THE CAREER PATHS OF WOMEN TO THE INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

As a result of the growing importance of internationalization, organizations are increasingly operating in an international context, which is why today the need for international leaders is greater than ever. Despite the great need, the demand for international leaders has been mainly limited to men and the number of women in international leadership positions is significantly lower than those of men. The purpose of this study is to increase knowledge about career paths of women to the international leadership positions; with what kind of career paths do women end up in international leadership positions, which factors are contributing to their careers, and in turn what kind of challenges they have to face in their careers when pursuing these positions. The study was conducted as a qualitative research and the data of the study was collected by seven semi-structured interviews of women leaders who were working in different fields and in different positions in international context. The data was analyzed by utilizing qualitative content analysis and theme analysis. The findings of this study indicate that women advance in their careers by emphasizing subjective factors such as their own growth and development and structure their careers to suit their current life situation. The factors that had mostly influenced women's career development were women's own work contribution, in addition to which, women emphasized the impact of their former leaders and colleagues, who had enabled women to advance in their careers to international leadership positions. Women had experienced the biggest challenges in the early stages of their careers when their qualifications were suspected due to their young age.

Key words	
International Leadership, Women in International Leadership, Women Leaders, Women's Careers, Career Development of Women	
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Tiivistelmä

Kansainvälistymisen kasvaneen merkityksen seurauksena, organisaatiot toimivat yhä useammin kansainvälisessä kontekstissa, mistä syystä myös tarve kansainvälisille johtajille on tänä päivänä suurempaa kuin koskaan. Suuresta tarpeesta huolimatta kansainvälisten johtajien kysyntä on rajoittunut suurelta osin miehiin ja naisjohtajia on huomattavasti vähemmän kansainvälisissä johtotehtävissä kuin miesjohtajia. Tämän pro gradu -tutkielman tavoitteena on lisätä tietämystä naisten urapoluista kansainvälisiin johtotehtäviin; millaisin urapoluin naiset päätyvät kansainvälisiin johtotehtäviin, mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat edistävästi heidän uralla etenemiseensä ja toisaalta millaisia haasteita he joutuvat kokemaan urallaan tavoitellessaan näitä tehtäviä. Tutkimus on laadullinen ja sen aineisto on hankittu haastattelemalla puolistrukturoiduin teemahaastatteluin seitsemää naisjohtajaa, jotka työskentelevät eri aloilla ja eri tehtävissä kansainvälisissä johtotehtävissä. Aineiston analysoinnissa hyödynnettiin laadullista sisällönanalyysia sekä teemoittelua. Tämän tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että naiset etenevät urallaan painottaessaan subjektiivisia muuttujia, kuten omaa kasvuaan ja kehitystään ja rakentavat uraansa siten, että se sopisi heidän sen hetkiseen elämäntilanteeseensa. Naisten urakehitykseen eniten vaikuttaneita tekijöitä olivat naisten oma työpanos, minkä lisäksi naiset korostivat entisten johtajiensa ja kollegoidensa vaikutusta, jotka olivat osaltaan mahdollistaneet naisten etenemisen urallaan kansainvälisiin johtotehtäviin. Suurimpia haasteita naiset olivat kokeneet uransa alkuvaiheilla työskennellessään jo korkeassa asemassa, jolloin heidän pätevyyttään oli epäilty heidän nuoren ikänsä vuoksi.

Asiasanat Kansainvälinen johtajuus, naiset kansainvälisessä johtajuudessa, naisjohtajat, naisten urat, naisten urakehitys	
Säilytyspaikka Jyväskylän yliopiston kirjasto	

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Basis of the Research

The importance of internationalization has increased in all industrialized countries in recent years, as a result of globalization. Globalization can be considered as the erosion of organization as well as national boundaries (Lane & Maznevski, 2014, 10). Due to globalization the world economy has internationalized (Edwards & Rees, 2011, 12) and it does not only affect to large, successful organizations but also to many small ones, creating requirements for organizations to customize their operations to meet international competition requirements (Harris, 1993). Thus, it is common that organizations are no longer functioning in just one country but operating wherever the market advantage is the greatest (Edwards & Rees, 2011, 12). Internationalization has changed job image, the functioning of the labor markets and has influenced the qualities and skills required of employees but also has an impact on their career opportunities (Adler, 2007). Nowadays, careers are no longer understood as linear and predictable as before but described as multidirectional, dynamic and fluid instead (Baruch, 2004).

Today, employers' demand for a workforce with global experience and willingness to take international assignments is greater than ever (Fischlmayr & Puchmüller, 2016). Moreover, careers are increasingly understood as global and employees are expected to be flexible and able to operate in an international environment (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009). Albeit women represent a significant part of the workforce and are mainly more educated than men, it is more difficult for them to advance in their career to the leadership positions compared to men (Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001; Lämsä et. al, 2014), let alone to the international leadership positions (Linehan & Walsh, 2001; Edwards & Rees, 2011; Varma & Russel, 2016). For the purposes of this paper an international leader is defined as a person, working in a leadership position in international organization either domestically or abroad.

This study explores career paths of women to the international leadership positions. Women in international leadership has been a topic of research since the 1980s (e.g. Adler, 1984; Adler, 1993; Harris, 1993) and most of its research

have been conducted in North America and United Kingdom. Research on women in international leadership has been closely linked to the research on international leadership in general, career research and the research of the position of women in organizations (Salamin & Hanappi, 2014). Although, career research started already in the late 19th century (Ekonen, 2007), the research on women's careers began to increase in the 1980s, as women's participation in the workforce had increased (Ekonen, 2011).

Initially, women's career research was combined with men's career research (Lämsä & Ekonen, 2007, 64) and theories about men's career development were used to describe women's career development (Mavin, 2001). However, it was soon realized that women's careers and career development differ from men's in many ways (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005) and there are factors that strongly influence women's career development (e.g. Linehan & Scullion, 2008; Grodzicki & Varma, 2011; Moore, 2011; Fischlmayr & Puchmüller, 2016). Hence, women's career research was separated from men' s career research and researchers started to develop models to describe women's career development, that take into account the specific characteristics of women's careers and factors affecting to women's career development. This study combines research on women's careers with research on women in international leadership.

1.2   Purpose of the Research and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to increase knowledge about women's career paths to the international leadership positions; with what kinds of career paths do women end up in international leadership positions, what factors contribute to their career development, and in turn what kind of challenges they have to face in their careers when pursuing these roles. The study aims to understand women's experiences about their careers by identifying with their thoughts, views and experiences and as the study represents the phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition of philosophy, the study aims to interpret these unique experiences of women leaders while taking into account that these are influenced by their own values and meanings.

The study was conducted as a qualitative research and the data of the study was collected by seven semi-structured interviews of women leaders who were working in different fields and in different positions in international context. The subjects were not assigned a lower or upper age limit or a limit on the stage of their career. However, the subjects had to have experience of working in international leadership positions. The age of the participants ranged from 29 to 54, thus they were at different stages of their careers. Women who were at different stages of their careers were selected for the study, as this was believed to increase the reliability of research as it would bring different perspectives on for example how they saw and experienced the current situation and the future of their careers. Each of the interviewees worked in different organizations, in different positions, and in different functions in their organizations. The data of the study was analyzed by utilizing qualitative content analysis and theme analysis. The analysis

focuses on to interpret what the women tell about their careers and their career development and on the other hand what they mean, and how these are influenced by their own experiences and their own meanings.

The study is limited to the perspectives and experiences of women leaders. This perspective is justified because, although much research has been conducted on women's careers, career challenges and career-enhancing factors, the career paths of women leaders and their experiences in their careers can be best imparted and described by the people concerned by the study; women leaders themselves. The study focuses on international leadership, as the topic is an interesting but less researched topic in leadership research and because the topic is very important to myself, the researcher, as I have a strong interest in equality issues in general and as I am dreaming of working in an international leadership position someday.

Furthermore, the topic is more relevant today than ever before as the constant internationalization keeps on having such a strong impact on work and careers nowadays. In addition, the study focuses on women leaders, because although the number of women in traditional leadership positions has increased, the number of women in international leadership positions has remained low (e.g. Harris, 2004). However, the purpose of this study is not to find out the reasons why the number of women in international leadership positions is significantly smaller than men but to consider women's career paths, their career development and the factors that have effects to it.

Instead of examing only obstacles to women's career development, like many studies before, the purpose of this study is to make women's voices heard and give them the opportunity to tell about their career paths and their experiences; what they have been through in their careers and how they have experienced their career progress to these positions. More specifically, this study aims to find out:

- With what kind of career paths do women advance in their careers to international leadership positions?
- Which factors have a positive impact on women's career development?
- What challenges do women face in their careers when pursuing international leadership roles?
- How do women see the future of their careers?

1.3   Structure of the Research Report

This research report consists of six main chapters. The first chapter, introduction, presents the subject of the study, the purposes for conducting the study and the structure of the research report. Following the introduction, the theoretical background of the study is presented, which is divided into two separate chapters. The first of these provides an overview of the previous literature concerning women in international leadership and assumptions about international leader and his or her qualities. After this, the third chapter aims to provide a holistic view of career research, and the research of career development and women's

careers. The chapter focuses on career research and how women's career development differs from traditional career development. Furthermore, this chapter presents previous research on the factors having an impact on women's careers.

The fourth chapter introduces research methods, the philosophical assumptions of the research and its data. The chapter describes how the research has been conducted and analyzed and it justifies the choices made regarding the research and analysis methods. In addition, the chapter assesses the reliability, validity and ethics of the study. The fifth chapter presents the empirical findings of the study. The findings are divided into their own subchapters by theme analysis. The empirical results are followed by the sixth and final chapter, which concludes the research report. The chapter discusses about the results of the study, compares them with the findings of previous studies and examines the limitations of the study. Furthermore, the chapter considers ideas for further research and concludes the study to the main findings of the study. Finally, the report presents a list of literature and appendixes benefited in the study.

2   WOMEN AND INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

This chapter firstly examines international leadership in general, followed by a review of previous literature on women in international leadership and their current position in these roles. Finally, the theory of international leader and his or her qualities are explored and what kind of skills and qualities an international leader is expected to have.

2.1   International Leadership

Leadership has been a topic of interest for researchers for over a century. It has been studied in different disciplines and from various perspectives over the years and there are numerous definitions to the term. Due to the scope of the research, leadership can be understood as a feature or a behavior, but it can also be approached from an information-processing or relational perspective (Northouse, 2016, 4–11). The definition is then much more complex than one might imagine at first. In this thesis leadership is defined as a process whereby a group of people are influenced to achieve a common goal by an individual (Northouse, 2016, 5), in other words, a leader.

Generally, the words leadership and management are separated from each other. Management is strongly associated with efficiency, processes, and managing through things and numbers, whereas leadership is generally combined with leading people and seen more interpersonally oriented (Northouse, 2016, 12–14). In this thesis it was decided to use the term leader instead of manager and the term leadership instead of management to clarify the message of the paper. More importantly, as noted for example by Linehan and Walsh (2000) and Van der Boon (2003) when working in international leadership positions it is important to adopt a people-oriented leadership approach, taking into account, among other things, different cultural differences, the terms leader and leadership were considered to better describe the leadership style in an international context.

According to Lane and Maznevski (2014) globalization can be understood as the erosion of national borders and as an increase in economic interdependence (2014, 10). Globalization and the subsequent internationalization are having a profound effect on all industrialized countries. They affect for example the functioning of organizations and the labor markets, the skills and knowledge required of employees and the job profile in general (e.g. Harris, 1993; Adler, 2007). The altered nature of work because of the growing importance of international business activity has signified also an increasing demand for international leaders.

There has been much debate between the terms global and international, among other things, about the extent of business activity to which each term reflects (Lane & Maznevski, 2014, 17), but also if the terms can be used interchangeably (Jokinen, 2005). Because many researchers (e.g. Jokinen, 2005; Woodall, 2011; Lane & Maznevski, 2014) use the terms as synonyms, for the purposes of this

paper the distinction between these terms is irrelevant. Instead, for the purposes of this thesis an international leader is defined as a leader with experience in working with people and getting things done across boundaries (Lane & Maznevski, 2014, 18).

Therefore, the definition includes leaders who are working in international positions domestically or abroad, but also expatriates, employees working temporarily abroad, outside of his or her home country (Brewster & Scullion, 1997). While it is acknowledged that there is a large variety of different kinds of international positions and assignments, depending on the duration, the frequency and the nature of the assignment, in this paper the objects of interest are women leaders who are working in or have experience in international leadership positions. The level of the leadership position is not relevant for this study, as in most previous studies, definitions of the international leader's formal position within the organization vary or is not even informed at all (Jokinen, 2005).

International leadership has changed a lot over the years. Before, a small number of leaders, who were or had been on international assignment in another country for a short time were classified as international leaders (Woodall, 2011; Lane & Maznevski, 2014, 8). Hence, most studies on international leadership focus on expatriates (Jokinen, 2005). However, as a result of the growing importance of internationalization, the number of international leaders has grown significantly, as have their remits. For this reason, the job description of an international leader is today much broader than individual international assignments (Jokinen, 2005).

Indeed, due to the increasing importance of internationalization, the working environment of international leaders has become even more challenging as it was before. The intricacy of globalization is illustrated in figure 1 (Lane & Maznevski, 2004, 14). The interdependence between countries has increased significantly in recent years. Because of the interdependence, events and decisions made in one organization or in one part of the world can have an effect to others who may be distant and even unrelated to the event or decision (Lane & Maznevski, 2004, 13). Thus, international leaders need to consider many different variables when making decisions, because depending on their position, their actions and decisions can have a broad and long-term impact on others.
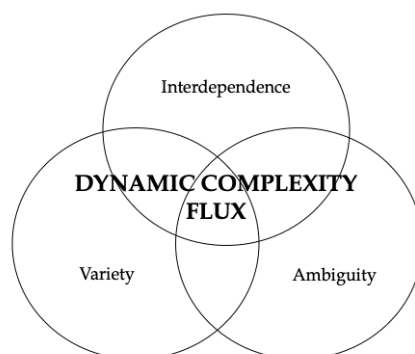

Figure 1. The intricacy of globalization (Lane & Maznevski, 2004, 14)

Moreover, international leaders have to face more variety than before. This is reflected, among other things, in the diversification of the workforce and increased competition for example, for customers and marketplaces (Lane & Maznevski, 2004, 13). In addition to this, internationalization has increased the ambiguity or in other words the lack of clarity. Ambiguity is associated with both the difficulty to see cause-effect relations in different situations and the reliability of the information available. Each of these are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing, thus reflecting the intricacy of globalization as can be seen in figure 1. (Lane & Maznevski, 2004, 13–14.) Moreover, the field of action of international leaders is constantly changing and what they are used to today may change tomorrow. The flux in the figure 1 (Lane & Maznevski, 2004, 14) refers to this rapid unpredictable change in internationalization that occurs in many directions.

Thus, today, international leaders must strive to meet ever-changing demands of the international environment and they may need to travel to several countries during the year and work simultaneously with many different nationalities (Lane & Maznevski, 2014, 8). Thus, in order to succeed in an international leadership position, a person must have certain qualities and skills, which will be further explored in chapter 2.3. Prior to this, previous studies of women in international leadership will be examined.

2.2 Women in International Leadership

Women in leadership has been a subject of interest over decades. The first studies were carried out in the United States in the 1970s and they focused on whether women could lead or be leaders (Hoyt & Simon, 2016, 397–398), after which the researchers have approached the subject from several different perspectives. However, the most studied topics have been the small number of women in leadership positions, especially in higher level positions and what are the reason why there are only a very few women in these positions. In addition to this, one of the most popular topics have been if men and women differ in their leadership styles and their abilities to lead. (Alvesson & Billing, 2009.) Despite numerous studies, an exhaustive answer to these questions has not been found.

Women in international leadership has been studied since the 1980s when the importance of internationalization started to increase in the business world but the number of women leaders in international leadership positions stayed low (Adler, 2002). Today, when internationality affects almost everything in working life and in business world in industrialized countries, the topic is more important than ever before. The research on women in international leadership is closely linked to the research on international leadership in general, the position of women in organizations and career research (Salamin & Hanappi, 2014). The first research results (e.g. Adler, 1984; Adler, 1993; Harris, 1993; Adler & Izraeli, 1994; Harris, 1995) are based specifically on North America and United Kingdom, where internationalization began. The studies focused on the growing importance of internationalization and the low participation of women in inter-

national leadership positions. In the beginning, until the end of the 1990s, international leader was typically a senior-level corporate employee who was a Caucasian male with a trailing spouse (Woodall, 2011, 164) and less than 3 % of all international managers were women (Adler, 1984). This aroused the interest of researchers, and they began to investigate the reasons why there are so few women in international leadership positions.

Adler (1984) identified three common myths about women in international leadership, which were prevalent at that time. At that time, it was assumed that women do not want to be international leaders, organizations refuse to send women abroad and that foreigners' prejudice against women precludes women's effectiveness as international leaders (Adler, 1994; Adler & Izraeli, 1994). According to Adler (1994) there were not a significant difference between women and men interested in international careers, but organizations offered much more often international opportunities to men than to women. What came to the second myth was that over half of the organizations that participated in the research reported that they hesitated to send women abroad. The reason to this was that the organizations believed that women could not succeed abroad because they believed that foreigners would have prejudices against women leaders, and they were also concerned about women's physical safety. However, most of the women leaders with the international career remarked that the most difficult part of the international assignment was getting the opportunity to be sent abroad in the first place. Once sent, women succeeded internationally. (Adler, 1994; Adler & Izraeli, 1994, 24–35.)

The more important the topic of internationalization became, the more vigorously researchers examined the reasons why women's career development seems to stop to their home country. In the mid-1990s and early 2000s, the literature on women pursuing international leadership positions focused on identifying overt and covert barriers to women's career development, mainly coming from the domestic business environment, and the perspective of women themselves and their experiences (Salamin & Hanappi, 2014). In the early 21st century, globalization began to affect to the needs of organizations, the operations of the markets and started to appear as increased competition. Therefore, the demand for international leadership skills was greater than ever. (Woodall, 2011, 164–167.) Hence, studies on the position of women and the challenges they need to face when pursuing international leadership positions increased significantly in the 2000s. At that time women were getting opportunities to progress in their career to the leadership positions but only a few was getting the opportunity to expand their career to different countries and make their career international (Adler, 2002).

In the early 2000s only 2 of the Fortune 500 companies had a female CEO (Fairchild, 2014) and fewer than 5 % of senior leadership positions were filled by women in Europe and if examined the international leadership positions, the number would have been between 2–5 % (Linehan & Walsh, 2001, 85). Researchers (e.g. Linehan & Walsh, 2000; Adler, 2002) tried to find reasons for this, further exploring obstacles to women's career development, and examining whether there are differences in the leadership style of women and men, which could be the reason why there are only so few women in international leadership roles.

However, increased competition due to internationalization forced organizations to start filling their open positions with the best possible workforce, despite the gender of the employee, which had a positive impact on women's career development (Adler, 2007). Although, Harris (2004) remarked that even though the number of women in international leadership positions was increased, it had grown very slowly since Adler's first research in 1984.

In recent years the research on women and international leadership has focused on slowly increasing numbers of women in international leadership positions (e.g. Varma & Russel, 2016), the barriers they still need to face as they pursue these positions (e.g. Moore, 2011; Fischlmayr & Puchmüller, 2016) and how organizations waste potential talent that could improve their competitiveness and help them better respond to the demands of the markets, when they greatly limit the selection of an international leader to male candidates (e.g. Vance & McNulty, 2014; Madsen & Scribner, 2017). Albeit the demand for international leaders is greater than ever, it is still mostly restricted to men and there are significantly less women than men in international leadership positions, although the number of women in working life and in leadership positions in general has increased, still being quite low even in domestic organizations (Varma & Russel, 2016). Globally less than 30 % of all women in the workforce are advancing in their careers to the higher levels of leadership positions and they are 3,7 % more likely to do so if they work for national rather than multinational organizations (ILO, 2019). Moreover, only 22 % of all expatriate positions are held by women (Welsh & Kersten, 2014) and only 33 of the Fortune 500 companies have a female CEO, which is just 6.6 % of the organizations on the ranking of highest-grossing companies (Zillman, 2019).

One reason for the generally low number of women in leadership positions has been the image of an ideal leader that women have not believed to fit in. This will be discussed next.

2.3 Qualifications Required for Working in International Leadership Positions

Even though the specific image of an ideal leader differs between different countries, yet most of the ideal attributes for a leader are associated with masculine qualities and masculinity (Adler & Izraeli, 1994; Linehan & Walsh, 2000; Lämsä et. al, 2014). Career theories are mainly based on working methods and success of men and they are based on psychoanalytic concepts of centralizing work to identity (Linehan & Scullion, 2008).

Identity is based on individual's personal characteristics that can be changed, progressed and developed over time. Identity can be described as multiple, fluid and contextual and even though it is personal and strongly associated with self-determination, it is formed, developed and expressed in a close interaction with other people in a social and cultural context. (Alvesson & Billing, 2009.) Although identity can be understood as personal and used as a tool for self-de-

termination, it can also be used to combine people with specific features into specific groups, in which case identity can be understood as social identity. Identity is strongly linked to the culture and gender. According to Powell & Graves (2003) the term gender can be separated from the term sex, as sex refers to a person's biological sex whereas gender is used in social context (2003, 3–4). Thus, the term gender refers to the social role of women and men, which determines what is appropriate for one gender more than the other, including behavior, interests, attitudes and feelings (Powell & Graves, 2003, 3–4).

Gender identity defines gender-specific characteristics, that are influenced by the gender patterns, habits and norms learned over the years. Furthermore, it explains the assumed feminine and masculine traits of the genders. (Alvesson & Billing, 2009.) According to psycho-analytical and sociological gender socialization theories, characteristics of genders are due to psychological and socio-psychological process. These theories emphasize the importance of one's background such as early life experiences, family, school, cultural values and patterns in the formation of gender identity (Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001). Therefore, individuals of different genders are suitable for different jobs.

Leadership style research aims to find out whether there are differences in leadership styles of women and men (Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001). According to Lämsä and Sintonen (2001) leadership style research assumes that women and men are suitable for different types of jobs because of their different characteristics. Traditionally executive tasks are combined with masculine qualities like full commitment and long working hours (Hearn et al., 2015) and leaders are assumed to be physically strong, daring and tough. Thus, executive tasks are expected to be more suitable for men, as most often men are combined with masculine features whereas women are combined with feminine features (Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001). Indeed, women are often combined with features like openness for feelings and for thoughts, emotionalism, supportiveness and warmness (Alvesson & Billing, 2009), which are considered as feminine features. Moreover, many other qualities associated with women such as social skills, ability to motivate others and networking skills are seen to enrich the business world, but as a woman pursues leadership roles, those qualities can make it difficult to attain those positions because often people in leadership positions are expected to have more masculine qualities (Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001).

Furthermore, because of the assumed differences between gender's values and way of functioning, some theories and researchers presume women to be less ambitious and less career-oriented than men. Gender socialization theories even suggest that if women want to succeed in their careers, they have to change their ways to lead and embrace masculine features (Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001). Linehan and Walsh (2000) argue that because of the leadership style of men has been considered as a general norm, women have been alternating between feminine leadership styles and efforts to adopt masculine leadership styles. However, some of women leaders have adopted an individualistic style of leadership, because they don't want their leadership style to be stereotyped as feminine or masculine (Linehan & Walsh, 2000).

Although, there are general assumptions about what kind of leader is a good leader and what kind of qualities he or she should have, the success in international leadership positions requires certain types of skills and qualities that are different from those of domestic leaders. The subject has been studied extensively and numerous studies have sought to determine what qualities and skills an international leader needs to succeed in his or her position (Bird & Osland, 2004, 65; Bird et. al., 2010; Lane & Maznevski, 2014, 18). Although, according to Harris (1993) the theory and practice of what kind of skills are needed for a successful international assignment have not always encountered.

Nonetheless, many researchers (e.g. Bird et. al., 2010; Lane & Maznevski, 2014) have confirmed that the pyramid model of global competence developed by Bird and Osland (2004) illustrates well what are the most important skills and knowledge an international leader needs and should have. The model is shown in the figure 2. According to Bird and Osland (2004), global leadership competence is a combination of certain traits, attitudes and skills and the model illustrates how they build on each other (2004, 65–66). The pyramid consists of five different levels and each level builds on the level below, and the more global the job the more extensive the leader's activities extend, the more a leader needs competences in the higher levels of the pyramid (Lane & Maznevski, 2014, 18).

Figure 2. The pyramid model of global competence (Bird & Osland, 2004, 66)

As seen in the figure 2., the foundation level consists of global knowledge, which is the most basic element when working in international context (Bird & Osland, 65). However, Bird and Osland (2004) note that the knowledge does not represent a competence but is a resource which is essential to all other competencies. Thus, the first level of competency consists of four certain threshold traits: integrity, humility, inquisitiveness and hardiness (Bird & Osland, 65). Integrity is a trait having values associated with honesty and transparency and being true to those values. Humility is the awareness that knowledge and skills are widely distributed and that others may know and are able to do things that one may not do by oneself. Inquisitiveness is an active motivation and desire to know new things and have new experiences and to learn from them, whereas hardiness is an ability

to face challenges and difficulties. (Bird & Osland, 67; Lane & Maznevski, 2014, 18.)

The next level consists of an important set of attitudes and orientations which influence how leaders perceive and interpret the world and, for example, how they see international tasks. Cognitive complexity is the ability to see and consider situations, ideas and people from multiple perspectives and a variety of angles. With cosmopolitanism, an awareness of the world and a positive attitude towards it, a leader has acquired a global mindset. With a global mindset, leaders can see and understand the world differently and think from a wider perspective, in other words, beyond their own cultural boundaries. (Bird & Osland, 67; Lane & Maznevski, 2014, 19.)

Attitudes and orientations are followed by level 3, consisting of interpersonal skills that are the most important for an international leader. These are mindful communication and creating and building trust. Mindful communication refers to the communication method, which draws attention to one's own communication style, modifying it when communicating with different people and in different situations, so that the meaning of the message is delivered and understood as desired. With mindful communication a leader is able to create and build trust and create multicultural relationships. (Bird & Osland, 67; Lane & Maznevski, 2014, 19.)

The final level is associated with a set of skills that an effective international leader needs for managing the systems of business. Boundary-spanning refers to the ability to work effectively across countries, organizations, divisions within organizations, and so on. In addition to this, an effective leader must be able to manage change in an ever-changing environment, while creating and building communities. In turn, with ethical decision-making a leader makes and implements decisions that take into account the long-term benefit of individuals and society. (Bird & Osland, 67; Lane & Maznevski, 2014, 20.)

Although, in the beginning women needed to conduct business in style of men to succeed in international leadership positions, as global competition intensified, it was understood that the most valuable features of the workforce for its success was its versatility. This meant that women were not expected to fit in anymore and expected to think and act like men but think and act like themselves. (Adler, 2002.) While it is often thought that leadership roles require masculine qualities, this is not the case with international leadership positions, as noted above and can be seen in figure 2. Next the career development of women will be discussed after which the factors affecting women's career development will be examined.

3 CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN TO THE INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

This chapter firstly introduces the concept of the career, after which a theory of the career and variety of career development models will be examined. After that, the chapter focuses on women's careers and career development, and the factors affecting women's career development.

3.1 Career

Career research began as early as the late 19th century (Ekonen, 2007). The definition of the career and careers in general have undergone major changes over the years. Traditionally career has been defined as an individual's evolving work experience over time (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989) and the subject of review has been individual's progress in the hierarchy of the organization over time (Mavin, 2001; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). This involves the idea of a career as an uninterruptible and upward movement in the hierarchy of one or two organizations, which is also widely regarded as the definition of a successful career (Lämsä & Ekonen, 2007, 63). Furthermore, the definition illustrates how careers used to be before and what is the idea behind most career models.

According to Hall (2002) career has four different meanings. He notes that career can be understood as a development; when it is seen as a vertical movement upwards in an organization's hierarchy, profession; when it is understood as a vertical movement in a certain type of occupations, a lifelong sequence of jobs; which includes all the workplaces and positions where the individual has worked, and a lifelong sequence of role related experiences; in which case career is understood as experiences and insights that an individual has experienced during his or her work history (Hall, 2002, 9–10). Hall (2002) also argues that a career can be independent of work, in which case a career refers to the history of individual's specific roles or positions which need not be tied to the working life (2002, 10).

In the past careers were based on hierarchy, inflexibility and rigid structures (Baruch, 2004) but as it was discussed earlier, changes in working life have also affected to careers and how they are seen today. Nowadays careers are increasingly described as nonlinear and discontinuous (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), but also as flexible and transitional (Baruch, 2004). Furthermore, as discussed earlier, globalization, advancements in technology and increased diversity of the workforce have all had their own effect to the work context, organizational structures, employer-employee relationships and have also contributed to individuals' attitudes towards working life and to their careers (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). In addition, careers are increasingly understood as global and employees are expected to be flexible and able to operate in an international environment (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009).

In contrast to how careers were understood before, nowadays career can be seen as a life journey which connects working life to private life and vice versa, which also has an effect to one's identity, status and social networks (Baruch, 2004). Sullivan and Baruch (2009) define career as individual's experiences related to working life and to physical movements, as in positions in an organization's hierarchy but also between organizations.

Furthermore, the present definition also includes individual interpretations of different events related to changes in his or her career such as how individual sees and feels about the change of jobs or opportunities given or not given in working life (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). The definition is therefore no longer limited to just one organization nor only to the physical movements inside of the organizations but includes also how individual feels about these changes and experiences. This illustrates that nowadays career can be understood in a more subjective way whereas it was before understood more as an objective phenomenon.

According to Ekonen (2011) the subjective view of a career refers to the individual's own experiences determining his or her career whereas according to an objective interpretation of a career, it is determined by the external structures. When looking at careers objectively, careers are emphasized from a working life perspective. In this case, career can be compared to a path which consists of jobs through which the employee progresses hierarchically to a higher position. (Aaltio-Marjosola, 2001, 187; Puttonen, 2006.) Thus, career success can be measured by individual's earnings, the level of positions in organization's hierarchy and rate of advancements (Powell & Graves, 2003, 185).

Subjective career thinking emphasizes career development, acquisition of new knowledge and skills and development of professional identity (Aaltio-Marjosola, 2001, 187). The individual's own experiences of his or her career are important and determine how satisfied he or she is with his or her career (Aaltio-Marjosola, 2001, 187; Puttonen, 2006). In this case career success can be measured by different variables, for example by job security, potential for advancement, stable relationships with family members and opportunities to pursue hobbies (Powell & Graves, 2003, 185). Therefore, career success is not only linked to working life. In additions to this, Ekonen (2011) notes that individuals define their career success by themselves and it means different things to different people. For example, most often women tend to measure their career success by subjective variables (Ekonen, 2011).

Because of the change of the nature of work and careers, traditional linear career development models (e.g. Super, 1957) no longer describe existing careers. Therefore, researchers have developed new theories and models for today's careers and career development. According to Baruch (2004) new models of career development consist of plethora of different options and there are several possible directions of development in a career. He introduced the concept of multidirectional career, according to which career development is no longer straightforward advancement in the organizational hierarchy but is individual's self-definable as how she or he understands his or her career success (Baruch, 2004). Thus, interpretation includes also a subjective point of view.

According to Hall and Moss (1996) individuals are responsible for managing their own career unlike before when the organization was managing it. They

introduced the concept of "protean career", which is a lifelong path which consists of, for example, all the individual's diverse experience in school, training and work in every organization where the individual has worked. In their career view, emphasis is on continuous learning and self-development and for this reason in their opinion career success is related to subjective variables such as professional development and not to objective variables. (Hall & Moss, 1996.)

In turn, DeFillippi and Arthur (1994) introduced the model of "boundaryless career", which describes the changes in the careers, how they have become more open, diverse, and controlled by the employees themselves. In addition to the previous ones, researchers have introduced several other models to better illustrate today's careers (Baruch, 2004). As one can notice, even though there are several new career development models, they all are associated by the idea of career diversity, individual responsibility for one's career, and that there are several interpretations, options and directions for a career development. The different career development models are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Career development models

Model	Authors and date	Point of view	Definition
Traditional career	e.g. Super (1957)	Objective	Career development is linear, upward progression within one or two organizations.
Boundaryless career	DeFillippi & Arthur (1994)	Objective	Career is defined as opportunities and it is seen as open, diverse and largely structured and controlled by employees.
Protean career	Hall & Moss (1996)	Subjective	Career is a lifelong path that consists of all the experience gained in school, training and work in several organizations throughout an individual's life.
Multi-directional career	Baruch (2004)	Objective and/or subjective	An individual defines his or her career development according to how he or she defines career success. Thus, career development can be a sideway move, change of direction, or for example a change of organization.

The definition of the career is nowadays considerably more widely understood concept than it was before. The definition includes changes and experiences in working life but also experiences in private life and how these are connected and how individual has experienced these experiences (Baruch, 2004; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). In this study, career and career development are considered both ob-

jectively and subjectively, from the perspective of an individual. Thus, career development is understood as jobs through which individual progresses from one job or position to another but interpretations are also made from a subjective point of view, where career development is viewed from the perspective of the individual himself or herself, taking into account, among other things, his or her experiences and sensations of his or her career success. Interpretation is done from both perspectives, because objective career interpretation clarifies the interpretation in general, but subjective interpretation can significantly complement the interpretation, especially in the case of women, as will be understood after the next subchapter.

3.2 Career Development of Women

Research on women's careers began to increase in the 1980s, when the portion of women in working life had increased (Ekonen, 2011). At first the research on women's careers was linked to research on men's careers (Lämsä & Ekonen, 2007, 64). At that time the theory of career development was based on the research results of white middle class males and their career development, which was studied by comparing the effect of the age and career stage of the subjects to their job attitudes and performance (Mavin, 2001). Like discussed before, most often career was described as a linear and easily predictable path which progressed upward as the individual reached higher positions in the organizational hierarchy (Mavin, 2001).

Initially, theories about men's career development were used to describe women's career development (Mavin, 2001), until it was understood that the career development of women differs from men's career development in many ways, already in the early phases (Hearn et al., 2015). According to Powell and Graves (2003) women's careers are much more complicated than men's and it may be easier to describe what women's careers are not rather than what they actually are (2003, 184). Moreover, many researchers considered women's careers as "problematic" when their career development did not fit to traditional men's career models.

There are three main features that distinguish women's careers from men's careers, which make it impossible to describe women's career development with traditional career models based on men's career development (e.g. Ekonen, 2011). According to Ekonen (2011) women define career success differently from men and their experiences of their career differs from men's experiences. Powell and Graves (2003) support this position arguing that when evaluating their career success, men tend to focus more on objective factors whereas women focus more on subjective factors (2003, 185–186).

The study of Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) establish the findings discussed above. Their study revealed that women strive to build their career in their own way so that it fits to their lives rather than concentrating on the career progress just because of the progress. This is partly due to the fact that women strive to

simultaneously focus on both career and their private life relationships throughout their lives. (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005.) Thus, as discussed earlier, when assessing their career success, women emphasize subjective variables more often. In this case, career success can be defined, for example, by satisfaction with the current job or by future career opportunities (Powell & Mainiero, 1992). Furthermore, women's careers have been found to be more discontinuous and harder to predict than those of men (Ekonen, 2011) and women are also more likely to work part-time than men (Powell & Graves, 2003, 188). According to Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) women's careers can be often described as discontinuous, interrupted, and even "side-ways", when women are often responsible for caring for children and aging parents but also, they need to deal with trailing spouse issues and outright discrimination in the workplace.

The study of O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) confirms the results of the influence of the family on women's careers. Because of family responsibilities, the form, continuity, advancement patterns, and directions of women's careers differ from traditional models (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). However, Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) argue that caring for the family is not the only reason why women may have career breaks. Instead, the cause may be the same as their male counterparts': lack of career opportunities in their current organization, job dissatisfaction or low organizational commitment, which is why they are leaving their organizations (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Because women's career development differs from the traditional linear, age and stage models, researchers have developed models to describe women's career development, that take into account the specific characteristics of women's careers.

Most often women's career paths have been considered to be kaleidoscope, spiral or circular in nature, related to their stages of life (Shortland, 2016). The career development model of O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) is based on the idea that women's career development happens in three separate, age-related phases. The model takes into account the impact of women's private life on women's career and what is their attitude towards their careers at each phase. In the first phase, women are 24–35 years old, motivated towards their careers and see their career as an opportunity to achieve something significant. In the second phase, women are between 36 and 45 years old and they have responsibilities and duties in both their professional and personal lives which is why their approach to their careers is more practical than in the first phase. They want new challenges and aspire to career development. Thus, they are ready to change organization if they are unable to fulfill their career aspirations in their current organization. In the third phase, women are between 46 and 60 years old. In this phase women have found a balance between their own requirements and those of the environment and are ready to work for their organization and for the people around them and achieve something significant. (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005.)

Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) have developed the ABC model of kaleidoscope careers of women, which also takes into account the impact of private life on a woman's career. According to the model, women's careers can be divided into three stages that reflect how women's attitudes toward challenges, balance, and authenticity for themselves vary throughout their careers. All of these are present throughout women's careers, but women emphasize these differently at

different stages of their careers. According to the model in the early stages of their careers, women emphasize challenges and pursue their career aspirations, whereas in their mid-careers, women emphasize a balance between work and family life, when in turn in their late career, women emphasize authenticity, while taking care of the balance and pursuing challenges. (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005.)

The findings of the study of O'Neil, Bilimoria and Saatcioglu (2004) indicate that women's careers are not undivided or random. According to O'Neil et al. (2004), careers are unique and women's career development cannot be described with only one model. Instead, there is an underlying structure to women's careers, which can be described by certain combinations of career loci and career patterns. Thus, according to the study, there are three different career types for women determined by a combination of ordered or emergent career models and internal or external career loci: accommodators, navigators and achievers, which are separated by the attitude of women towards their career, career satisfaction and career success. (O'Neil, Bilimoria & Saatcioglu, 2004. The different career development models of women presented above are summarized in table 2.

Table 2. The career development models of women

Model	Authors and date	Point of view	Definition
Three distinct career types of women: achievers, navigators and accommodators.	O'Neil, Bilimoria & Saatcioglu (2004)	Objective and/or subjective	The career types are determined by a combination of ordered or emergent career models and internal or external career loci: accommodators, navigators and achievers, which are separated by the attitude of women towards their career, career satisfaction and career success.
A three-phase, age-linked model of women's career development	O'Neil & Bilimoria (2005)	Objective and subjective	Career development happens in three separate, age-related phases, which are the idealistic achievement phase; the pragmatic endurance phase; and the reinventive contribution phase.
the ABC model of kaleidoscope careers of women	Mainiero & Sullivan (2005)	Objective and subjective	According to the model women focus on three parameters; authencity for themselves, balance and challenge, when making decisions about their career and emphasize these differently in different stages of their careers.

However, according to some researchers (e.g. Lämsä & Ekonen, 2007; Ekonen, 2011), the models discussed above portray women's career development too unilaterally, many of them focusing solely on harmonizing family and career. Although no specific model for women's career development has yet been developed, it is detected that there are certain factors that strongly influence women's career development. Because this paper focuses on women's career paths to the international leadership positions, the subject of the review are the factors that have been enticed to influence women's career development into these roles. This will be discussed next.

3.3 Factors Affecting Women's Careers

Most of the previous research concerning the factors affecting women's careers, focuses on obstacles women need to overcome in order to advance in their careers. According to several studies, organizational barriers still exist and in order for a woman to be able to advance in her career to the international leadership positions she must face and overcome these barriers (e.g. Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998; Adler, 1994; Adler & Izraeli, 1994; Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001; Linehan & Walsh, 2001; Varma & Stroh, 2001; Selmer & Leung, 2003; Hoyt & Simon, 2006; Linehan & Scullion, 2008; Woodall, 2011; Grodzicki & Varma, 2011; Fischlmayr & Puchmüller, 2016). Researchers are referring to the term glass ceiling, which is a metaphor for invisible barriers that are preventing women from advancing their careers (Festing, Knappert & Kornau, 2014).

The glass ceiling consists of various barriers that limit women's career development. In order to break it and getting an international leadership position, women need to be more ambitious, more qualified and more mobile than men. In addition, they need to work harder to get the position. (Linehan & Walsh, 2001, 88–89.) Many women have had to convince their leaders of their willingness and desire to participate in international assignments and in order to be selected to international assignments, women have to work harder than their male counterparts to prove their worth. Although women leaders would demonstrate their competence, they are offered international assignments only very rarely. (Linehan & Walsh, 2000.)

This chapter focuses on the factors affecting women's career and their career development to the international leadership positions either in a conducive or a hinder way. Thus, the chapter focuses on both the factors promoting and preventing women's careers and career development. These factors can be analyzed in four different levels and divided into four different categories, which are societal factors, organizational factors, interpersonal factors and personal factors (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Powell & Mainiero, 1992) (see figure 3.). Although the factors are divided into subchapters of their own, they are in some way related to each other, which is observed above, and can be seen in figure 3.
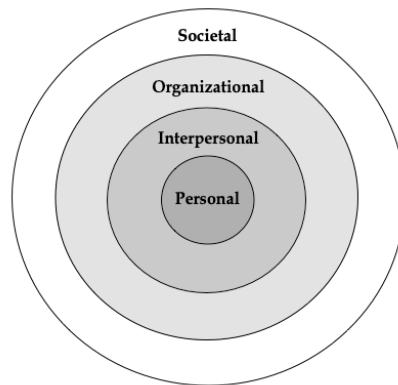
Figure 3. Factors affecting women's careers and their analysis levels.

3.3.1 Societal Factors

The career development of women is strongly influenced by the norms, values and stereotypes that are deeply rooted in the societies. For example, stereotypes about gender roles, socialization in gender roles, and prejudices are examples of the factors that are affecting women's career development and are difficult to change (Ekonen, 2007). Societal factors affect women's careers already when making the choice of profession but also later in working life (Puttonen, 2011).

Prejudices or assumed prejudices have been one of the strongest barriers in women's path making their career more international. There have been and still are stereotypical perceptions of women's abilities and qualifications which are affecting women's efforts to advance in their careers (Adler & Izraeli, 1994, 4) as have been discussed earlier in chapter 2. Furthermore, these capabilities may not be recognized or rewarded to the same extent as the same capabilities of men (Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998). Assumed prejudices have affected to women's career development since they started to pursue an international career (Adler, 1984). However, most often these assumptions have proved to be incorrect.

The findings of the study of Harris (2002) establish that despite the doubts of the home organization, women who have been on an international assignment did not encounter any prejudices from foreigners, as it was assumed. The main obstacles for their career development were assumptions about women's lack of qualifications by their home organizations, which made it difficult for women to progress in their career to these positions (Harris, 2002). Vance and McNulty (2014) support this position, arguing that men still have prejudices about women's success in international leadership positions, although women have proven such doubts wrong.

One of the strongest stereotypes rooted in society is the family roles of women and men, according to which a woman is a mother who takes care of family responsibilities while a man builds his career and thus acts as a breadwinner (Linehan & Walsh, 2001; Fischlmayr & Puchmüller, 2016). Hence, what comes to women's career, they may face higher social pressure to fulfil their responsibilities for their family and home. Stereotypes can also occur as a presumption of acceptable behavior of women as a mother and a wife (Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998). The findings of the study of Linehan and Walsh (2001) confirm that women are

still taking the main responsibility of the family and taking care of the children which makes it more difficult for them to progress in their career and expand it to be more international (2001, 89–90). Moreover, if a woman is working abroad for example because of an international assignment, she also needs to arrange family responsibilities such as childcare before, during and after her trip (Fischlmayr & Puchmüller, 2016). Thus, the family life continues to have a major impact on women's careers.

Lämsä (2011) remarks that women find spousal support important and meaningful for their career development. In turn, issues related to trailing spouse, that refers to the partner in the secondary professional role, who follows his or her spouse or partner abroad when he or she gets an international assignment, has been found to complicate women's career development (Linehan & Walsh, 2001). The research of Linehan and Walsh (2001) revealed that in opinion of women, it is harder to put male partner's career on hold because, according to the general norm, woman's career is not a priority, which is why women may refuse to pursue an international career (Linehan & Walsh, 2001). However, Shortland (2016) remarks that sometimes women's international assignments can be driven by the expatriation of their spouses or partners. For example, if a woman's spouse or a partner who is working in the same organization, is offered an international assignment and he or she accepts it and the woman is following him or her abroad, some organizations offer assignments for the trailing spouse also (Shortland, 2016). Hence, the spouse can influence and accelerate the career development of the other.

3.3.2 Organizational Factors

Organizational factors have a significant impact on women's career development. According to Adler (1994) late 1990s women leaders needed to encourage their organizations to provide international assignments for women. Linehan and Walsh (2000) found out that if a woman leader wants to apply for an international assignment and make her career more international, she needs to first prove herself in her organization to be selected. This study also revealed that women leaders may be considered to be as a greater risk as their male counterparts for their organizations while being on an international assignment. (Linehan & Walsh, 2000.)

Moore (2011) suggests that male senior managers may unknowingly experience being threatened by an ambitious woman which is why they may select an employee representing the same sex as themselves to the position of international leader. In this case the recruitment decision is guided by the subconscious prejudices (Moore, 2011, 197). Hence the recruitment decision is not a result of any systematic process. The findings of the study of Varma and Russell (2016) confirm the results of previous studies. According to their study the reason why there are still so few women leaders in international position is because there are still fewer women in leadership positions in general (Varma & Russell, 2016). Hence recruitment decisions are mostly made by men and most often they tend to choose a person of their own gender to the open position. The phenomenon is known as homosociality, which refers to favoring one gender over another.

(Hearn et al., 2015.) Thus, more women in leadership positions in general would further facilitate women's progression to leadership positions.

According to Selmer and Leung (2003) women receive less support in developing their careers from their organization than males do. Linehan & Walsh (2001) support this position and argue that women need more psycho-social support than their male counterparts but still they do not receive the same kind of organizational support as men. The findings of Selmer and Leung (2003) establish these results. Varma and Russell (2016) argue that perceived organizational support can have a significant impact on women's decision to apply for international assignments and how they succeed in these assignments. The study of Selmer and Leung (2003) revealed that organizations make career development activities less available to females than to their male counterparts but also that the careers of women who are in an international assignment are less appreciated than those of men (Selmer & Leung, 2003).

Furthermore, Linehan and Walsh (2000) argue that organizational norms favor employees without children and do not take into account the option of childbearing and child rearing, which puts women in a secondary position because they still have greater responsibility for home and family commitments. When organizations support childcare, they can have a positive impact on women's career development (Linehan & Walsh, 2000; Harris, 2002). The findings of the study of Shortland (2016) confirm these results. The study revealed that women saw international assignments as enabling them to combine their careers with motherhood, which was due to organizational international assignment policy supporting such issues as childcare, housing and travel to work (Shortland, 2016).

3.3.3 Interpersonal Factors

Women's career development is also strongly influenced by interpersonal factors. Interpersonal factors have both direct and indirect effects, for example, on many organizational level factors, such as in recruitment situations, but they are also strongly influenced by various societal level factors, such as the prejudices and stereotypes discussed above (Puttonen, 2006). Mentors, role models and networks are examples of interpersonal factors affecting to women's careers and career development. According to several studies (e.g. Kanter, 1977; Harris, 1993; Linehan & Walsh, 2000; Linehan & Scullion, 2008) all of these have a great impact on career development of women and the success of international assignments.

According to the study of Linehan and Scullion (2008) mentoring is particularly important for women's career development, because they need to encounter greater organizational obstacles in their career development than men. This study also suggests that effective mentoring for women leaders is even more important in the international leadership context than in domestic context (Linehan & Scullion, 2008). Moreover, Shortland (2014) remarks that mentors and role models have different roles in different stages of women's career. In the early stages of their careers, women can learn from them and follow in their footsteps, how to pursue an international career, while in the middle of their careers they can learn about the ways to combine international careers and family life. With

role models, individuals can learn knowledge and skills, identify the resources they need, and evaluate their own success. (Shortland, 2014.)

Also, effective networking and informal networks can have a great impact on women's career development. According to the study of Linehan and Walsh (2001) women leaders are lacking networks which their male counterparts have. The respondents of the study felt like they were isolated by their male colleagues because they were in a minority group. The lack of the networks affected for example to their career development, promotion and their salaries. (Linehan & Walsh, 2001, 93.) The findings from the studies of Harris (1993) and Linehan and Scullion (2008) confirm these results. Women do not have the access to the informal networks of the organization, which can influence promotion and acceptance inside the organization, because these networks are mainly represented by men (Harris, 1993; Linehan & Scullion, 2008). According to Puttonen (2006) this discrimination originates from prejudices and stereotypes against women at societal level which manifests itself as discrimination at the interpersonal level. The importance of informal networks is even greater when working abroad, given the absence of family and friends. (Shortland, 2014.) Thus, informal networks are an important support for a person who is working abroad.

As mentioned earlier, interpersonal relationships play a central role behind many organizational factors affecting to women's careers, like recruitment and promotion (Puttonen, 2011). The selection process has a major impact on the development of women to international leadership positions (Harris, 2002). The Leader-Member Exchange model (LMX), which was earlier known as the vertical dyad linkage model, was created to explain the relationship between a leader and an individual subordinate (member) and how these relationships are developed over time. In addition to this, it works as a measurement how individuals perceive their relationships with each other. (Varma & Stroh, 2001i.) According to the model, relationships between a leader and his or her subordinates are based on exchange of both parties. Leaders develop relationships of different stages with their subordinates and the stage is determined by the social exchange between a leader and each of his or her subordinates. Moreover, this stage determines how each subordinate is treated by the leader and for example can have an impact on performance ratings, promotions and other critical outcomes for subordinates. (Dansereau Jr., Graen & Haga, 1975; Grodzicki & Varma, 2011.)

According to Varma and Stroh (2001i) high-quality relationships can lead to higher levels of supervisor guidance and support, higher levels of subordinate performance and satisfaction, lower levels of subordinate turnover and above all, better quality of assignments, which also support the results of the study of Dansereau Jr. et al (1975). On the contrary, low-quality relationships can lead lower levels of subordinate performance and satisfaction, higher levels of subordinate turnover, supervisory control and directives and less desired assignments (Varma & Stroh, 2001i). The findings in the study of Varma and Stroh (2001ii) confirm that there are significant positive relationships between interpersonal affect and LMX but also between receiving high LMX scores and high-performance ratings. Thus, LMX theory may explain permanent differences in male-female career patterns and also impacts on the selection of the employees for the assignments, for example for the international assignments (Varma & Stroh, 2001ii).

The research of Varma and Stroh (2001i) remarks that female subordinates with the high LMX are offered international assignments and nearly every one of them perceived assignments as a positive experience (Varma & Stroh, 2001i). Based on this study the correlation between high LMX and the selection for international assignments is high and gender has a significant impact of the quality of LMX, in other words, to the supervisor-subordinate relationship. Thus, the relationship between an employee and his or her employer can have a major impact on an individual's career progression to international roles and this can be influenced by the gender of the individual.

3.3.4 Personal Factors

The factors discussed earlier in this chapter have a great impact also on individual level factors. For example, the choice of education or profession is greatly influenced by societal factors, whereas organizational and interpersonal factors affect to the decisions of women related to, for example, family and career (Puttonen, 2006). However, this subchapter examines women's personal characteristics, qualities and other personal factors that influence to women's careers and career development.

Personality traits of an individual have a major influence already on the choices of education and profession but also strongly influence an individual's career development (Ragins & Sundsrom, 1989). The findings of the study of Ragins and Sundsrom (1989) indicate that women may choose their education and profession according to what is expected to be appropriate for their gender. Therefore, women's career is already influenced by social factors when deciding the choice of education. Although, a woman is educated in a field that supports a career in leadership, career development can be interrupted when a woman specializes in a task that is typical for women and there are no further career opportunities (Ragins & Sundsrom, 1989). Often women are also assumed to be less motivated towards their careers than men. However, these assumptions are often due to the fact that women make different decisions about their careers than men, because, for example family issues concern especially women and affect to women's careers (Powell & Mainiero, 1992). As discussed above, women are still taking the main responsibility of the family and taking care of the children which also has a great impact on their career development.

According to Ragins & Sundsrom (1989) the career development of women can also be greatly affected by their lack of confidence. As a result, women may underestimate their own knowledge and abilities and thus settle for a job instead of building a career (Ragins & Sundsrom, 1989). However, according the study of Mathur-Helm (2002) women are not allowing their gender to restrict them anymore but they are equipping themselves with the knowledge, skills and abilities to succeed internationally. As Adler (1984) discovered already back in the 1980s, the general assumption has been that women are not interested in international careers, which is one of the reasons why there are so few women in international leadership positions. However, like back then, this assumption has been proven to be incorrect. The findings from the study of Harris (2002) confirm results from previous research studies (see e.g. Adler, 1984; Adler, 1993; Harris, 1993; Adler &

Izraeli, 1994) about the fact that women are highly interested in pursuing international career. The findings of the study of Vance & McNulty (2014) establish these results. Based on their study women are highly interested in working abroad and do not let a variety of obstacles to slow them down when pursuing international assignments (Vance & McNulty, 2014).

According to the study of Shortland (2016) many women are pursuing international assignments because of career development related reasons. International assignments provide for example opportunities for learning and skills development, independence and diverse work, which are believed to help in career development (Shortland, 2016). Thus, the findings of this study establish that women may emphasize subjective factors more when building their careers and that international assignments can be seen as career development factors. Thus, as discussed in this chapter, although it was previously assumed that women were not interested in working in international leadership positions this assumption, as well as many other assumptions about women's motivation or ability to work in international leadership positions has been proven to be false by various researchers.

4 RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA

In this chapter the research method and the data of this study will be presented. The chapter introduces the theory of conducting and analyzing a research, while describing how this study was conducted and analyzed. In addition, the chapter justifies the choices of research and analysis methods and how the reliability, validity and ethics of the research have been maintained throughout the research process.

4.1 Qualitative Research

There are two main research methodologies for the empirical research: quantitative and qualitative methodology. Often these two methodologies have been considered as opposites of each other and their differences have been compared by numerous researchers over the years. However, recently researchers have started to see them also as complementary to each other. (Hirsjärvi et. al, 2003, 123–125; Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2006, 21.) In general, quantitative research is based on objectivity and aims to produce statistically generic results, whereas the aim of the qualitative research is to describe, illustrate and understand a phenomenon or a case (Hirsjärvi et. al, 2003, 129–157) and its perspective is more subjective (Eskola & Suoranta, 2008). Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2008) confirm these observations. Furthermore, Eskola and Suoranta (2008) as well as Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2008) argue that the method of the research should be chosen according to the problem or phenomenon that is being examined. Hereby the choice of methodology is affected by the questions to which the research seeks to find answers to.

Because the purpose of this study was to examine women's experiences in their paths to the international leadership positions, it was decided to apply qualitative research method in the study, because of its better suitability. As qualitative research in general (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2008, 28), this study aims to understand people's experiences and their views, and to empathize with their stories, thoughts and feelings. As a qualitative study this study also represents the phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition of philosophy that focuses on the individual's experiences, meanings and community. Thus, the purpose of this study is to interpret the unique experiences of an individual that are influenced by his or her own values and meanings.

According to phenomenological meaning theory the individual's actions are intentional and they are strongly influenced by the meanings created by the individual, which originate from the community in which he or she has grown up and to which she or he belongs to (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2008, 34–36). Thus, I try to interpret the stories and experiences of women leaders through the meanings created by the influence of their community. Furthermore, as in general in phenomenological-hermeneutic research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2008, 35), I try to bring out in this paper what is experienced but not consciously thought or something that is self-evident, or a habit has made unnoticeable.

According to Hirsjärvi et. al (2003) qualitative research is a flexible, comprehensive information acquisition, in which the target group of the study is carefully selected (2003, 155). As in general in a qualitative study, a small number of interviewees were selected for this study. For the purpose of the study, the selection criteria for the interviewees was that they were women and that they had experience working in international leadership positions. One of the key issues for qualitative research is participation (Eskola & Suoranta, 2008). Hence, the most commonly used methods in the qualitative research are interviews that can be used to examine the perspectives, experiences and observations of the subjects (Hirsjärvi et. al, 2003, 155).

There are a number of types of interviews and they are usually differentiateed according to how structured and formal they are. Structured interview or form interview is fully structured and executed with pre-defined questions in a specific order. Frequently, the interviewee is given also the answer options. In turn, unstructured interview, is conducted freely by discussing about a specific topic without pre-defined questions. (Hirsjärvi et. al, 2003, 194–197; Ruusuvuori & Tiittula, 2005, 10–12.) In this study data was collected by semi-structured interviews which will be discussed next.

4.2   Semi-structured Interview as a Data Collection Method

The object of the interest in this study was women's subjective experiences about their careers and their career development to the international leadership positions. Hence the data for the study was collected by semi-structured interviews of women leaders who were working in international leadership positions. In general, the interview is an interactive situation which can provide detailed information about the interviewee's personal experiences, views and observations (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2006, 41–43). Thus, it can provide unique information about the issue being studied but on the other hand, as noted by Ruusujärvi and Tiittula (2005) the interaction of the interview is part of producing information and the interviewer can have a great impact on the answers received.

In this study semi-structured theme interviews were used as a data source. As in general in theme interviews (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2006, 48), the themes of the interview had been decided beforehand, but the form and order of the questions varied between the interviews. In this kind of interview, it is important that instead of pre-defined questions the interviewer ensures that certain themes are discussed with each interviewee (Eskola & Suoranta, 2008). This releases the interview from the perspective of the researcher and brings out the perspective of the interviewee for the research (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2006, 48). By conducting interviews as semi-structured theme interviews, it enabled the interviewee the freedom to share her thoughts and experiences as freely and as broadly as she wanted but in such a way that certain topics, that were relevant to the research were discussed with everyone. However, in a way that it minimized the influence of the researcher on the results obtained.

The interview frame (The Appendix 1) was prepared to conduct the interviews in order to ensure that all the key topics will be discussed with each interviewee. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, but for the purposes of this paper, the interview frame has been translated into English. The interviews consisted of two parts. The first part focused on the back-ground information of the interviewees regarding their age, marital status, education and the current professional title, in order to obtain an overall view of who the interviewees were as individuals. The second part consisted of six open questions representing themes that were the objects of the interest in this study. These questions focused on the factors that have influenced to the choice of education, career development, combining family and career, thoughts about leadership and about sexuality in an international context and the future prospects regarding career of the interviewee. These themes were chosen because the study was interested in how women have reached international leadership positions and the interviews were aimed at examining all the factors that have affected to the career paths as broadly as possible.

When preparing the questions, the aim was that the interviewee would not be guided in any direction with the questions, but that she would have the freedom to share her own thoughts and experiences as broadly as she wanted. Furthermore, more specific support questions were prepared to facilitate the progress of the interview but only if it would be necessary. Considerable attention was paid to the formulation of the questions because the interviewer's influence on the responses wanted to be minimized as it is often recommended by several researchers (Ruusuvuori & Tiittula, 2005, 51–56).

4.3   Implementation of Interviews

Because this study focused on women leaders with experience in leadership in an international context, this greatly limited the choice of potential interviewees. To find interviewees a number of organizations that operate internationally in various fields were contacted to find out if they had someone in their organization who would be suitable for the study and willing to participate in the interview. The aim was to find women with experience in international leadership positions different from each other and that they would be in different phases in their careers. Thus, the interviewees were not assigned a lower or upper age limit or a limit on the stage of their career, because this was believed to increase the variability and thus the reliability of the research. After a number of contacts, several women leaders who were interested in participating in the study were reached and five of them were selected for the study as they were suitable for the research based on their work experience. In addition to this, with the help of social media two women who were also working in international leadership positions were reached and selected to the study.

The interviews were conducted during March 2019. The interviewees were informed beforehand about the topics in general that would be discussed during the interview and for one of the interviewees the questions were delivered in

advance at her request. In practice the interviews were conducted according to the wishes and schedules of the interviewees, in person in one case, on the phone in one case and on Skype in five cases. All interviews were conducted as individual interviews. Five of the interviewees were working in Finland at the moment and two were working abroad. The duration of the interviews varied from 41 to 81 minutes and they all were digitally recorded of which the interviewees were aware. All the interviews were conducted in Finnish.

While conducting the interviews, I tried to keep my role as a neutral listener as it is often recommended by several researchers (Ruusuvuori & Tiittula, 2005, 44–50), so that the study would only include the thoughts of the interviewees. The same interview frame was used with each interviewee. However, all of the interviews took different forms and proceeded differently. I took care of that all the topics relevant to the research were discussed with each interviewee. All the interviewees seemed very enthusiastic about participating in the research and widely shared their thoughts and experiences about the subjects discussed. At the end of each interview, the interviewees were given the opportunity to add something related to the topics discussed or outside of the topics, in which almost every interviewee seized with enthusiasm.

All the interviewees selected to the study were Finnish. Two of them were working abroad at the moment in different countries and the rest of them were working in international leadership positions in Finland. All the interviewees were working in different organizations and they had experience in different roles and in different fields in the international context. All the interviewees represented different positions and different functions in their organizations, but all of them worked in international leadership roles. Their ages varied from 29 to 54, thus they were at different stages of their careers, which diversified the results significantly and brought interesting perspectives to the research. Six of the interviewees were married and had children while one of the interviewees was unmarried and had no children, which also brought a different perspective to the research. The interviewees are presented in table 3. However, to protect the identity of the interviewees, their names, organizations, cities or countries, that they work in will not be revealed in this study. In table 3, the industry of the organizations is defined with the help of Standard Industrial Classification TOL 2008 of Statistics Finland (Statistics Finland, 2008). The industries are defined only in general terms so that the organizations of the interviewees cannot be identified and thus the identity of the interviewees would remain anonymous.

Table 3. Presentation of the interviewees

Inter-viewee	Age	Marital Status	Working years	Industry	Professional Title
I	54	Married	<30	Manufacturing	Executive Vice President, Communication's Marketing and Investor Relations
II	36	Married	<15	Manufacturing	Insight Manager
III	42	Married	<25	Administrative and support service activities	Director of Global Sales
IV	29	Unmarried	<5	Professional, scientific and technical activities	Group Sustainability Manager
V	39	Married	15	Administrative and support service activities	Group CSO
VI	47	Married	<20	Financial and insurance activities	Vice President, the Head of International Services
VII	41	Married	15	Manufacturing	Export Director

To protect the privacy of the participants in this study, their answers have been treated and presented in a mixed order in the findings chapter. They have been presented in a way that none of the participants' stories can be compiled from the participants' responses. In addition to this, when I provide excerpts from interviews in the findings chapter, I have chosen randomly a letter or a number for each participant that I benefit when I provide excerpts from interviews. In the first subchapter I have chosen randomly a capital letter between A-G, in the second a number between 1–7, in the third a letter between a-g for each research participants. Thus, I ensure that the identity of the participants in the study will not be revealed by their answers and that the excerpts cannot be used to compile the story of any of the participants.

4.4   Analysis of Data

After each interview, I verified that the interview was recorded successfully by listening the interview from the recording. The interview was then transcribed and then re-listened to a few more times to ensure the transcription was complete. After listening and reading the material several times, it started to become very familiar and I began to make observations about interviews that I had not noticed in the interview situation. Thus, the analysis of the data started immediately after each interview.

The purpose of the analysis is to create clarity and new information on the subject being studied (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 100). There are several ways to conduct a qualitative analysis of which researcher should choose the one in which he or she can best find the answer to the research problem or research task (Hirsjärvi et. al, 2003, 219; Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2006, 152). The most common methods of analysis in qualitative research are thematic analysis, typology, content analysis, discourse analysis and discussion analysis (Hirsjärvi et. al, 2003, 219). I considered many options when choosing the method of an analysis, but the more I worked with my material, the more convinced I was that content analysis and thematic analysis together would be the best and most versatile methods to answer questions which I was looking for answers with this study.

According to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2018, 103) content analysis is a text analysis that examines text format material or material modified to such form, as in this case of transcribed interviews. Content analysis aims to find humane meanings from the text (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 103) thus, it supports well also the phenomenological-hermeneutical interests of this study. Moreover, it provides a concise description of the phenomenon under study, linking the results to other research findings on the phenomenon and to the wider context of the phenomenon (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 103–104). Content analysis allows me to interpret the answers of the research participants, what they say, what they mean and how these are influenced by the experiences of individuals and the meanings they create by themselves. Content analysis can be conducted either material-driven, theory-driven or theory-based where in the first analysis is based on the material, in the second the analysis is based on theoretical framework and in the third theoretical framework only guides the analysis but does not directly define the analysis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 103–117), as in this study.

While reading and analyzing the material I noticed three main themes that emerged from the answers of the participants of this study. In thematic analysis, when analyzing material, the aim is to find features that are common to several participants of the study. These features may be based on the themes of the theme interview and the material may lead to entirely new themes (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 126; Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2006, 173.) Furthermore, Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018) note that by thematic analysis, observations of material can be chopped up and grouped into different themes (2018, 93). Thus, while performing content analysis, I made observations and interpretations of the material. After which, I utilized thematic analysis to divide these findings into three main themes, under which I formed several sub-themes, which repeated in the responses of research

participants. The main themes that emerged in the material of this study were construction of women's career path, factors affecting women's careers and future prospects of women leaders, that can be found in the findings chapter as their own subchapters. Below these, I have compiled the observations of the sub-themes into their own sub-chapters. Thus, the answers will be presented as a group of answers based on the same theme.

4.5 Reliability, Validity and Ethics of Research

The assessment of the reliability of a study and the means for its implementation depend on whether the study is qualitative or quantitative. Traditionally the assessment is done by reliability and validity. Reliability of a study refers to the reproducibility of measurement results whereas validity refers to the ability of research method or a meter to measure exactly what it is intended to measure (Hirsjärvi et. al, 2003, 226–227). Because these terms are often associated with quantitative research, their use has often been criticized or even been recommended to be avoided in a qualitative research (Hirsjärvi et. al, 2003, 227; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 136). However, the terms can be used when applied to the context of qualitative research (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2006, 188).

In a qualitative research, the concept of validity can be divided into external and internal validity. Internal validity refers to the concordance between theoretical and conceptual definitions of research, with which the researcher can demonstrate the researcher's competence in his or her discipline, whereas external validity refers to the validity of the relationship between conclusions, interpretations and the data. In turn, the concept of reliability refers to the interpretation of the data in qualitative research. The study is said to be reliable when the interpretation of the data does not contain contradictions. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 154.)

When evaluating the reliability of qualitative research, it is important to evaluate the whole research process and its implementation. Since the researcher is the central research tool of his or her own research and thus plays a central role in the reliability of his or her research (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 152), the reliability of the study is enhanced by the researcher's accurate description of the implementation of the study (Hirsjärvi et. al, 2003, 227). Firstly, it would be important for the researcher to explain what he or she is researching and why this particular topic is important to him or her (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 140).

When conducting a research, it should be taken into consideration that the researcher influences the results of his or her research already at the data collection stage (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2006, 189). This refers to the method of data collection and the technique of data collection as well as how successful these choices and their implementation were in terms of the topic of the study and research questions. Furthermore, the reliability of the research is influenced by the participants of the research, the relationship between the researcher and the participants and the researcher's interpretations of the participants' responses. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 140–141.) In addition to this, researcher should review

and interpret his or her data comprehensively, stating the reasons on which his conclusions are based.

The quality and reliability of the study are also strongly related to the ethics of the study. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018) the relationship between research and ethics can be seen as twofold. On the one hand, the results of research influence ethical decisions, while on the other, ethical positions influence the decisions made by the researcher in his or her research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 125). In human sciences, ethical issues are present at every stage of research. Indeed, the most important ethical principles are related to informing, consent and protection of anonymity of participants of the research, confidentiality and professionalism of a researcher and legitimacy of a research. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2006, 19–20.)

From the beginning, as a fledgling researcher, I realized that I would need some help with my research, so that I could do a research that answers the questions I was interested in finding answers to, and that the results would be reliable and valid. Therefore, I started doing my research by reviewing a large body of literature on how to do a research and what should be taken into consideration for a successful research and reliable results. I understood from the very beginning my own open subjectivity, which refers to my own choices and interpretations that influence my research results (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 152) and I tried to maximize my own objectivity, while doing research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 135).

In order to improve reliability of my study, I have tried to describe my research and its implementation, the collection of the data as well as its analysis as comprehensively as possible as well as considered the factors that may have contributed to its implementation. I understood my own weaknesses as a fledgling researcher, which is why I relied heavily on the literature to overcome these shortcomings and minimize their impact on research results. Furthermore, I trusted the professionalism of my instructor, when asking her for instructions on how to proceed with the study. I have sought to explain as precisely as possible the passage of my research, the choices and limits I have made and why I have made them, so that the reader could follow and evaluate the progress of my study, all the way from introduction to conclusions.

In the analysis phase, I realized that, as with human scientific data in general, the data can be interpreted in a multiple ways (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 157) and interpretation may be influenced by, for example, the researcher's gender, age, nationality, and many other personal characteristics (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 136). Since I am the creator of the study design and its interpreter, I understand that I have some influence on the research results. However, I have tried to analyze the evidence impartially (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 136) as I was also trying to adhere to the ethics of science (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, 125) and sought to bring to the study only the voice of those who participated in the study. When conducting the analysis, I strived to ensure the validity of the research by analyzing specifically women's career paths to international leadership roles and the factors that had influenced their career development to these roles so that the study would focus on exactly what the study was originally interested in. In addition to this, I have explained the basis on which I propose my interpretations

and what are the basis for my conclusions (Hirsjärvi et. al, 2003, 228), which is why I have also presented direct excerpts from the interviews in the findings chapter, so that the reader could interpret and evaluate whether I have managed to interpret my material in a reliable way.

Furthermore, I have tried to take into account the ethical issues in every stage of my study to the best of my ability. As I first examined the subject for my study and finally chose it, I received approval from my supervisor for it. In addition to this, I reviewed a literature and accomplished a course in my university on how to do a research to help me understand what should be taken into account when conducting a research that follows ethical principles. When searching for interviewees for my research, I informed potential interviewees about the topic of my research in general and how I was about to conduct interviews already in the interview invitation.

If the person was interested in participating in the study, I explained in more detail what the interviews would be about and how they would be conducted. In addition, I provided each interviewee with a research consent form, which gave more details about the study and where and how I would use the interviews. With this form, I also promised to take care of the privacy and anonymity of the participants in the study, which I have taken care of always from conducting interviews and analyzing responses to the reporting part. The identity of the participants in the study is only my knowledge and no one else has been able to listen the interviews or read the transcripts.

Each interviewee had to agree and sign the research consent form so that I could use the interviewee's answers in my research. There are two identical forms for both the research participant and me. In the analysis phase of the research I strived to analyze the data objectively and to verify my interpretations I provide excerpts from the interviews in a way the identity of the participants in the study will not be revealed. Thus, I have tried my best to follow ethical guidelines for the implementation of my study.

5 FINDINGS

In this chapter the findings from the analysis of the data will be presented. The chapter is divided into three subchapters, that describe the three main themes that emerged in the material. Furthermore, these subchapters have been divided into several subchapters which describe the sub-themes that emerged in the material. The first subchapter explores how women's career paths were constructed, followed by the second subchapter focusing on factors that have influenced women's careers and career development to the international leadership positions. Finally, the chapter examines the future prospects of women in international leadership positions.

As mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, all the interviews were conducted in Finnish and thus the excerpts of the interviews presented in this chapter have been translated from Finnish to English by me, the researcher. Thus, it is important to notice that the excerpts are not necessarily word for word what the research participants have said in the interview situation due to language differences. However, I have endeavored to translate the excerpts in such a way that they correspond as closely as possible what the participants in the study have said and meant, to make the findings of the study as reliable as possible.

5.1 Construction of Women's Career Paths

5.1.1 Goal-oriented Students

Because I wanted to get a comprehensive understanding of the career paths of women, I found it relevant to go back in time all the way to the participants' youth and consider the factors that may have influenced their careers. Thus, all the participants began to reminisce their youth. With the exception of one participant, each of the them told that they were very keen students and had been very successful in their studies ever since primary school.

> I was… Like a really keen student at school and I liked getting good grades and… ---
> I was, like, really motivated. (E)

> Actually, I've always experienced studying really easy, it never felt like, hard or anything, vice versa… (D)

> Studying has always been, like, easy and fun and... I did really well at school. (G)

Thus, almost all the women participated in the study had experienced their studies facile and had been very motivated and successful already in school life. The only one, who had not been as eager student as others, did still quite well at school but had been more interested in things other than studying, which was reflected in her grades.

> I was like average, never best in class, but if I've ever wanted something or if I had any interest… --- It's more about that attitude, how much you wanna invest in something… Than ability. (A)

Thus, she also invested in and was putting effort to things that she was interested in. When choosing the field of study most of the participants told that they were led by their interests but also by employment opportunities. Because of the fairly wide age range of the women, they had been in very different situations when choosing the field of study in which case external pressures may have played a significant role to the selection decision. However, a few of the participants had been highly goal-oriented and ambitious already in their youth, when choosing the field of study. Therefore, they had chosen their field of study on the basis of what could help them advance to the furthest.

> Somehow, I always had this thought that… I'm going to the high school, so in a way I didn't even have an opportunity to go to vocational school. And… And from high school straight to the university, so the university of applied sciences wasn't the option for me, so in a way, I always wanted to go there from where you could go to the furthest. (D)

When considering the reasons for choosing their field of study, a few participants imparted that their parents had had a great impact on what field of study the participants had chosen. In the case of one participant, her studies had taken her directly to the international path where her parents had also first studied and subsequently worked.

> My parents have been working in international positions, so in a way they have set a certain kind of example. --- They [her parents] have a university degree, so in a certain way they assumed that I will gravitate to a similar… Similar career path. (G)

Thus, internationality had always been present in her life and perhaps by the example and impact of her parents, she began pursuing an international career already from school life when choosing the field of study. The other women participated in the study had considered an international career while studying, but they had not studied in fields that would have taken them directly to an international career. One of the participants was very grateful for that her parents had influenced her educational decision, because she told that she might have chosen another field herself and would not necessarily have continued her studies as far without the encouragement of her parents.

> I have been extremely thankful for that. --- It was always clear that the kids would go to high school and then to the university… --- It had to be a university degree and then you could do whatever you wanna do. (A)

Thus, parents can have an influence on the type of career path an individual is pursuing. Other participants' parents were not highly educated and had worked in very different fields compared to them. However, their parents had always encouraged them to acquire education and attached a great importance to education, which may also be due to the fact that the parents themselves did not have

the opportunity to acquire education in their youth, taking into account the age range of the parents of the participants.

> I come from a working-class family and… --- They've always encouraged to it [to acquire an education] and the education has always been seen as very important. --- It has been seen that education enables a lot there, in working life. (D)

The women participated in this study had been very motivated already in school life and succeeded well in their studies. In addition to this, their parents had supported them to acquire higher education and in the case of a few participants their parents had had a significant impact on their educational choices and thus contributed to the field in which they are currently working. One of the participants had always wanted to work in international positions, which is why she had applied for a school that supported an international career. The other women participated in the study had ended up in an international career through their jobs in working life, which will be discussed next.

5.1.2 Manifold Career Development of Women

The career paths of women participated in the study were unique, but there were also similarities in them. If the career development is considered objectively, two career development models could be identified from the data; linear in four cases and multidirectional in three cases. I describe career development as linear if the development has been a vertical movement, upwards in an organization's hierarchy within one or more organization. If the career development is described as multidirectional, then the development was either horizontal; in which case after the change of a job, individual worked in a position of the same level as in the previous one, vertical or even backwards, in which case after the change of a job the individual's new position was lower than the previous one in organizational level.

Four of the women had advanced in their careers upwards in an organization's hierarchy within one or more organizations every time they had moved from one job to another. Thus, their career development can be described as linear. In addition to the linear model, multidirectional career development model could be identified from the data. Thus, three of the research participants had progressed in their careers either vertically, in which case they had worked in a higher position after the change of job or horizontally, when they had worked in similar position, or even lower positions after the change of a job. Although some of the participants had worked in lower level positions after the change of job, this change had helped them to reach even higher positions in the long run.

All of the women participated in the study had been working ever since they were young, for example one of the women had their first job at the age of 11. Moreover, all the women were united by the fact that they had always been highly motivated employees, they had extensive work experience in a variety of roles and positions with the aim of developing themselves and they all highly valued work. Furthermore, the women emphasized subjective factors such as self-development in their careers, which will be discussed more in the next subchapter.

With the exception of one participant, each participant had been on a maternity leave during their careers or unemployed, as they wanted to change the organization, sector or country where they worked. Thus, their careers could also be described as fragmented. According to all of the women, maternity leave had not had an effect on their career development. However, after starting the family, the women had taken into consideration their family when making decisions about their career.

> At some point we noticed that our family was starting to grow and that was the situation for me… Or I needed to think, if I continued to work in (a city) in a job like this or would I have to come up with something else… And so, it turned out that I had to come up with something else. (F)

> --- This was a clear step down for me in my career… But I had a little... 11–12-month-old baby at home so I thought, hmm… Maybe this might be a temporary solution for me now… (A)

Thus, even though the participants did not feel that maternity leave had an impact on their career development, after having children, they had emphasized new factors when making decisions about their careers. Although, in the last excerpt above, the participant had moved to a position lower at the organization level than her previous position, she accepted the position as she was able to advance to a higher organizational level through this position.

As above, the career development can be considered objectively, in addition to which career development can also be viewed subjectively. When career development is examined subjectively, the career development is not tied to a change of job that moves individual from one organizational level to another. Instead, career development can be understood as, for example, self-development (Powell & Mainiero, 1992). Because the study participants were of different ages and at different stages of their careers, they considered their career and career development from very different perspectives. Moreover, it could be observed that women emphasized and had emphasized different things at different stages of their careers.

When discussing about the early stages of their careers, women had pursued new challenges and aspirations that had taken them forward in their careers. The early stages of women's careers were full of new challenges, major changes, and reaching their own career goals, through which women were searching for themselves and their own interests related to their careers. In the early stages of their careers, most women strived to develop themselves as people and employees and tried a variety of tasks in search of what would interest them. In addition to this, many had put more emphasis on objective variables in their careers in the early stages of their careers. One of the research participants, who was still in the early stages of her career had always been highly determined and after only a few years in working life, she had already achieved her career goals that she had set for herself during her studies.

> So, this is like the dream job, that I was thinking during my studies, like what you could do… (B)

Most women had started working in an international context right from the early stages of their careers. Many of the women participated in the study had built almost their entire careers in international organizations, moving from one position to another all the way to the international leadership positions. As mentioned before, the early stages of their careers were full of change and pursuit of dreams and they were willing to take risks to achieve their aspirations. At that time a few women had moved abroad to work and started to build their careers in an international context.

> My husband and I, we thought that it would be really nice to go abroad and… And maybe focus more on, like, what you have studied and then we… We had friends in [a country] then in a way through that we ended up there and we moved to [a country] for three years and then I got a job there too. (G)

Thus, the early stages of women's careers were very eventful, and most women had already started working in international positions back then. In turn, in their mid-career women emphasized something other than changes and challenges. In their mid-career, when they already had experience in a variety of tasks, and had advanced to the international leadership positions, women pursued to find a balance between their careers and personal lives. At that time women had small children, which affected, among other things, that they wanted to spend more time with their family and thus, they were not currently looking for new, major challenges in their careers like before. Instead, they pondered what they would want to achieve in the future.

> I know that now I'd have the capabilities for it [to move to the next organization level], but then again, it's also your choice, like… At what point you should go for it… Because, on the other hand, at this point when the kids are small, it's like wisdom to focus on that and enjoy this moment. (D)

Women who had been building their careers for a long time and were in their late careers, imparted that during their maternity leave and the time, when they were perhaps more focused on their private lives than their careers, they had time to think about what they wanted to do in the future. Indeed, the mid-career had been a turning point for many, and after that women had began to pursue new challenges again. For many, this meant either furthering their studies, changing jobs, or moving to a whole new organization level. In their late career, women wanted to do things where they were able to influence things and that challenged them, and where they felt they were still developing as people and employees. In addition to this, the most important factor was that they enjoyed working and were able to give something to their organization.

> You have to be like honest with yourself. An honesty like that is really important. Otherwise, you don't have the energy for it [to work], you don't feel up to it…You need to have the motivation and the suction, you know, for that what you're doing, whatever it is. (F)

Thus, women's career development had been very diverse and depending on the perspective from which the careers are viewed, different career development models could be observed from the data. Many of the women had started their

careers in international organizations or had moved to such organizations in the early stages of their careers and thus had worked throughout their careers in an international context. Each of the women had moved to international leadership positions by their mid-careers, at the latest. Although some similarities were found in women's career development, it would have been impossible to form a reliable age-stage model of their career development, as their career development differed so much from each other. Instead, women were found to emphasize subjective variables in their career development and their career development was based on the fact that they had always wanted to develop themselves and through this they had progressed to very significant roles in their careers. Next, the factors that have had an impact on women's careers and career development will be examined.

5.2 Factors Influencing Women's Career Development to the International Leadership Positions

5.2.1 Career Development Comes from One's Own Work Contribution

Most of the women had progressed to higher positions in their careers because they were interested in learning new knowledge and skills and gaining work experience in a variety of tasks to develop themselves. Furthermore, many of them had decided to change jobs just because they wanted to grow and develop themselves and through this, they had advanced in their careers. Thus, women who participated in the study focused more on subjective variables when evaluating their career success, and what had pushed them forward in their careers was their constant desire to develop themselves as people and employees. Most of the women mentioned employee's market value on several occasions and they had sought to increase their market value by, for example, studying or gaining work experience abroad. Indeed, some of the women had furthered their studies during their careers, for example during their maternity leave, so that they were able to maintain their skills and knowledge, thus secured their opportunities for a more diverse career in the future.

When discussing more about their career development, three main factors emerged that had had a positive impact on their career development to international leadership positions, these were their own work contribution, the right place and the right time, and the right people around them. However, every one of the women noted that the most important factor that has helped them to advance in their careers was their own work contribution and because of that, their competence and potential had been recognized, through which they had advanced in their careers.

> Perhaps what has helped the most is that you do your job properly… Because… Somehow people hear that okay there is this and this kind of person working and… We are interested in getting her here to work with us. So… So, in a way it's always that… That you do your best. (5)

> So, in a way by chance, I must say, like I was in the right place at the right time… --- But of course, I took care of my own responsibilities well… So, it wasn't just luck, but there were the right time and the right people around me, that it [advancement to a higher position] happened. (3)

Almost every woman imparted that their career advancement had been furthered and accelerated by their own supervisors or executives who had helped them to advance in their careers, for example by giving them more responsible roles or recommending them to new roles where they could better utilize their potential.

> --- I saw those [an organization's] leaders a lot and then they learnt that maybe she [herself] knows something and that's how they could recommend me to this post… So, I don't think that I'd have got here, like, without the recommendation of an influential person. (3)

> All of them [previous leaders] have seen the potential in me and they've got me opportunities… They have definitely contributed to the fact that I'm in this position. (2)

> --- some superior had seen the potential in me and then he/she has given me like bigger boots, that I had before… --- And then I've, indeed, received a confidence… And I've got to try out even the craziest ideas, hahah. (7)

In addition to this, one of the women highlighted the importance of the contact network in their careers. She told that the contact networks she had made in working life had had a great impact on her career advancement.

> It has helped a lot, let's say that, the last two jobs I've got with the help or persuasion of old colleagues or… With the help of their hinting… --- It's like… A lot of people want to work with people they know and if you know someone is good at something, you easily recommend him/her somewhere or you wanna take him/her with you if you go somewhere. (4)

Furthermore, one of the women also pointed out the importance of career planning and presenting these plans to one's supervisor or a leader, so that one's career aspirations and visions do not remain just those, aspirations and visions.

> If you wanna advance in your career and in addition fast, then you need to have like the courage to suggest such thoughts you're dreaming of, like what you could do, because if you never speak about them out loud, then they're unlikely to come true and then you'll become satisfied with, so to speak, what you do today. But then that little bit of dissatisfaction or like, always looking a little bit to the future, what you could do or what you really dream about what you'll do. --- It's not just about having the perfect know-how, but also having the courage to try and suggest new things. (3)

Thus, although the participants highlighted the impact of the recommendations of previous colleagues and supervisors or leaders on their career development, the most important factors in their career development to the international leadership positions had been their own motivated attitude towards work, their burning desire to influence things and the opportunity to exploit their own potential in working life by advancing in their careers.

5.2.2 Determined and Enabling Leaders

As discussed earlier, the women participated in the study had been highly motivated and determined since their youth. The same characteristics had remained with them throughout their careers; almost all of the women imparted to be highly motivated towards their work, partly career oriented and they had always been willing to influence things. In addition to this they had always been interested in developing themselves and acquiring new knowledge and skills. Furthermore, they greatly enjoyed working and work was more than work to them. They believed that it was these characteristics that have also helped them to advance in their careers to the international leadership positions and also helped them to succeed in these positions.

> Working has always been very important to me. --- It has always been a really important counterweight to everything else. Although I've had very tough times on a personal level, always, when I've got to the office, it's been somehow like a wonderful Eden Manor for me. When I've come through the office doors all those worries have somehow gone away. Then I can be most effective, I can make things happen. I can influence so many things with my own behavior, my own work. I love it when… I've made some changes and improvements and I've got strategies and whatsoever… And when you see that YAY! Our entire company has gone in that direction and we've done like this, and this has now been achieved and that has been achieved… (2)

As discussed earlier in the previous chapter, women had ended up in an international career along different paths. However, each of them had been interested in working in an international context and thus began to build an international career. Most of the participants believed that they would always work in international positions and some of them even believed that they would no longer be able to work in a domestic organization that operates exclusively in their home country, because the disparities in practices between international and domestic organizations were so great.

> In a way it's bigger and more exciting and… It has always been like that and I've been thinking --- could I be working in a domestic organization and I've come to the conclusion that I don't think that I could even… I couldn't even fit to that picture. (2)

According to the women the most important characteristics of an international leader are flexibility, good listening and communication skills, the ability to make wise choices and decisions and trusting others. Each of them highlighted flexibility as one of the key features and argued that when working with different nationalities, the leader must be able to be flexible in different situations, in terms of schedules, opinions and thus be able to take into account others and their opinions. According to the women the listening skills, in particular, were highly important in international leadership positions and many of them believed that good listening skills had greatly helped them to succeed in their jobs.

> --- you need to listen with two ears and talk with one mouth. Like, listen more than you talk, it is still like very important. (6)

> --- you need to have an ability to listen, ability and desire to understand. People always think that foreign cultures don't tolerate listening, but that you should always be like able to maintain small talk, but I can tell you, a lot of Asian cultures appreciate that the other side is actually saying something sensible and doesn't just fill the air. (1)

> And it is certainly because of it, that I can listen and like to listen to people. I… I look at people, I watch how they react, and I see them as human and not just... Let's say as a toolbox. Mm… Many great leaders I've met, they just listen to give you an answer, and don't listen like that they could understand what you are saying. (2)

According to the women participated in the study, when working with different cultures, discretion and thus ability to make wise choices or decisions in different situations is of primary importance. Many of them had had to change their traditional procedures when they have started working in international leadership positions, so that their leadership style would have been consistent with what other cultures were used to.

> You need to know the people and the context and their background… It has been surprisingly important, and it has also been perhaps the challenge for me, how… How to find the way to deal with different people and… And to make certain things happen and that's… At least to myself personally, when you are a "straight Finn" so there have been such bumps along the way. Like, how you find the way to be with people. (3)

Furthermore, many women noted that working in an international organization or organization operating in an international environment, it is important to consider the entities and understand that when an organization operates in an international environment, what happens in other countries or other organizations in different countries affects its operations.

> You have to realize that not only what is happening here in Finland affects us but also that what happens in other countries and… And that we all work together, it has to be understood, in our own everyday life and how it affects our own work. (7)

In addition to the previous ones, the women emphasized the importance of participatory leadership and that the leader had to have trust for others, to their team and their subordinates. The women emphasized the knowledge and skills of other people and the fact that the leader had to consider these to give other people space and opportunity to operate. Thus, act as an enabler.

> --- you can't do everything alone. You need to… You need to make sure that there are people around you, in your team or otherwise, who bring something to that what you're doing together. --- You need to trust your own team and that, that they move those things forward and then, if the things don't go forward then you need to set out to the adequate measures, you need to lead… And help… Or whatever the situation is. (5)

> I always choose the best ones. The best people who can also help me, because without them I'm nothing. I'm... I am a good leader, I can move things forward, I can hold on to them and make us move forward, together, but it has always been… I have understood that I am not... This is not just my show. (2)

Moreover, women pointed out that humility, honesty and open-mindedness were qualities that were useful for a leader throughout the world. Almost all of the participants had had women as their supervisors and leaders, who had influenced the atmosphere of the organization, while increasing a more equal mindset within the work community. They described them as strong women, who has given them the model of a woman leader and thus considered them as their role models.

> I've had a lot of strong women as my supervisors, who has given me quite nice… Quite nice, you know… Model of a woman leader and often they also want to lift other women up and also somehow empower them. (4)

Each participant described the woman leaders they knew as strong women who enjoyed high levels of trust in their work community. Nonetheless, they felt that women had to work harder to get to these positions, but then the women who worked in high positions had always earned their place in there and that they were often more trusted than men in similar roles.

> --- in a way I feel like… Like really, if you're a woman leader, you've earned your place… And redeemed it. (7)

> Maybe as a woman you have to be a little bit more aggressive and… --- You need to work harder and you need to be very… Kind of quick-witted and stout to get that credibility. (4)

> That is something you might usually expect, that if you're a woman leader you have to be probably tougher than average… Than a male leader, for example. It feels like you need to work harder, if you're a woman leader versus being a male leader. --- If you look at our top leadership team, you will find that you also have to be tougher than average also in comparison to men, if you're going to be there. But of course, they are that age, so that they were able to fight themselves forward 20–30 years ago, they've must have been really… A bit like scary people in fact even. (3)

Thus, women participated in this study saw the women in leadership positions in general as strong women who enjoyed high levels of trust. Women felt that their own career progression to the international leadership positions was strongly influenced by their own determination and desire to develop and influence things. While working in international leadership positions, they emphasized listening and communication skills in particular and believed that these as well as trusting others and their abilities had helped them succeed in these positions.

5.2.3 Young Woman Syndrome

Women had faced the greatest challenges in their careers in the early stages of their careers. Five of the women imparted that the biggest challenges they had faced in their careers were related to the fact that they were young women in a responsible position. The women had felt that their ability, knowledge and competence had been questioned due to their young age, which was reflected in how people treated them or how seriously they were taken. They did not feel that they

were treated this way solely because of their gender but believed that the combination of a young age and being a woman raised the prejudices. Moreover, they believed that they would not have experienced the same behavior if they were young men.

> This young woman perspective, it feels like it's like that people can get easily prejudices. I feel like if I was a man, there wouldn't be that much certain prejudices. --- At least my own experience is like that… That easily a person can get that feeling, like okay this is a young woman and… That, this must be some assistant or this is someone else [than a leader]. --- So how much they for example listen to you… It can be difficult at first. (3)

> Then it was confusing at times, that hey it's a woman who makes the decision, that how much you actually need to pay for this. But for me it was just like, okay it goes like this and that's how it is, and you can continue from this, but that's how it goes in the end. (1)

Thus, although the women had experienced prejudices about their ability in the early stages of their careers, they had not allowed this to interfere with or limit their activities. In addition to this, one of the study participants imparted that she had experienced prejudices about her gender and appearance also later in her career, as she was significantly younger than her colleagues and as she did not look like a "traditional leader". In addition to this, she had been subjected to harassments more than once.

> I'm such, I would say, quite different… [tells about her look] --- and I look quite young… So, I've got comments about my age... And that I'm a girl in their eyes. --- when we [an executive team] go out to eat, there has been more of those comments, unfortunately… When a person gets a glass of red wine and when we sit there and have a small talk and… It feels like… And I'm not that sensitive, I can handle quite a lot, but there have been some situations. Like... Like there have been suggestions or just about that, that I'm so young and what do I know or… Then there has been touching and whatsoever… So, unfortunately there are things like that, or has been over the years. (2)

However, she had not allowed such activity to continue, but had put a stop to it. Nonetheless, each of the participants believed that in general their work community was equal and thus women and men were treated in the same way and when discussing about women's position in international leadership in general, most of the interviewees told that they felt that the position of women leaders was equal to that of men. However, interviewees who worked in the fields that were male dominated, imparted that the number of women in leadership positions was much lower than those of men but they also thought it to be natural, as only about 20–30% of all their employees were women.

Indeed, many interviewees wondered that a woman's position might be better in both domestic and international leadership, if women applied for more, and more often to leadership positions in general and if women were to apply more variedly to different fields, especially to male-dominated ones. However, women pointed out that equality issues could have been very much influenced by the fact that they worked in Scandinavian organizations, and that the situation could be very different, for example in a Central or Southern Europe. Despite this,

participants felt that female and male leaders were expected to have certain characteristics. They felt that certain qualities were only acceptable to male leaders, and if the female leader had similar qualities, it was not considered acceptable.

> If a woman is that stout and thight leader, then she's a bit of a bitch like that, but if a man is like that again, he's a good leader. So… So, in a way if not directly, sometimes you notice between the lines… You notice some things. (5)

> If a man is tight and says to his employee that you did wrong very strictly, it's somehow expected, that of course a man is tight, and you don't need to be that… You don't have to build those relationships. No need to think about it from that point of view… But if a woman does so, my God! Then she's a real bitch. She's like a horror story and then people talk about her like she's was so tight… Or… Like she's some old maid or that she must have problems at home, there has been things like that… That definitely, her husband is not quite satisfied and that's why she's this tight. --- Women are expected to be, that they understand and that they have the time to listen to people… And that they have time to consider all their views. (2)

Thus, although the participants felt that women and men held equal positions in international leadership roles, assumptions about the traditional feminine and masculine qualities of female and male leaders were still prevailed. In addition to this, some of them believed that women leaders had to succeed more in their jobs, and that failures were not allowed for them unlike they were understandable in the case of male leaders.

> In a way you need to succeed more and… And you need to be more in a way like spot-on, unlike men. --- Sometimes it feels like, that if something slips between the fingers of a man it is like more allowed. (7)

In addition, two participants highlighted the impact of maternity leave on their careers. The women shared their experiences of the challenges of maternity leave in terms of their careers, how it for example fragments women's careers and how it requires women to take actions to stay on the same pay scale as their colleagues who have not had children.

> Even if they [people in general] are positive about it [maternity leave], but like from a simple perspective, it does mean that I've been out of work for two and half years, when my colleagues, who have not had children, they've acquired work experience and… And they've gone forward. (7)

> I've been twice on maternity leave --- Both times we had co-operation negotiations and then after that [maternity leave] it's been quite difficult in a way to find your own place [in working life]. And then that you can keep your salary level at the same level as your male colleagues for example, I've needed to assert myself and fight for it. (4)

Other challenges women had had to face, were related to their own demands and the difficulty of finding a balance between leisure and work. All the women had always valued and enjoyed working and some of them have felt that at some point in their career, they had been too focused on working and they were spending most of their time at work.

> I have always been very committed to the work and I've gone pretty much in life like the work in my mind. And then at some point, I noticed that I was maybe a little too much leaned to the work… (7)

However, having a child had influenced to the way of thinking of many and helped them to find a balance between work and leisure. This will be discussed next.

5.2.4   The Manifold Influence of a Family on a Woman's Career

With the exception of one participant, all the women participated in the study had at least one child. Thus, almost everyone had experiences of combining family and career and the experiences of it were diverse. Women who had children imparted that they had faced some challenges in combining family and international career. A few women noted that having a family had a natural effect on their risk-taking ability in their careers.

> In a way, life is maybe a little bit more complicated nowadays as it was before, when we [herself and her husband] moved to [a country] and we just packed two suitcases and left. In a way, that risk-taking ability was a bit higher than it is today with children. You need to think about their schools and this whole package around it. (4)

Often the challenges were related to traditional ones associated with responsible tasks, such as long working hours, when the time spent at work is out of the time spent at home, but also to the work-related stress which is not facilitated by the stressful everyday life with children. Moreover, working in international position often means business trips to different countries or even moving abroad, which also has a major impact on the life of the family. Several of the women told that they had had a bad conscience if they had not been present in their family's everyday life and that they had not always looked after their own well-being so that they could have be more present in their family's everyday life.

> When the children were small, then… Then if there were long trips… Then in a way the everyday life and… Then, how you explain to your kid on the phone that I need to be here for five days. So, it was more about the pain of not being present in the daily life of the little one. (6)

> If you need to find the one who suffers the most, then I think that it is… Well, mom herself. You haggle the most from your own well-being. Because you want that everyone else is doing good. And then you notice that okay the number of steps for this week is quite small and you haven't done any exercises but hey at least you've been present at home. (1)

However, many participants told that after having children their working days got limits, so they could spend more time with their family and thus they did not spend all their time at work. Nonetheless, women believed that they might not have been able to combine their career and family life as well as they had without the support of their spouse and the help, they had received from their support network.

> Before we had kids, it was very easy. But then of course, when my child came into the picture, of course, it always gets more complicated… Then it's a bit more complicated. We have had a good situation with that my parents and my husband's parents have always lived very close and… And we get daily help from them. --- Help has always been needed, from the very beginning. (2)

Moreover, women noted that organizational support had made it much easier to combine a career and a family and the women who worked in organizations that have taken family issues into account had not experienced external challenges in combining family and career.

> --- such things like, certain employer's staff regulations help in that, like for example… That you can stay at home with the permission of the employer if the child becomes ill, so you don't always need the medical certificate. It helps a lot. And then the possibility for remote work. These possibilities have helped that if for example the child is sick, I have been able to work remotely from home. (7)

> In this organization, where I'm right now, I've also started my family at the same time. It has been really flexible and very, like… They actually think, that the family… It's important and it's not like a speed bump in your career or for your work or anything. We have like a possibility for the remote work and a possibility for flexible working hours and… And for all family leaves and everything like that. So, they've always been very good. So, I don't have anything… Any harms or anything. (6)

Despite the challenges outlined above, each woman who had children told that children and family life had brought so much good to their lives that it made the challenges seem insignificant. Many of the participants told that family life have set new proportions to their lives, which is why they are, for example, much more gracious and forgiving towards themselves and others. In addition to this, family life has made them more flexible and understanding as a person and a leader. Moreover, nowadays they told that they are better at leading multiple, large entities at once.

> I had a baby. I can tell you it was… It definitely had a positive impact. In a way I'm… I'm much calmer and more forgiving to myself. Before I was awful, like everything needed to be like hundred percent and especially after studies, since then I've been very responsible and somehow… Terrible drive on, I had to be the best, always. But then I realized that if it's fifty or… Or even eighty percent, then it's a good achievement. (2)

> It doesn't matter how f-like day it's at work, you can reset it pretty nicely there when you come home because it's so different… It is somehow such a different reality then there with the kids, who live like in a different world, it makes you forget those certain working pressures. (4)

> Somehow, before I had children, I was kind of black and white. But now it's like easier to stop at different life situations and understand that work is however, just work. (7)

Thus, although it was sometimes difficult to harmonize family and career, family life had given women qualities that were also helpful in working life and working in the international leadership positions. In addition, family life set new proportions to their lives and had helped them to prioritize things.

5.3 Future Prospects of Women in International Leadership Positions

Lastly, I wanted to find out what kind of future plans the women had for their careers and how they saw the future of their careers. All of the women had plans for their careers and although the women were at very different stages of their careers, they emphasized very similar things in their future plans.

The women who were in the early or mid-stages of their careers, had career plans that were related to their own growth, self-development, challenging themselves and achieving new goals. Some of them dreamed of entrepreneurship, as they felt that it would be the best way to develop themselves and, on the other hand, indicate their own abilities. In turn, some of the women wanted to work in a certain position for which they already had some experience and that they found interesting. Most of the women imparted that they wanted to continue working in international positions also in the future. All of the women were very determined about their plans and were going to implement them whenever the time was right. Indeed, some of them had made clear five- and ten-year plans for their careers; where they would want to be and what they would want to do in the future.

Women who had been building their careers for a long time and were in their late careers felt that they still had much to give but did not dream of similar challenges as other women. Instead, it was important for them that their work would remain interesting, however, in a way that it would fit to their lives in the future also.

> As long as it's nice, like… I rather have goals for the self-development. --- You know, that the work stays like meaningful, that you can give something for the team, and you can, as a leader… Move it forward like in a reasonable way, but also give room to the teammates and remain credible until the end. (b)

Each of the women participated in the study, saw the future of their careers as positive and full of opportunities and they did not see any obstacles or limitations for their career development but wanted to continue to grow and develop as people and employees. Indeed, all of them found the future of woman leaders bright. They believed that the number of women in international leadership positions would increase and would improve but noted that this required action from the women themselves as well as from the society. As mentioned earlier, interviewees believed that if women applied more for leadership positions and believed more in themselves and their skills, the number of women would increase in international leadership positions. Some of them also wondered about the impact of maternity leave on women's careers and how old attitudes should change and how father's parental leave should be further supported, so that the careers of young women in particular would not be as fragmented even if they started a family.

> It's a bit like… A little dependent on societies, like what is happening in there and how it will change in the future. But I've seen like nothing but positive things… The

> future is good if only people give it a chance and people find their way to the right jobs. (g)

One of the women also believed that many women mistakenly believe they had to choose either a career or a family, even though they have the opportunity for both.

> I'd say that we also need to take advantage of the time that more women will be in leadership roles. I have had more of the problem of not having enough female applicants when we've been looking for women for a job, it has been a bit annoying. --- You can be a good mother, you can be good at everything, but you don't have to… You do not have to choose that whether you take one of the pieces of the cake, you can actually take the whole cake. (c)

All the women participated in this study, saw that in the future, the number of women in international leadership roles would increase and thus the position of women leaders would be better in general in the international context. In addition, they believed that anyone could achieve anything, as long as they believed in themselves and were ready to work for their dreams.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter examines the key findings of this study, while examining their relationship to the theoretical framework. This will be followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study and proposals for further research, followed by the conclusions of the study.

6.1 Discussion

Research of women in international leadership (Adler, 2002) as well as the research of women's careers (Ekonen, 2011) began in the 1980s. Previous research of women in international leadership have mainly focused on identifying reasons for the small number of women in international leadership positions (e.g. Adler, 1984; Adler, 1993; Harris, 1993) after which the studies have mainly focused on identifying obstacles to women's career development to these roles (Linehan & Scullion, 2008; Grodzicki & Varma, 2011; Fischlmayr & Puchmüller, 2016). In general, the research on women's careers has sought to determine the factors that influence women's career development (e.g. Powell & Graves, 2003; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005) and thus to create career development models for women (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005).

If women's career development is considered objectively (e.g. Aaltio-Marjosola, 2001) two career development models could be identified from the data; linear in four cases and multidirectional in three cases. Moreover, almost every woman in the study had been on maternity leave and unemployed at some point in her career, either once or twice, which is why their careers could also be described as discontinuous (e.g. Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). However, women had been unemployed and had changed jobs because they had found that there were no opportunities for progress in their current organization (see e.g. Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005) or when they were pursuing a career in another field or in another country. Thus, women's careers were not fragmented just for family reasons, as many previous studies suggest (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Although, the career development of the four women had been linear, the development did not follow the traditional career development model, being easily predictable and uninterruptible (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). However, the career development of all the women participated in the study differed significantly, for example, at the speed of career development and it would have been impossible to make a valid age-stage development model about their careers.

Instead, this study also confirms the work of Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) and O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) who suggested that women build their careers by taking into account, among other things, their private lives and that they emphasize different things at different stages in their careers. The findings of this study confirm the results of previous studies (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005) that in the early stages of their careers, women emphasize challenges and achievements of their career aims whereas in their mid-career

women emphasize work-life balance. Most women participated in the study had started working in an international context right from the early stages of their careers or had even moved to another country to pursue an international career. In the middle stages of their careers, women have already experienced and achieved a lot in their careers, and thus sought to strike a balance between their professional and private lives and consider what they would like to achieve still in the future (e.g. Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Each of the women participated in the study had progressed in their careers to the international leadership positions by their mid-careers, and thus had already achieved much in their careers. Instead of women dreaming of major upheavals in their careers at that point, women strived to find a balance between their career and personal lives. However, they had made plans for what they wanted to do in the future and were ready to implement their plans when the time was right. In turn, in their late careers, the women no longer sought great challenges or changes but wanted to take care that they and their career development will continue and that they have the opportunity to influence things.

The findings of this study also establish that women emphasize subjective factors when evaluating their career success (e.g. Ekonen, 2011). The women who participated in this study, had always been interested in self-development and some of the women had even furthered their studies during their careers, which they believed to increase their market value as employees and in addition allowed them to have more diverse careers. Thus, instead of seeking higher positions for merits, for example, the women have been interested in their own growth and self-development, which have taken them forward in their careers, as the previous literature suggests (see e.g. Powell & Graves, 2003; Ekonen, 2011). In addition, it was important for women that their work fit to their current situation in life.

All of the women in the study were united by their high level of work motivation and that they had always experienced their work and career very meaningful. When considering the factors that had had a positive impact to their career development to the international leadership positions, the women believed that the most important factor that had helped them advance in their careers was their own work contribution. As leaders, the women were determined but flexible and they trusted the people around them, which they also believed have helped them advance and succeed in their careers in international leadership positions. Women emphasized the importance of communication skills, as well as understanding and flexibility in the face of cultural differences in these positions. They understood their role as leaders and the importance of other people in their work. They saw their teammates as people, listened to them and enabled their ideas and development. Thus, the results of this study confirmed the results of the studies of Bird & Osland (2004) and Lane & Maznevski (2014) who emphasized the importance of similar qualities and skills in international leadership roles. Furthermore, the women highlighted the influence of their former colleagues, superiors and leaders in their career development.

According to many research studies (e.g. Harris, 1993; Linehan & Scullion, 2008) women are lacking networks that their male colleagues have but the findings from this study were to the contrary. In addition, this study also confirms

the work of Puttonen (2011) who suggested that interpersonal relationships inside working life have a great impact to women's career development. Majority of the women imparted that their former leaders and colleagues had had a great impact on their career development as they had recognized women's competence and potential and they had enabled women to advance in their careers to international leadership positions. Many felt that it was their former leaders or colleagues who had made it possible for them to advance in their careers and that without them they would not be in the positions they were currently working. Thus, the results of this study confirm the findings of Varma and Stroh (2001i & 2001ii) and Harris (2002) the influence of the leader on women's careers. However, according to this study, the genders of the leaders of women had no effect on whether they had helped women advance in their careers as the previous studies (e.g. Varma & Stroh, 2001i) suggest. Moreover, women also believed they had been in the right place at the right time, which has allowed them opportunities to advance in their careers.

Although many studies have showed that women still have the primary responsibility for family responsibilities, which negatively affects their career development (see e.g. Linehan & Walsh, 2001; Fischlmayr & Puchmüller, 2016), the findings of this study indicate that family life does not act as a barrier to women's career development, and may even enrich it. Although, also in this study women imparted that making impulsive career decisions is much more difficult as are the commutes abroad when having children, they had still experienced that family life had mainly had a positive impact on their careers. Family life had set new proportions to their lives and brought them qualities like flexibility and grace which they found useful as international leaders. Majority of the women imparted that they had not found it difficult to combine family and career because their organization had taken family issues into account and thus supported their family life and motherhood. Thus, the results of this study confirm the results of a previous studies (e.g. Linehan & Walsh, 2000; Harris, 2002) about the important impact of organizational support on family and career harmonization, which, according to this study, is of particular importance for women's careers.

As mentioned earlier, most of the previous research on women in international leadership has focused on obstacles to women's career development. For the most part, these challenges have been related to gender roles, prejudices and various internal barriers within the organization that limit the career development of women (e.g. Linehan & Walsh, 2001; Harris, 2002; Fischlmayr & Puchmüller, 2016). When considering challenges to their careers, many women could not name the actual challenges they would have experienced during their careers. The majority of women felt that their organizations prevailed equality, and that women and men were treated in the same way. However, as we discussed more about their career paths, many challenges that were mainly related to their gender emerged and that almost every woman had experienced at some point in her career.

The results of this study establish that women have to face prejudices about their skills and abilities, especially if they are of young age and in a responsible position. However, the women had not felt that such prejudices had a negative impact on their career development, as previous studies have suggested (see e.g.

Harris, 2002). Instead, women had experienced that, especially when they were young and in the early stages of their careers (see e.g. White, Cox & Cooper 1992, 128–131), working in a responsible position, their ability, knowledge and competence had been questioned because of their young age. Furthermore, one of the women had even experienced sexual harassment more than once during her career. The findings of this study also confirm the work of Linehan and Walsh (2000) who suggested that women have to work harder and be more ambitious and more qualified than their male counterparts to advance and work in the international leadership positions. Indeed, most of the women participated in the study felt that women had to work harder, succeed in their jobs, and prove their abilities more than men to progress and work in these roles.

Furthermore, the women felt that different expectations were set for the leaders of different genders, concerning their accomplishments and their qualities. The findings of this study establish that traditional assumptions about the feminine qualities of female and masculine qualities of male leaders are still prevailed (see e.g. Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001) and if the leader's behaviour is different from his or her gender's traditional behaviour, it can be dealt with very strongly, especially in the case of women leaders. Thus, one might wonder if organizational cultures were after all as equal as it is generally assumed or as women participated in this study initially thought.

When considering the role of women in international leadership, all the women felt that the position of women leaders was equal to that of men. However, women were aware that the industry could have a major impact to this and that women leaders mostly worked in human resources and communications, whereas, for example, CEOs were almost always male. Instead, women who worked in a male-dominated industry noted that there were significantly fewer women in leadership positions than men. However, women felt it was normal, as only about 20–30% of all their employees were women. Indeed, all the women believed that women's position in leadership positions in general could be greatly improved if women were to strive for more male-dominated fields and aspired more to leadership roles in general. Thus, the findings of this study establish that societal factors may still have a strong influence on women's career choices (see e.g. Puttonen, 2011).

Women saw both their own future and in general the future of women in international leadership positions very brightly. Especially women who had been building their careers for a long time had seen the position of women improved over the years and believed that it would be further improved in the future. Moreover, all the women participated in this study were very positive about the future of their careers. Almost every one of them had plans for what they still wanted to achieve in their careers. However, the achievements were mainly related to subjective variables, such as personal growth and development. Furthermore, as women contemplated their future plans, they reflected on the impact of different career choices on their current life situation in the future. Thus, the findings in this study indicate that women build also their career plans with an emphasis on subjective factors and taking into account their personal lives and the impact that different career choices have on it (see e.g. Powell & Graves, 2003; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Most of the women wanted to continue working in

international positions also in the future. They did not see any obstacles for their future plans but wondered when it would be a good time to put them into practice. Indeed, women believed that anyone could achieve anything, if only she or he believed in herself or himself and worked for her or his dreams. Perhaps it is precisely because of this attitude that women have succeeded in their careers and progressed to the very positions they were currently working.

6.2 Limitations and Proposals for Further Study

The limitations of the research are largely related to the limitations of the research topic and my position as a fledgling researcher. Because the interest in this study was women's career paths to the international leadership positions, this significantly limited previous research available. Since most of the research on women in international leadership has been conducted in the United States, the theoretical basis of the study is based on studies on the experiences of the American women in international leadership roles. This may partially influence the results of the research, when all the women participated in the study were Finnish. However, I strived to give a holistic picture of women's careers and to focus on factors that are not related to the nationality of women. However, women's careers and their role in working life are influenced by many cultural factors, such as the general position of women in society and working life and how society supports parental leave, for example.

The limited nature of the topic also significantly limited the selection of potential interviewees as the interviewees had to have experience in working in international leadership positions. However, after a long search, I reached several women who would have been interested in participating in the research. The interviewees selected to the study were Finnish and worked in international leadership positions in Scandinavian organizations. However, for the results of the study, it would have been useful if I could have interviewed women of different nationalities, or women who had worked in organizations that were not Scandinavian. This would have brought a variation in the results of the study and, the theory base would have provided better support for the research. Indeed, many women participated in the study believed that equality issues were relatively well taken into consideration in Scandinavian organizations and that the situation could be very different in organizations in Central or Southern Europe, for example.

Because in a qualitative research, the researcher influences the entire research process from the choice of concepts to the preparation of the research report (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2006, 18) the results of this study may have been influenced by my own choices, interpretations and deductions as a fledgling researcher. For example, the design of the interviews is crucial in order for the interviews to produce data that allows reliable conclusions to be drawn about the phenomenon under study (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2006, 66). Therefore, my choice of words and question formulation may have influenced how the interviewees may

have approached the issues and thus influenced the interviewees' responses. Although, I tried to form them in a way that they did not guide the interviewees in any direction. In addition to this, the interview situations may have been strongly influenced by my position as a fledgling researcher. If I had been more experienced interviewer, I could have been able to gather more extensive and varied material through interviews. In addition to this, the material is influenced by the interview situation, what the interviewees wanted to talk about and, on the other hand, what they left untold and why.

I arranged the interviews according to the wishes of the interviewees in order to make the interview situations as pleasant as possible for the interviewees. However, many interviews were conducted during or at the end of the interviewees' workdays, which may have affected how much they were able to focus on the topics addressed in the interview or how much time she could spend on it. Furthermore, the interviewees' responses may have been strongly influenced by their current life situation, which may have reflected, for example, from what perspective different topics were considered or how widely different themes were addressed. In addition to this, the material is greatly influenced by what the interviewees left untold. For example, many of the things that might not have seemed relevant to the interviewees, but could have been very relevant to the research, might left untold.

For instance, challenges in working life as a woman was a topic that many hardly talked about when they were asked about the challenges, they had experienced during their careers, but which emerged later in every interview. Many women felt that their work community had always been very equal, which may also be influenced by the general assumption that men and women have equal status in working life in Finland. However, when considering their careers more closely, many of them discovered challenges that were related, among other things, to different prejudices, which women have to face during their careers, especially in the early stages of them. Thus, do women find such challenges so common that they are not even discussed, or has the idea of equal position been so strongly ingrained in women's minds that such matters are overlooked? Despite the significant improvement in the position of women in working life and in leadership positions in general, especially in Western countries, still less than 30% of all women in the workforce advance to higher levels of leadership positions, and the advancement is 3.7% more likely if a woman works in a national rather than multinational organizations (ILO, 2019).

Therefore, in further research, it would be important to delve even further into women's careers and their development to the international leadership roles. It would be important to do research outside the United States, where most of the previous research on the topic has been conducted because internationalization affects so widely across the world and the position of women in working life or in societies varies across the world, which also has a major impact on women's careers and their chances of advancing in their careers. Furthermore, it might be interesting to delve deeper into women's career aspirations and consider whether women dream of working in leadership positions and how many women are pursuing such roles in international context. In addition to this, it would also be important to bring the voice of men to the research and examine what kind of

plans men have for their careers and how they have experienced their careers and their career development and compare these to women's plans and experiences. This could increase the reliability of the research and bring a new and important perspective to the research.

6.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to increase knowledge about the career paths of women to the international leadership positions; what kind of challenges they have experienced and in turn what factors have helped them to advance in their careers to these positions. The findings of this study based on semi-structured interviews of seven women working as international leaders. The women were at different stages in their careers; some were in the early stages of their careers, while others had been building their careers for decades. Moreover, women worked in different fields, different positions and different functions in their organizations, which is why the research results consisted of diverse experiences, perspectives and observations. Women's career paths were unique but at the same time they had some similarities.

If the career development of women is considered objectively, two different career development models could be constructed from the data; linear in four cases and multidirectional in three cases. In addition to this, almost every woman's career could be described as discontinuous because, with the exception of one interviewee, every woman participated in the study had been on a maternity leave or unemployed at least once during her career and thus had been away from working life. Although there were similarities in women's career development, it would have been impossible to make a valid age-stage development model about their careers since the career development of each of the women differed significantly, for example, at the speed of career development. However, the findings of this study indicate that women's careers can be divided into three different stages where women emphasize different issues, such as challenges or the balance between their careers and their private lives.

The findings of this study also establish that women emphasize subjective factors in their career development. The women participated in the study had always been interested in self-development and in part their career development was explained by their own interest in learning new knowledge and skills that had taken them forward in their careers all the way to the international leadership positions. Indeed, women's career development to these positions was particularly influenced by their own attitudes towards their work and career and by their own work contribution. Thus, as the women were interested in working in international positions, they had pursued such careers and such tasks. In addition, most women felt that their former leaders and colleagues had had a major impact on their career development. They had recognized the skills and potential of women and given women the opportunity to advance in their careers.

Perhaps surprisingly, women also felt that family life had had a positive impact on their careers. Family life had brought them new qualities that women

found useful in international leadership roles and had set new proportions to their lives. In fact, the women emphasized interpersonal skills, open-mindedness, flexibility and trust in other people in international leadership positions. They believed that it was these qualities that had made a difference in their career progression and success in these roles. Furthermore, the findings in this study indicate that women build their careers so that it would fit to their current life situations and consider the impact of work on their private lives.

Although women felt that a woman's position in international leadership was equal to those of men, almost every woman participated in this study had experienced challenges in her career that were somehow related to her gender. For instance, women had faced prejudices about their skills and abilities and felt that different expectations were set for women and men leaders, both for their accomplishments and for their qualities. Women felt that as women they had to work harder, succeed in their jobs, and prove their abilities more than men had to, to progress and work in the international leadership positions. Other challenges that women had experienced in their careers were related to their own perhaps even unreasonable expectations for themselves.

However, women believed that women's position in international leadership positions would be further improved in the future, but this would require action on the part of both women themselves and the society. Women saw also the future of their careers as bright and full of opportunities. Every one of them had plans for their careers, and those plans were related mainly to subjective achievements such as personal growth and development. The women did not see any challenges to their future career plans and believed that all dreams could be achieved if one just believed in herself and was ready to work towards her dreams.

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APPENDIX 1 INTERVIEW FRAME

Background information:
- ⇒ Age
- ⇒ Marital status
- ⇒ Education
- ⇒ Professional title

Would you tell about your educational background and the factors that influenced your choice of education?
- ⇒ How would you describe your parents' attitudes towards education and career building? Their profession?
- ⇒ How did you feel about studying?
- ⇒ How did you succeed in your studies?

Would you tell about your career path and how have you ended up in an international leadership position?
- ⇒ What kind of previous positions have you had during your career?
- ⇒ What made you interested in an international career?
- ⇒ What factors have contributed positively to your career development to the international positions?
- ⇒ What challenges have you experienced in your career when pursuing international positions? In what situations have you encountered these challenges? How did you respond to these challenges?
- ⇒ What qualities do you think are needed to pursue an international career?
- ⇒ How have you experienced the importance of networks and organizational support in an international career?
- ⇒ How would you describe the importance of work and career to you?

Would you tell about your experiences (or thoughts) about combining family and career?
- ⇒ How have you experienced the combination of family and career?
- ⇒ How has the family life affected your career?
- ⇒ Have you experienced challenges in combining family and career? In what kind of situations and how have you responded to these challenges?

Would you describe your thoughts about leadership in an international context?
- ⇒ How would you describe yourself as a leader?
- ⇒ What qualities do you think are required for a good leader and do you think they differ between genders? Do you think these features differ from the domestic context?
- ⇒ What kind of leaders have you had during your career? How have you experienced them affecting your career?

Would you tell about your views on how gender has appeared in an international context when you have been pursuing leadership positions and when you have been working in these positions?
- ⇒ How do you think gender appears in an international context? Do you think it differs from the domestic context?

⇒ Have you noticed that your gender has influenced your career in some way? In which situations?

⇒ Have you noticed stereotypes or prejudices about gender roles in your career?

⇒ How would you like to develop yourself and your career?

⇒ How do you see the position of female leaders in an international context?

  ⇒ Which things do you think affects to this position?

  ⇒ How do you think the position will change in the future? What do you think it would require?

Would you tell about your future plans for your current job and career?

⇒ How would you like to develop yourself and your career?