interviewees saw mentoring, coaching and/or sponsoring as effective ways to increase the number of women in managerial positions and encourage women to pursuit higher positions. Söderman has mentored two female managers herself and believed both of the mentees profited from the mentoring. Networking and its importance was again brought up. For example, to have someone appreciate you and your skills and bring up your name when needed was considered to be very beneficial (Geber-Teir 2013). As for organizations, equally looking for both male and female candidates when hiring a leader was mentioned as well. Other ideas

included, for example, parents encouraging girls and boys equally in their career aspirations and for women to gain more experience in operational tasks. Also, it was suggested that there should be more education and career possibilities in the fields which women dominate and that the field of education and orientation should be chosen in favour of possibilities that specific field has.

When asked about quotas, the answers followed the same lines as discussed earlier in the thesis. Quotas were not appreciated or favored that much, but were seen as a necessary action to increase the number of women in management, especially in bigger companies.

> *I do not believe in quotas, but think that aiming for a balance between women and men in organizations is a good thing: more women in the areas and positions with domination of men and vice versa. (Söderman 2013)*

Hautakangas and Suominen both said that they are nowadays in favour of quotas because lately not much has changed for women and maybe quotas could change the situation. The results of quotas for women are clear as by using quotas women are given more positions in the board of directors. However in general, women are against being "quota women" and want to be chosen by their skills and achievements. The number of female leaders has not changed a lot in Finalnd in the recent years and that is why many are starting to be in favor of quotas.

The final question was about women's career possibilities in the future, as organizations and leadership styles change. Suominen (2013) described the future possibilities of women in leadership very well:

> *Female managers and executives are more common now than 30 years ago and certainly leadership styles traditionally classified as female have become more important in the fast changing world. In the future, the far better education level of women will make it very hard for women NOT to succeed in advancing the female leadership agenda. I strongly believe that in the future we will have equal opportunities.*

Geber-Teir (2013) also commented that the strong level of education and skills of women in Finland hopefully opens many doors in the future. Hautakangas (2013) on the other hand said she is not that optimistic about it and that maternity leaves might keep women in a weaker position in the future as well. Söderman was not

so certain about the change for better either. She stated that it also depends a lot on the branch of the organization. She considered younger people being braver nowadays but that their values regarding willingness to struggle for achievements is different from the older generations.

> *... those fast developing start-ups – they are almost all driven by young men. Most women seem not to be as ready as young men to take risks. I think there is also a question about women not necessary being willing to do the hard and dirty job that being a manager or leader sometimes is. Although men are taking more care of the children and the household there are still too many families where the woman is responsible for managing the family.(Söderman 2013)*

There were many other interesting points from the interviewees. Geber-Teir saw the changing of the traditional straightforward career structure to more of a "project" style career structure as a potential leeway for women. Being able to get ahead according to one's own life situation and changing positions is beneficial especially for women, when considering starting a family. She also mentioned that changing organizations and societal regulations is possible but changing cultures and traditional gender roles takes a long time. She had herself experienced that there have already been changes, for example, more men are participating in taking care of children, but that societal factors such as parental leaves should be improved in order to create more possibilities for women to advance in their careers.

The general idea seems to be that women are in good position now, to be able to get more demanding positions in the future. Especially education is seen as a stepping stone for women. Clearly, more equal distribution of parental leaves between mothers and fathers would better women's possibilities by not leaving such a long gap to their careers.

4.3   Questionnaire

An internet based enquiry on the topic was also conducted to get more insight to the topic by gathering different views from female leaders. Three women participated in the questionnaire. Because of the nature of the questions, the answers were shorter but even more pertinent.

4.3.1 Structure of the questionnaire

The enquiry included nineteen questions which can be seen in appendix 2. Some of the questions were Yes and No type of questions and some were answered by writing. All the Yes and No questions were given a space for reasoning. The structure of the enquiry is marked as appendix number two. The questionnaire included questions about the respondents background and their opinions on women's career possibilities and leadership.

All the women who answered had twelve years of experience in leadership positions. Their ages varied from 31 to 45 years. The three women who answered all had twelve years of experience in leadership positions. Their titles were a business development manager, a Finland customer operations manager and a program manager.

4.3.2 Results of the questionnaire

Two out of three women answered that they think that women and men have the same opportunities to advance in their careers. The two emphasized that equality in Finland is good and we already have women in top positions in many industries. One of them considered that often men still prefer to hire men, rather than women.

The women were asked what they think are the most important aspects which advance women's career. Women's own activity, ambition and attitudes were regarded as important factors. Other advancements included networking, high level of education and hard work. When considering specifically women, encouraging them to be bold and emphasizing their generally good skills in communication were seen as beneficial factors. Also, multi-tasking was considered to be a strength for women.

In general, the need for women to prove themselves more than their counterparts was seen as an obstacle as well as missing connections in times of trouble. One of the women did not consider that obstacles that women may come across with are necessarily gender related. Also, women's lack of confidence and traditional beliefs of men being better leaders were mentioned as obstacles.

Their opinions on having children and its effects on their career were not coherent. It was not seen to have a negative effect on their careers, however, it seems to depend on the company. One woman stated that it was not preferred to stay at home when a child was sick and in that way it had influenced her work. However, one of them commented that due to flexible working hours offered by the company she has not experienced children influencing her work. Earlier in this thesis, it was noted that even though many Finnish companies offer flexible working hours the number of female leaders is low.

As for ways to increase the number of women in leadership positions, the answers were not surprising. Mentoring and networking were mentioned by all the women and stated as an "extremely good way of adding confidence and encourage women to take action". Using quotas was mentioned by one woman, as well as changing attitudes and praising a job well done.

Two of the women were not in favour of quotas because they believe that professional skills, experience and personality should be the criteria when choosing a leader. The person in favour of quotas said quotas would make the change faster.

When asked whether the prefix female should be avoided when talking about leadership, there were again two different views. One of the women commented that it need not be avoided and stated the following:

> *It is in general something we women are really good at, so I'm really very fine with the term female leadership.*

The two other women thought that it should be avoided, as the criteria for good leadership should be the same for all, women and men, and competences and experience should be emphasized.

4.3.3   Summary of the interviews and questionnaire

All the respondents have had many years of experience in managerial positions and they represented different sectors. The answers were the respondents' own opinion and thoughts on the issue, which are based on their own experiences and knowledge.

The answers of the interviews and questionnaires varied as is expected when the answers are based on the respondents own experiences, beliefs and values. However, on a positive note, many of the respondents had not experienced their gender to be an obstacle when moving up the corporate ladder. It was experienced more as a benefit, like one of the interviewees mentioned that having been responsible for dozens of children through a hobby, has had a positive influence on her career and competence. Women's own doubts or lack of confidence were also mentioned by many of the respondents, but they were not considered to be too empowering and thus not influencing their career advancements that much.

Differences between women's and men's style of leading were not acknowledged and even if any differences were indentified, the respondents did not want to emphasize them. It was clear that gender was not believed to be relevant when it comes to leadership and that only skills and character are important. A good leader was seen a person with vision and leading others to a common goal. Comprehending entitities, having good social skills and being fair and just were some of the qualities of a good leader.

The general comment on women's possibilities to become leaders in the future was also positive. Education and strong know-how were considered to be the key factors which will help women move up in the future as well. Some were against quotas and others were not, but the reasons of those who favoured them were the same: it would make the change faster. The number of female leaders was considered to be too low and change too slow and thus quotas were seen as the fastest way to improve the situation. Those opposing quotas, want to emphasize being chosen by competences and skills and not by must or gender.

In addition to women's own competences, networking, mentoring and sponsoring were all considered to have a positive impact on women's career development. Mentoring can be beneficial to both the mentor and mentee. Mentoring allows the distribution of knowledge and support. Sponsoring and networking go hand in hand and supports the saying: "It's not what you know, but who you know". It is important for both women and men have networks and people speaking for you when needed. Also, changing attitudes and emphasizing the importance of

educational choices from early on is important when promoting women's possibilities to get demanding positions.

Many of the respondents commented on the changes which have happened. Their comments included that men are participating more to taking care of children and that attitudes have changed regarding working mothers. Also, the changes regarding career structures were seen to be beneficial for women as the structure is becoming more flexible. In spite of these positive changes, many of the respondents thought that there is still a long way to go and that promoting female leadership is important.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the conclusions of the study will be discussed and the research questions will be answered according to the findings. The author will also give suggestions for future studies, as there are many things left unraveled about the topic. Also, the reliability and validity of the study will be examined.

5.1 Findings and conclusions

To conclude the thesis, the research questions are revised in order to find out whether they have been answered. The answers reflect the author's interpretation of the findings, hence there may be other alternatives as well. The table below shows the research questions formed in the beginning of the study and the answers the author has found.

TABLE 2. Research questions and findings

1. What are the main factors that influence women's rise to leadership positions?	The factors considered to influence women's career development the most were organizational factors. Other factors include societal and individuals factors.
2. Why are women underrepresented in senior management in Finland?	Factors behind the ones defined in question 1, such as traditional gender roles, business culture and women's own values have an impact on the number of female leaders.
3. What are the ways to increase the number of women in leadership positions?	Promoting educational choices from an early age and education itself are very important in addition to mentoring, networking and organizations conducting an equality plan.
4. What benefits do female leaders bring to organizations?	Diversity, better company performance, equality and use of all available resources and know-how.
5. Is leadership gender neutral?	Yes and no. Studies show that women and men use different leadership behaviours differently. Leadership can be feminine or masculine but it can be practised by both

To answer questions one, the author outlined three main levels which all have their own influential factors. The three main factors are societal, organizational and individual factors. The author divided the factors into three main categories because the reasons behind women's career possibilities are not unambiguous. The societal factors are indirect factors which have an impact on organizations and individuals. Organizational factors are more easily changed and are more direct.

Individual factors are affected by both societal and organizational factors as well as by the relationships the individuals have.

More precise factors that influence women's positions in senior management in Finnish organizations were defined inside each main category. Societal factors include traditional gender roles, division of labour market and governmental policies. Traditional gender roles define what is expected of men and women and still many people tend to act according to those roles, albeit unconsciously.Thus, even though there are many female leaders nowadays they are still often the "exception". Especially in male-dominated sectors, women leaders are scarce. The division of education and labour market by gender is strong in Finland, which creates inequality, differences in salaries and less managerial career opportunities for women. Also, the governamental policies have a role by creating or maintaining policies which either support or not working families with children.

As for organizational factors, business culture and the action organizations take in recruiting and offering career advancements are very influential to female leadership. The Finnish business culture is still considered to be very masculine and women having to see twice as much effort than men and be more adaptable. Cronyism still exists and it can be hard for women to enter men's networks which might open many doors to women. Organizations are the key factors in women's career development as they make the direct decision whether to hire a woman or a man. Organizations also create their own organizational culture, which was stated to influence women's career possibilities. Organizations can also have an impact by choosing how to search for people and the ways they make their decisions when looking for staff. Organizations possibilities to offer career advancements and their support for both women and men is crucial.

Individual factors refer to women's own expectations and values regarding their career aspirations and possibilities. Women are affected by culture and also by the business culture in their organization. Women are said to be less willing to take risks than men and underestimate their skills. However, the negative effect of women's lack of confidence or will to succeed is often overestimated. According to the results of the interviews and questionnaire, the lack of confidence is usually easily overcome and is not considered to be a major obstacle by women

themselves. Nevertheless, many women choose, or are forced to choose, family over career at some point of their lives. In most households, women are still the ones who stay home to take care of children even though men have the possibility as well. This derives from traditional gender roles and affects women's career aspirations. Women's own thrive to be leaders and their own input in promoting female leadership, for example by mentoring others, are very important to female leadership. Women being the underdogs can also have a positive impact, as it makes many women more determined to succeed.

There were various findings regarding question number three. However, the effectiveness of some of these actions have not been studied so they are recommendations. Education is one of the key factors for women to better their possibilities to be leaders. Hence, evening the division in educational fields by familiarizing children from an early age with different educational and career opportunities and emphasizing the importance of education would be tackling the problem from the root. The more equal distribution of parental leaves between women and men would also better women's possibilities to advance by not leaving a long gap in women's work experience.

For women, mentoring and networking are very important and proved to be beneficial. Men have been networking for ages and women lack the same extent of networks as they have been doing for a lot less time. Mentoring on the other hand will help young women in their career paths and promote female leadership and networking as well. Organizations should conduct clear, achievable equality plans, in order to enhance their diversity and performance. Quotas are controversial. They would obviously increase the number of women in management, but many women do not want to be chosen to be leaders by legislation but instead by their skills. Others see it as the only way to increase the number of female leaders within a reasonable time period.

Studies have proven that organizations benefit from having more women in their managerial teams. Better company performance is linked to the diversity of organizations. Diversity itself brings more ideas, more perspectives and more diverse leading. Diversity in management would also influence the organizational culture and probably make it more equal and diverse as well. In other words, the

different performance levels of organizations would all be affected. By not having competent women who are available, organizations are not reaching their full potential. There are many working women who have the education and know-how but are not able to use it or they are concentrated in some sectors only.

As for leadership and whether leadership styles differ between men and women, the answer was both yes and no. It is often said, that gender is not relevant when it comes to leadership but the individual's way of leading is. This is true, all leaders have their own style of leading which derives from their personality, values and beliefs. A woman can lead in a masculine way and a man in a feminine way. But, this raises the questions what kind of leadership is then considered to be good leadership. People have their own perceptions of what is good leadership and appreciate different characteristics over others.

Traditional leadership is masculine and hierarchical whereas today's leadership is turning towards more equal and a social style of leading. Studies also show that in general, female and men leaders show certain behaviours more than the other gender. Traditional organizations and leaders may thereby avert female leaders as they do not fit their traditional view of a good leader. All in all, the reason why this questions was not given one specific answer, was because the subject was not studied to its full extent. Based on the findings, the author believes that in general, there are differences between men and female leaders as women and men bear their gender and gender-related characteristics with them to their managerial behaviour as well. The author notes, that this does not apply to all people and that there are exceptions. Also, the differences should be emphasized in a positive way rather than be used to identify which gender is the better leader.

The results of the interviews and questionnaire mostly aligned with the theory of the thesis and with previous studies and literature. However, what was interesting to find out was that most of the women believed that women do have the same opportunities as men to advance to leadership positions and they did not see their gender being an issue. Their suggestions on how to improve female leadership were similar and promoting female leadership was considered important. Nevertheless, there were also different opinions and views on the issue and thus from the interviews and questionnaire no uniform conclusions could be drawn.

Their answers were interesting and an important part of the study, as they gave light on women's own opinions and how they have experienced their careers and leadership.

5.2   Reliability and validity

When conducting the thesis, multiple sources were used to gather data. The sources used include literature, newspaper articles, other published articles and public statistics. The author focused on using up-to-date information in order to ensure the actual situation today. Interviews and a questionnaire were also conducted to have first-hand opinions and to see whether the respondents' views are similar to previous literature.

The ways to promote female leadership have not been tested nor is there proof of their ability to improve the situation. They are based on the found factors which influence women's career developments and also on previous literature. They are also based on the author's own observations and supported by the data collected from the interviews and questionnaire.

However, there were only a few respondents and the empirical part does not provide a general view about the issue. Some of the information may be outdated in the future, especially the numbers regarding female leadership should be checked in case of using the thesis as a source or in case of further research.

5.3   Suggestions for future research

During this research, the author found plenty of information regarding the factors influencing women's careers and more specifically women's managerial careers. The main levels which have an impact on women's career building were identified and they gave some headway about how female leadership could be promoted and why it matters. Nonetheless, the issue has many underlying factors and needs further research.

The three main categories that influence women's careers are vast and only the main factors within each category were examined in this thesis. All the three levels, society, organization and individuals, need further research.

There are great variations between countries and cultures. This thesis concentrated only on female leadership in Finland and thus more research is needed regarding other countries. By studying the effects of different cultures on female leadership and comparing countries between each other, more knowledge would be gained on how the culture and organizations' and governments' structures affect women's positions as leaders.

Also, the position of women in politics as decision-makers was not covered in this thesis and neither was female entrepreneurship. In order to get a wider view of equality in Finland and women's power to influence over governmental matters, the position of women in politics should be researched. It would be interesting to study further women's success as entrepreneurs and the factors that influnce women to become entrepreneurs.

Finally, factors that influence men's career successes have not been handled in this thesis. By studying men's career developments, advancements and obstacles, the topic would get more value of comparison.

6 SUMMARY

This thesis set out to study women's possibilities in management in Finland and what makes a woman to succeed in work life. The idea of the thesis was based on the observation that women are still underrepresented in management, even though Finnish women are well-educated and equality is considered to be good in Finland. The aim of the thesis was also to find the best ways to promote female leadership and the importance of having women in management as well.

The reasons behind women's low number in management and also the factors which influence women's careers were divided into three main factors: societal, organizational and individual factors. By identifying these, more specific factors were found and it was seen that women's careers are not affected only by one thing, but all these factors play a part in women's possibilities to move up. Societal factors have an indirect effect as underlying factors on women' career possibilities whereas organizational factors have a more direct effect. In the conclusions, the research questions were answered and the main influencing factors described shortly.

There are many ways to promote female leadership, of which some are more time consuming and complex and others are more easily conducted. If societal factors are considered, attention should be paid on the raising of children by giving boys and girls more possibilities to get to know different fields and professions in order to balance the gender division in the Finnish labour market. Also, changing traditional gender roles by emphasizing equality in all matters would change attitudes towards female leadership and women's own doubts about their abilities. At an organizational level, companies can adapt equality plans and aim for diversity by hiring competent women and men equally. Networking, sponsoring and mentoring are all good ways to promote female leadership as well.

All in all leadership is changing, likewise businesses and organizations will have to change accordingly. Female leaders can bring something new to organizations when, for example, social skills are becoming more important. The question should not concentrate on the differences between female and male leadership, but on what can be done together. Improving organizational diversity as well as

gender equality benefits all. Many women themselves do not want to emphasize differences between leadership styles or femininity. They prefer emphasizing the skills and competence of the leader and ignore gender.

The topic of the thesis is complex and broad and thus further research is recommended. This thesis only concentrates on the main issues which can be researched in more detail to find more ways to improve women's possibilities to become leaders. By studying other countries and comparing those, a broader theory could be formed.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Semi-structured interview of four female leaders

Elsi Lahti
Summer/2013
INTERVIEW

Name of interviewee:
Company:
Title:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Please give some general information about the company you are working for now. For example, number of employees, number of offices, line of business etc.

2. What is your position in the company? Please describe also the main tasks of the position. How long have you worked for the company?

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

3. Describe your educational background.

4. Describe your work experience. For example, which kind of field(s) you have worked in, tasks, positions, etc.

5. How many years of experience do you have in managerial positions?

6. Which aspects or events do you consider to have advanced your career the most?

7. Which aspects or events have you considered as obstacles or speed bumps in your career? If any?

OPINIONS AND EXPERIENCE ON WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP

8. How do you define leadership?

9. What do you think are the most important qualities and characteristics of a good leader?

10. According to an enquiry conducted by Talouselämä magazine, many Finnish female leaders consider that it is still easier for young men to get ahead with their careers than it is for young women. What is your experience or opinion about this? Have you experienced your gender/femininity to be in the way of your career development? Or has it helped?

11. What do you think are the best tools to increase the number of women in leadership positions? (For example, quotas, mentoring, general discussion, etc.) What benefits or advantages do women bring to leadership and organizations, in your opinion? Or are there even any special advantages?

12. Do you feel that the differences between men and women's leadership styles are significant? Or are there generally any differences between women and men when it comes to leading?

13. Is gender relevant, or should only professional skills be emphasized when considering leadership and managers? Or is it necessary to better women's position in working life in certain ways, because there are other obstacles, which are not related to professional skills. (It is statistically shown that women are more educated in Finland than men) What do you think about these questions?

14. According to a study by McKinsey & Company, leadership styles which are more commonly used by women (feminine leadership) are more suitable in facing new trends, such as social and environmental trends, than traditional leadership.

Do you think it is easier for women to become managers at the moment and even more so in the future? Why do you think it is / is not?

15. Anything else that comes to mind about women and/or leadership? Opinions, stories, notes....

Appendix 2

Questionnaire on female leadership

According to an enquiry conducted by Talouselämä magazine, many Finnish female leaders consider that it is still easier for young men to get ahead with their careers than it is for young women. This has sparked discussion about whether there is still room for improvement when it comes to equality in the labour market. The thesis concentrates on the current trends of leadership and what women could bring to organizations. The thesis also examines whether or not it is still harder for women to pursuit higher positions than for men, and what might be the reasons behind it.

1. Name (optional)

2. Company/Organization (optional)

3. Short company presentation (optional)

4. Age: *

25-30 31-35

36-40 41-45

46-50 >51

5. Title:

6. Job description:

7. Educational level (Highest completed degree)

8. Working experience in positions of reponsibility in years:

9. Which aspects do you consider to be the most important in enhancing women's careers? And why?

10.In your opinion, what are the most common obstacles in women's careers? (If there are any):

11. In general, do you think that women and men have the same opportunities when pursuing higher positions?:

Yes No No opinion

Reasoning:

12. Have you felt that being a woman has made it harder for you to get ahead in your career?

Yes No Not opinion

Reasoning:

13. If you have children, have you experienced it influencing your position in the companies you have worked for or when applying for a job?

Yes No No opinion

Reasoning:

14. Do you think the prefix "female" should be avoided when talking about leadership? (Nais-etuliite / Naisjohtajuus)

Yes No No opinion

Reasoning:

15. Do you consider there to be significant differences in the style of leading between men and women?:

Yes No No opinion

Reasoning:

16. Should professional skills be emphasized more than gender when considering leadership positions?

Yes No No opinion

Reasoning:

17. Are you in favour of quotas (naiskiintiöt):

Yes No No opinion

Reasoning:

18. What do you think are the best tools to increase the number of women in leadership positions?: (E.g. mentoring, quotas, discussion, etc... ?

19. Free word: (Examples, stories, experiences, opinions about female leadership, etc...)