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**A qualitative study exploring how social norms and
empowerment influence female leaders related to
represent organizations externally**

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Foreword

The fact that only 1 out of 5 women are executive managers and that they still do not earn the same as men in many businesses, might be seen as strange nowadays, since there exists laws against discrimination and that the number of female managers is increasing and that there is roughly as many women as men that take higher education and enter the work life (SSB, 2011). Working as a female manager in the bar- and restaurant business, and taking a leadership education, this is something that concerns me. There exist several studies related to women and how they are treated and perceived in organizations, however, I could not find anything about how they are perceived when representing organizations externally. Therefore, I wanted to do a research among leaders at different levels to see how they perceive female leaders, especially when it comes to social norms, stereotypes, prejudices and gender roles. Since former research claims that women are better than men when it comes to what the modern society requires of people, such as good in verbal communication and interpersonal relationships (Daft, 2010), and that Attanapola (2005) claims that empowerment contributes to make women more secure, I wanted to see if empowerment was seen as important and perhaps if this could “help” women.

Finally, I would like to thank my advisor Gro Ellen Mathisen. I could not write this thesis without her help. Tone Therese Linge and Kai Victor Hansen have also contributed with excellent help, especially related to the methods chosen for this thesis. And of course I would like to thank all the seven leaders and the participants in the focus groups that participated in this research.

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Abstract

Qualitative methods; seven in depth interviews among leaders in an chosen organization and two focus groups were chosen for this research to get as profoundly insight as possible when it comes to their perceptions of female leaders that represent organizations externally and how or if social norms in the society or/ and organization influence them. There were not found any large differences among the different leaders nor the focus groups.

Old prejudices and stereotypes, such as perceive men as having stereotypical leader attributes, or by Eagly and Karau (2002); called agentic attributes, and women as having stereotypical communal attributes as being sensitive, caring, good in social relationships, and etc., also seems to be the view among the participants in this research. When asked to describe a person who represents an organization externally, the participants also gave this person typical agentic attributes, at the same time as gender was not believed to be important; they were more concerned about age. Therefore one might assume that a female leader who is representing an organization externally acts or becomes more agentic than communal when having this role; she must leave her gender role as a woman.

Empowerment was seen as something positive among all the participants. Some of them also believed that this could contribute to gender equality, or as Attanapola (2005) claims: Helps women to be become more secure. Everybody also believed that there have to be some guidelines when representing an organization externally. And since gender was not mentioned or given any importance, one can assume that the participants believe that everybody; both men and women who are representing organizations externally need to have some guidelines and therefore none have the opportunity to act freely, at the same time as empowerment is apparent.

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Introduction

Background and motivation

There exists evidence that men and women alike prefer to have a man as a manager (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). Men have also traditionally been leaders, both in the private sphere and at work. But as the time has changed and as women in ages have strived for equality, what is it that prevents them to achieve this equality that they so long have fought for? Despite the fact that women nowadays represent half of all workers and that there exists laws that protect women from discrimination, what is it that prevents them from reaching the top level of management? Although social roles have changed dramatically for women the last decades, they still are underrepresented when it comes to leadership roles, especially as top leaders (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000).

Furthermore, if gender is seen as the cue to legitimacy, men are given more prestige, simply because of the fact that they are men (Berger, Fisek, Norman & Zelditch, 1977, cited in Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). Men are mostly represented in powerful social roles, such as politics, law, religion and the military. This has resulted in an implicit male leader stereotype (Banaji & Greenwald, 1995; Eagly, 1987; Forsythe, Heiney, & Wright, 1997; Vianello & Siemienka, 1990, cited in Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). This stereotype of men might cause a belief that men are superior and therefore are the right persons to control and receive more resources compared to women (Jost & Banaji, 1994, cited in Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). A result of this might be that most people have a stronger association of leaders as men than leaders as women. If this is correct, then powerful women might be disliked for breaching an expectancy of men being the natural leader, and women as subordinates, housewives, and etc (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000).

Do there exist differences in how female and male leaders behave? And what are the expectations and perceptions of female leaders related to how they represent organizations externally? Many women are seen as better than men to behave in terms of what the modern society requires of people, such as paying attention, abiding by rules, good in verbal communication and better in interpersonal relationships (Daft, 2010). As many societies work for increased democracy also in the workplace (Eagly & Karau, 2002, cited in Eagly, Koenig, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011) empowering subordinates might be an important consequence of this, therefore one might ask if working women, especially female managers are affected by this democratization/empowering? For instance, how much are they “allowed” to act freely when representing the organization externally? Do other; both male and female managers “trust” them when giving them increased responsibilities? Finally, what are the implicit and explicit attitudes among different levels of leaders towards women as managers and how they represent organizations?

As a woman and a leader, these themes are of interest, not just because of what I so far have experienced, but also of what I might experience in my future job as a female leader.

Research approach and proposal

There exists a lot of literature when it comes to female leaders and how they are perceived in organizations. For example, research by Eagly and Karau, (2002; 2011), Insch, McIntyre and Napier (2008) and Sümer (2006), Heilman (1997) and etc. concern about stereotypes, prejudices and gender roles related to being a woman and a leader. In addition, there have been shown a lot of interest on themes such as empowerment, social norms, attitudes, and etc. Authors like Daft (2010), Sunstein (1996) and Rudman and Kilianski (2000), have for instance given these themes attention. Although there exist laws and work against discrimination of women in most

organizations, there still are obstacles for women when they try to reach the top level of management and these top managers are mainly men. However, when it comes to middle managers women are well represented (Jones & Palmer, 2011). Furthermore, women are also seen as softer and better in interpersonal relationships (Daft, 2010). Do these stereotypical feminine attributes give them advantages or disadvantages when representing an organization externally? And how do male and female leaders at different levels perceive them? There might be many reasons that influence the female leader related to how she behaves or communicates, and to which degree she is able to act freely.

To find out how different leaders, both men and women think and perceive other female leaders, a good solution might be to use a qualitative approach: To go profoundly into the chosen themes. Therefore, I decided to interview leaders at different levels in an organization, to see if there exist differences or similarities when it comes to how female leaders are perceived, to which degree they have the opportunity to act freely related to represent the organization externally; and thus if empowerment plays any particular role, and finally; how social norms might influence them.

I first had to prepare theory for my thesis before I was able to conduct this study. This helped me to find important themes, such as theory about stereotypes, attitudes, gender roles, empowerment, and etc. Since these themes also are the topics for my thesis, the leaders that got interviewed also received questions related to this. The goal of this research was to describe and go into the depth of the perceptions, stereotypes and prejudices middle- and top-leaders have towards female leaders, and also if social norms and attitudes concerning gender roles influence female leaders when representing the organization externally. Empowerment will be used to find out if it is

an important concept related to how women are allowed to act freely when representing organizations externally and thus “help” them to get involved in important processes such as decision making and so on. All of this will therefore be presented in the theory section, as well as it is included in the interview guide.

As mentioned earlier there exist a lot of former studies that concerns about female leaders and how they are viewed, but I could not find anything about how they are perceived and if they are influenced by the norms in the organization and/ or society when representing organizations externally. Since Attanapola (2005) claims that empowerment makes women more secure, I also wanted to find out how other leaders thought about this. I believe that this thesis can contribute to give a more comprehensive view about already well-known themes; how female leaders are perceived, especially when it comes to stereotypes, prejudices, gender roles and empowerment, and thus external communication. Therefore, the research proposal and research questions are as following:

Research proposal:

A qualitative study exploring how social norms and empowerment influence female leaders related to represent organizations externally.

Research questions:

1. How do social norms, gender roles, stereotypes and prejudices influence female leaders when they represent organizations externally?
2. What are the perceptions towards female leaders seen from both middle managers and top managers?
3. To which degree can empowerment “help” women when representing organizations externally?

Conducting the study

Since it was important for me to explore perceptions and attitudes among leaders, I decided to use a qualitative approach: To get as profoundly insight as possible.

To get new ideas and test questions about relevant topics, two *focus groups* were conducted before the interviews. According to Neuman (2011), focus groups can be defined as “a group of people informally “interviewed” in a discussion setting that is participating in a qualitative research technique” (p. 459). These groups consisted separately of eight women and eight men that have positions as subordinates, to get an insight into how they perceive female leaders and other themes related to this study. I wanted to see if there were any differences or similarities between these two groups. Seven interviews were conducted among leaders at different levels in an organization to explore differences and similarities related to the themes for this thesis. The respondents consisted of four women and three men, that all varied in age, experience and education. Therefore, the sample seems to consist of satisfactory quality, together with widespread meanings, perceptions and etc. Though the sample might be small, it gives a detailed insight into how female leaders are perceived among some leaders.

Theoretical framework

Since this thesis mainly concerns about female managers and how they are perceived, it might be important to present theory about gender roles (role congruity theory), implicit and explicit attitudes and social norms that might exist in an organization. Furthermore, the theory gathered for this thesis is also about a well-known concept called the Glass ceiling, together with terms such as prejudices, stereotypes, social norms, Role congruity theory, Lack of fit and etc. All this will be defined and presented in this thesis.

Literature review

Although laws in Norway and in many other regions prohibit sex discrimination, it is still a widespread problem for most working women (Bell, McLaughlin & Sequeira, 2002). It seems like traditions such as always having men, as leaders both in the family and at work, still are important all over the world.

According to Palmer and Jones (2011), the first convention on women's rights was held in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. Some centuries later, the literature and national media still do research on how women are perceived as leaders and the difficulties they experience when trying to climb upward the corporate ladder. Though there have been many movements in place and national attention on equal rights, there are still questions of why women today are fighting to break through a Glass ceiling that contributes to limit upward mobility, and this continues to intrigue many researchers. To know that women have to fight for equality in the workplace, one might ask oneself: *What is it* that keeps them from reaching those equal rights that they have fought for in centuries? The literature exists of several discussions and speculations of why women still struggle to reach the top levels of management. Clark, Caffarella and Ingram (1999, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011), claim that women must sacrifice their gender and adopt masculine perspectives, and choose between their personal and professional identities. Some researchers have also suggested that most women do not know how to compete and negotiate for the top levels of management. Furthermore, "stereotypically feminine qualities are generally not the qualities that come to mind when people think of successful leaders, resulting in the portrayal of them as relatively ill-suited to leadership" (Prime, Carter & Wellbourne, 2009, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011, p. 198).

Eagly and Karau (2002) have in their role congruity theory, claimed that there exist an incongruity between the female gender role and the leadership role, and that

leadership roles have attributes that match men better than women. The need to balance these dual identities makes difficulties for women, as they try to achieve advancement, while they also want to maintain social relationships with their colleagues

However, some other researchers claims that it is just a matter of time before women in the same manner as men get the opportunities to become top leaders. Proponents of this point of view argue that the reason that there are fewer women than men who are top leaders, is a natural consequence of them not having been in top managerial positions long enough for the natural career progressions to take hold (Forbes, Piercy & Heyes, 1988, cited in Heilman, 1997). This is often called the “pipeline theory”; however, there is little evidence that supports this theory. Because, if this theory was correct, women should at least comprise 15 % of those at the top level of management. Most other researchers also find this explanation unsatisfactory (Fierman, 1990; Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986; Salmons, 1987, cited in Heilman, 1997). Furthermore, research on this issue has shown that while there is an increased numbers of women in the lower and middle ranks of management, few have advanced to the top level of management (Dipboye, 1987, cited in Heilman, 1997).

Some researchers also blame on women themselves for not getting advancement to the top levels. These authors claims that it is the weaknesses related to skills and attitudes that women bring to the workplace which obstruct their advancement, weaknesses they have to get rid of if they want to succeed. However, no scientific evidence has been reported to validate these assumptions (Heilman, 1997).

The fact that many people have certain opinions and expectations of how women and men should behave, often result in stereotypes and prejudices related to gender roles or social norms that exists in an organization. As a consequence of this women

might struggle more than men to reach the upper levels of management. Madeline Heilman (1997) used the “the Lack of fit” model in her research related to this topic, while Alice H. Eagly and Steven J. Karau (2002) as mentioned earlier refer to “the role congruity theory”. These theories will be explained later in this thesis.

Definitions of stereotypes, prejudices and social norms

Stereotypes can according to Heilman (1997), be defined as a set of attributes ascribed to a group that characterize its individual members because they belong to that particular group. Furthermore, stereotypes related to sex are attributes that are imparted to individual men and women just because of their sex. Heilman (1997), further claims that stereotypes can be a work- saving cognitive mechanism that simplify and organize a complex world. And in many cases it might be effective, such as knowing that rocks are hard and do not melt when submerged in water enables us to understand the environment more effectively than if we had to establish these attributes every time we saw a rock. One of the problems is that stereotypes about groups of people often are inaccurate or exaggerations that do not always fit the individual group member that is targeted. Related to this, stereotypes become the basis for faulty reasoning that might lead to biased feelings and actions, disadvantaging or advantaging others not because of what they are or what they have done, but mostly because of the groups others believe they belong to.

Heilman (1997) argues that the descriptions of men and women often differ dramatically, and apply to almost all men and women as members of their respective groups. As a matter of fact, research has shown that men and women often are seen as polar opposites (Broverman et al., 1972, cited in Heilman, 1997). Men are seen as strong and active, with inherent attributes such as high level of decisiveness, independence, rationality, objectivity and self- confidence. While women are seen as weak and passive, with inherent attributes such as high level of indecisiveness,

dependence, sensitivity, non-objectiveness and insecurity. Men and women are also described differently when it comes to the qualities of warmth and expressiveness; women are often seen as more tender, understanding, concerned with others and comfortable with their own feelings, compared to men. Furthermore, the traits associated with men and women are also valued differently. Though, both sexes are given desirable traits, it is often well known that those attributes associated with men in Western culture are valued higher compared to those associated with women; meaning that achievement-oriented traits that are typically ascribed to men are seen as more valued than those concerning about nurturance and affiliation typically ascribed to women. And one might also expect that this differential desirability of gender stereotype to be even more emphasized in achievement-oriented settings such as in the corporate world. Indeed, research has confirmed this to be so (Darley, 1976; Zellman, 1976, cited in Heilman, 1997). But, are these traditional stereotypes also considerable when women are managers? Are there for instance differences in the perceptions towards men and women as managers compared to the differences between men and women generally? If this is not true, then claiming sex stereotypes as a reason for the inhibition of female managers' career progress might be wrong (Heilman, 1997).

According to Eagly & Karau (2002), *prejudice* can arise from the relations that people perceive between the attributes from the members of a social group and the requirements of the social roles that the group members occupy or try to occupy. Furthermore, prejudice exists when a person has a stereotype about a group that is incongruent with the attributes that are thought to be needed for success in many classes of social roles. If a stereotyped group member and an incongruent social role become mixed together in the mind of the perceiver, this inconsistency might contribute to decrease the expectation of the group member as an actual or potential

occupant of that particular role. Generally, prejudice towards female managers often come from the incongruity that many people perceive between the attributes of women themselves and the attributes for the leader roles.

Eagly & Karau (2002) also claims that prejudice towards female leaders can take two forms. The first is a less favorable evaluation of women's than men's potential to having the position as a manager because leadership ability is seen as more stereotypical for men than for women. The second form is that a less favorable evaluation of the actual behavior of women compared to men is because such behavior is seen as less desirable in women than men. Furthermore, women leaders' choices are often threatened both from the confirmation to the gender role that would produce a failure to meet requirements of their leader role, and that the confirmation to their leader role would produce a failure to meet the requirements of their gender role. These two forms of prejudice will not only produce a more difficult access of women than men to leadership roles but it will also produce more obstacles for women to accomplish success when having these roles.

Social norms can according to Cass R. Sunstein (1996), be defined as social attitudes of approval and disapproval, specifying what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Some norms can be seen as a set of good manners, for example if the norms in an organization "demands" people to be kind and honest towards each other. Other norms reflect morally terrible views, such as in the taboo on interracial relations, while some concerns about hard-won moral commitments, as in the norm against racial discrimination. Sunstein (1996) further claims that there exist social norms about almost every aspect of human behavior. For example, there are norms about driving, eating, when to speak, when to talk, recycling garbage, etc.

Social norms are sometimes codified in law, for example in cases with littering, respecting private property, and discrimination related to gender or race. Laws can also in some ways exist at work, when social norms are enforced through social sanctions, or at least are pervasive. “Political correctness” is not an isolated phenomenon; it occurs everywhere, for instance whenever reputational incentives make high costs on behaviors that are not preferred. Those sanctions that occur often create many unpleasant emotional states in people who have violated norms at the work place. Furthermore, if someone acts in ways that are not consistent with the social norms, public disapproval might produce embarrassment or shame and perhaps create a need to hide. Therefore, the social consequences from these unpleasant feelings brought by violations of social norms might be intense (Sunstein, 1996).

Role congruity theory

Because social roles can be seen as shared expectations that apply to a person who have a certain social position or are members of a certain social category (Biddle, 1979; Sarbin & Allen, 1968, cited in Eagly & Karau, 2002), “gender roles are consensual beliefs about the attributes of women and men” (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574). In earlier research Eagly, also claimed that “these beliefs are more than beliefs about the attributes of women and men: Many of these expectations are normative in the sense that they describe qualities or behavioral tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex” (Eagly, 1987, cited in Eagly & Karau, p. 574, 2002).

Furthermore, in Eagly’s and Karau’s role congruity theory, which has its roots in social role theory (Eagly, 1987, cited in Sümer, 2006), one can divide roles into two norms or expectations; *descriptive norms* (or stereotypes), which are expectations concerning about what a group of people actually do, and *injunctive norms* which are expectations concerning about what some people ought to do or ideally would do (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In other words, according to this theory, gender roles also have

a prescriptive function, meaning that it does not only leads to the perception of women having less leadership ability compared to men, but they also get less favorable evaluations of behaviors related to the fact that they are women *and* possess a leadership role. This is because their behaviors are seen as inconsistent with beliefs about expected and desirable feminine behaviors. Descriptive and injunctive aspects of the gender roles often lead to at least three negative consequences for women, such as perceiving less favorable attitudes related to be a woman and at the same time be a leader, more difficulties than men in achieving top leadership positions, and less favorable evaluations of their effectiveness (Eagly, 1987, cited in Sümer, 2006).

However, women will not always be targets for prejudice related to have the position as a leader, because several conditions might moderate these prejudices, such as the incongruity between the descriptive content of the female leader role and a leader role, and that prejudice will be weakened or absent related to how much this incongruity is weak or absent. But also since prejudice follows from incongruity between a leader's behavior and the injunctive content of the female gender role, other moderators might influence prejudice. The more a leadership role becomes *agentic*, which are attributes ascribed to men that include characteristics such as assertiveness, controlling, and confident tendency, such as aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, self-sufficient, self-confident, and also the ability to be a manager, the chance is bigger that such women manage to elicit unfavorable evaluation since their behavior differ from the injunctive norms related to the female gender role. And of course it also depends on to which degree a woman fulfils these agentic requirements (Bakan, 1966; Eagly, 1987, cited in Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Furthermore, the principle of the role congruity also makes opportunities for prejudice towards male leaders, to some extent if there exist leader roles that are

descriptive and that the injunctive content is mostly feminine. But since leadership is generally seen as masculine, leader roles like that are rare, and normally women and not men are vulnerable to role incongruity prejudice when it comes to having a position as a leader. In addition, the degree of prejudice also differs related to the leader's situation and characteristics of the perceiver (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

According to Eagly and Karau (2002), there have been several researches on the descriptive and the injunctive aspect of the gender roles and both aspects are well documented. Evidence that descriptive norms are associated with both gender are well known, because people believe that each sex has typical or divergent traits and behaviors (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Newport, 2001; Williams & Best, 1990a; cited in Eagly & Karau, 2002). Furthermore, a main point in social role theory is that most of the beliefs about gender can be related to agentic attributes, as mentioned earlier, and *communal* attributes (Bakan, 1966; Eagly, 1987, cited in Eagly & Karau, 2002). The communal attributes, which mostly are assigned to women, describe mainly a concern with welfare of other people, for instance holding characteristics as being affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing, and gentle (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Congruity of gender roles and leadership roles

Role congruity theory has its roots in social role theory's treatment of the content in gender roles and in how they promote sex differences in behavior (Eagly et al., 2000, cited in Eagly & Karau, 2002). But role congruity theory goes further in that it considers the congruity between gender roles and other roles, such as the leader roles, at the same time as it specifies main points and processes that influences congruity perceptions and how this often result in prejudice and prejudicial behavior (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

A reason for the prejudice towards female leaders is inherent in the female gender role and comes from the dissimilarity to the expectations that most people normally have about leaders. Prejudice might arise when people judge women as actual or potential occupants of having a leader role because of inconsistency between the communal attributes that people associate with women and the agentic attributes they believe a leader shall hold. Furthermore, people usually have dissimilar beliefs about women and leaders and similar beliefs about men and leaders. When it comes to how male managers perceive women managers, Heilman and her colleagues demonstrated in their research related to what attributes a successful manager holds, that male managers rated women managers as more agentic than communal than women in general, though not as agentic as men managers (Heilman, Block & Martell, 1995; Heilman et. al., 1989, cited in Eagly & Karau, 2002).

On the one hand research has shown that female managers who were described as successful were *almost* as similar to successful managers in general as successful male managers were, while on the other hand, perceiving a female manager as very similar to her male colleagues might give her disadvantages. These disadvantages might come from the injunctive norms that many people associate with the female gender role. Since women who seem to be effective leaders usually violate standards for their own gender when they manifest male stereotypical agentic attributes and fail to manifest their “own” stereotypical communal attributes, they are often unfavorably judged for their violation of the gender role, especially by those people who prefer traditional gender roles (Cialdini & Trost, 1998, cited in Eagly & Karau, 2002). Other variables, such as physical attractiveness, feminine clothing, and token status might also disadvantage women because it influences the perceivers to weight the female gender role more heavily when judging women as leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Therefore,

one might assume that women managers have to both dress and act more agentic in similar manner as their male counterparts do, though they have to be careful and not “leave” all their communal attributes behind. If they do so, they do not fit into the gender role where they belong, being a woman.

Eagly and Karau (2002) further claims that as long as women are assimilated to the relative lack of agency inherent in the norms of the female gender role, a double standard often exists about task competence, that forces women to perform better than men to be considered as competent as men. Generally, research has shown that people perceive men as more competent, and that people are more influenced by men; this was also the result when women were judging themselves. But at the same time that they required more evidence from women than men to infer high ability, people have lower standards for women when it comes to the amount of task competence that they considered minimally acceptable. However, even if a woman achieves recognition for her competence, this recognition might not have the same potential for leadership compared with a man and his potential as a leader, because women have less inherent agentic behavior and it does not match the communal behavior expected of them.

But do there exist changes in stereotypes over time? Eagly and Karau (2002, cited in Eagly et. al, 2011) have earlier argued that the incongruity between leader stereotypes and the gender stereotypes is not a fixed category but varies with change in either stereotype. Cultural changes over time might reduce women’s role incongruity related to leadership. There are several organizational experts that claim that definitions of good managerial practices have changed in time related to the features of the contemporary organizational environment, such as fast social and technological change and unprecedented complexity of many of the organization’s missions and contexts. Furthermore, according to analyzes conducted related to this, these changed

conditions compromise the efficacy of the top- down- and- control leadership while it also provoke democratic relationships, employees who get involved in decision-making processes, delegations and team based leadership skills (Gergen, 2005; Kanter, 1997; Lipman- Blumen, 2000; McCauley, 2004, cited in Eagly et. al, 2011). This type of leadership is seen as less masculine than many other traditional leadership, as it include typical communal attributes as being unselfish and concerned with other, etc. (Eagly et. al, 2011).

The lack of fit model

As mentioned earlier stereotypes often play a role related to women and their difficulties to become top leaders, it is thus important to remember that the top leadership is typical “male” in character (Heilman, 1997), or as Eagly and Karau (2002) argue; leaderships often have stereotypical male attributes. This kind of sex-typing has deep roots. Paid work, especially if it is important, such as a having a position as a leader has originally been a man’s domain. Though, not all jobs are considered to be male in sex- type, for instance jobs as: Nurses, librarians, secretaries, elementary school teachers, which are all traditionally a women’s domain. Having these jobs it is important to have typical feminine skills and attributes that society also expect from women, such as being sensitive, caring and working with service. However, the job as a manager is usually quite different, because it is mostly seen as a man’ s domain and is thought to require an achievement- oriented aggressiveness and an emotional toughness that is characteristic for being a male. Thus, most managers are usually men; in addition to that a good management is also seen as a manly business. A manager is often seen believed to have skills and attributes that are stereotypical for men as a group (Heilman, 1997).

Related to all this, it could be crucial to ask; how do stereotyped conceptions of women and corporate managerial positions affect women’s career advancement

(Heilman, 1997)? According to Heilman (1997), expectations about how successful someone will be when having a particular job can be seen as the driving force underlying personnel decisions. Furthermore, these performance expectations are determined by the fit between the attributes a person has related to the work setting and the perceptions of what the job requires when it comes to skills and orientations. If the fit is satisfactory, success is expected, likewise if the fit is seen as poor, then failure will be expected. These expectations, whether they are positive or negative, might be important when evaluating job situations, because there exists a cognitive tendency to perpetuate and confirm them. If expectations concerning an individual are apparent, it creates a predisposition of negativity or positivity that influences perceptions and judgments. They contribute to highlight what kind of information about a person is attended to, influence how particular information that is made available is interpreted, while it also affects information that is remembered and if this is recalled during critical decisions.

Heilman (1997) further argues that the attributes and skills presumed to be required for having a position as a top leader do not fit the attributes that are stereotypical for women as a group. When taking a leadership role, which often requires making tough decisions and actively competing for resources are not something “women normally do”. Additionally, one might expect that if a stereotyped view of women were taken due to have an executive role, there would exist expectations of failure. These expectations of failure have also consequences for how women are evaluated: Creating clearly a bias that is seen negatively. Finally, women are not seen as suited for having a role as a top leader, and information that shows that they as a matter of fact are good equipped tends to be discredited and/ or distorted to fit these negative expectations that people often have inherent.

Covert discrimination seen as the Glass ceiling

The Glass ceiling was for the first time introduced in 1986 in “The Wall Street Journal” in a column called “Corporate Women” (Lampe, 2001, cited in Insch, McIntyre & Napier, 2008). It has been used as a metaphor to describe corporate America but also other regions in the world, “and is referred to the unseen artificial barriers that bar women from top executive jobs” (Insch et al., 2008, p. 20). Furthermore, it has been seen as “an invisible, yet quite impenetrable, barrier serves to prevent all but a disproportionately few women from reaching the ranks of the corporate hierarchy, regardless of their achievement and merits” (Lampe, 2001, cited in Insch et al., 2008, p. 20). Prejudice is often thought to be a reason for these barriers. However, there is less resistance for women if they want to enter middle management positions, because these positions are not at the strategic level of the organization (Tsui & Gutek, 1984, cited in Gregory, 1990).

One of the main reasons for the Glass ceiling effect is that women have traditionally been hired into positions that have had stereotypical feminine attributes. For instance, women managers are often common in personnel or human resources, but are rarely when it comes to promotions to the top levels of managements due to finance, marketing, sales, or production. Women have traditionally not had the opportunities to be hired into so-called pipe-line positions (Elmuti et al., 2003, cited in Insch et al., 2008). Richard L. Daft (2010) claims that many women leaders often feel that the cost of climbing upward the corporal ladder is too high. They feel that they have to sacrifice personal time, friendships, or hobbies because they still do the most of the work at home, such as childcare, cleaning, and etc, in addition to their business responsibilities.

Furthermore, Daft (2008) argues that together with a Glass ceiling there also exist “Glass walls” that also serve as invisible barriers for women related to important

lateral movements within the organization. Glass walls are apparent in areas such as line supervision or general management and enable women and other minorities to achieve senior- level positions.

Overt discrimination

Bell et al. (2002), define *overt discrimination* “as the use of gender as a criterion for employment- related decisions. (...) Overt discrimination includes, but is not limited to, such behaviors as refusing to hire women, or steering them to “women’s jobs” (Bell et al., 2002, p. 66). Together with social norms and perceptions of what is appropriate related to each gender, overt discrimination has led to occupational sex segregation. For instance, women are the majority in jobs such as: Nurses, flight attendants, and secretaries, in supportive of men, who usually have the positions as physicians, pilots, and are managers (Roos & Gatta, 2001, cited in Bell et al., 2002). Female dominated jobs are characterized by low pay, low status and usually short and difficult career ladders (Reskin, 1997, cited in Bell et al., 2002).

Furthermore, Bell et al. (2002) claim that since women are rarely in positions of power and therefore they do not have the opportunity to influence behavior, which often contributes to persistence of sexual harassment. Dipboye (1985, cited in Bell et al., 2002) argues that women may not be treated fairly in organizations because the organizational structure might perpetuate both indirectly and directly that they should not be. In other words, social norms in the organization influence the treatment of women. The absence of women in manager positions might also give an indication to sexual harassers that women are viewed as less valuable members of an organization.

Top management are as mentioned earlier mostly dominated by men, and when it comes to the social functions and out- site activities, such as golf, country club and/ or gym membership, and etc., it is also often limited to male colleagues. The social contact made when meeting socially is often important when promotional

opportunities arise because top managers often look for people they trust and are comfortable with (Elmuti et al., 2003; Linehan and Scullion, 2004, cited in Insch et al., 2008). Organizations also often exclude women for instance when expatriate managers are selected. If there is no overt action by the upper management, this might be a self-reinforcing cycle that is difficult to stop (Insch, et al, 2008).

“Contra-power” harassment and workplace relationships between women

One might assume that women stick together because of prejudices, stereotypes and other struggles they often experience related to work and also having the position as a leader. However, this has not been supported in the literature. Women who get the opportunity to become a leader are often viewed as a threat to others: Both men and women (Heifetz, 2007; Mooney, 2005; Sandler, 1986; Tanenbaum, 2002, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011). Most women might feel that friendships and ambitions cannot coexist at the workplace (Chesler, 2001; Mooney, 2005, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011).

Furthermore, women managers might also experience “contra-power” harassment, meaning that lower status men or women harass higher status women (Benson, 1984; Grauerholz, 1989; McKinney, 1990, 1992, cited in Bell et al., 2002).

Palmer and Jones (2011), further claims that many ambitious women often are afraid that they will be perceived negatively by colleagues and therefore might believe that it is necessary to hide their ambitions so that they do not have to feel ashamed of wanting achievement (Heifetz, 2007, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011). When keeping these desires under wraps, it often results in a self- defeating dynamic that disables women in getting the power that they really want (Heifetz, 2007, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011). Heifetz (2007, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011) also claims that even when women deserved having the position as a leader, it still would not decrease the

issues related to achievement of women in the workplace, and even more specifically, increases the beneficial relationship between women.

Often when women work together they do not appear to be supportive. Women fail to support each other, they also actively undermined their authority and credibility, and they even try to sabotage for one another. They are also the first to attack other women who get promotion (Heim & Murphy, 2003, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011). To have other females that women must compete with, result in feelings of inadequacy that comes from real societal situations; women and their restrictive roles (Tanenbaum, 2002, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011). They might also limit other women's access to different important meetings and committees, for instance they can withhold information, assignments and promotions, or inhibit interactions with mentors or other important people (Klaus, 2009, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011). If they do this they might feel that they maintain their token positions and increase the competition from other female colleagues (Palmer & Jones, 2011).

However, one might asks; why do women act towards each other like this? This traditional behavior of women towards other of the same gender often results in difficulties related to their career advancement. Are they jealous? Or do they not want other of the same gender to achieve positions that they might not be able by themselves to get? It might be expected that women should be good in interpersonal relationships and indeed value it. The lack of this together with the absence of women in many manager positions might create feelings of inequality for women in organizations, and it also minimizes their opportunities to create associations (Giscombe, 2007, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011).

Honest communication might be difficult, if women do not care for social relationships with one another. Research has also shown that women often felt that it

was difficult to confront other women. They were also quietly sabotaging each other if they felt threatened, instead of communicating honestly about problems that occurred. This happened because of the desire most women have related to behave nicely to coworkers, at the same time as they have a need to be successful in their careers, though both cannot coexist. For many women outward competition is seen as inappropriate, at the same time as social norms influence women to battle without engaging directly towards each other. They want to be perceived as professional and do not want to alienate others, therefore they choose covert acts such as lying and sabotaging so that they can reach what they really want (Mooney, 2005, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011). Seeing all this together, one might assume that contra-power harassment might be apparent in the workplace mostly as covert discrimination between the female leader and her female subordinates. In addition, women often also use “gossiping, spreading rumors, divulging secrets, making public insinuations and insulting comments, and withdrawing friendships” (Heim & Murphy, 2003, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011, p. 191).

On the one hand women are seen as supporting and mentoring towards each other, but on the other hand research has also shown that many women did not want to work for other women. Actually, both men and women claim that their female manager was competitive, often was able to withhold information, and that they also would take the credit and resulting power from other professional efforts, resulting in an opportunity for them to climb upward the corporate ladder. Finally, female managers are often viewed as less qualified in typical manager attributes such as problem solving (Giscombe, 2007, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011). According to Palmer and Jones (2011), this absence of trust and respect for one another might decrease the impact of female managers within organizations.

Age as an important factor due to the relationships between women

Many older women might feel resented by younger women, if they feel that they are not given the respect they believe they deserve (Mooney, 2005, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011). This feeling of disrespect can be a result of female managers who did not have any successful experiences in former years, perhaps because their own manager was male and gender propriety was crucial (Sandler, 1986, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011). Or perhaps older women feel that younger women have not struggled as much as they had to when entering the work life (Gordon, 2006, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011)?

Attitudes and perceptions towards female managers

Attitudes can be “conceptualized as stemming from a person’s beliefs regarding a particular behavior and its consequences. In turn, attitudes go on to shape an individual’s behavioral intentions and ultimately, their consequent actions” (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, cited in Nelson, Benson & Jensen, 2010, p. 90).

There might be many reasons why both men and women often perceive female managers as less qualified in stereotypical male related tasks. One of the reasons could be the attitudes that people have towards female leaders, attitudes that might be influenced by stereotypes and old beliefs of how women should behave. Social norms and the society that surrounds them might also influence them to behave due to the expected gender role as a woman. According to Freedman, Carlsmith and Sears (1970, cited in Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980): “Attitudes always produce pressure to behave consistently with them, but external pressures and extraneous considerations can cause people to behave inconsistently with their attitudes” (p. 25).

Furthermore, attitudes can according to Greenwald and Banaji (1995, cited in Dovidio, Pagotto & Hebl, 2011), be divided into *explicit* processes that are conscious, deliberate and controllable, and *implicit* processes that involve a lack of awareness and

are unintentionally activated. An explicit measure of prejudice towards women often consists of direct self-reports of attitudes, while implicit measures involve many different techniques, such as indirect self-report responses that include word fragment completions, linguistic cues, attributions and explanations (Fazio & Olson, 2003, cited in Dovidio et al., 2011). These implicit attitudes might also be unconscious. Bargh and Raymond (1995), claim that those people who discriminate are often not aware of it, and how it prospectively affects those who get affected. They also argue that the lack of awareness can be related to the unintentional influence when making stereotypes in forming impressions of other people. Thus one might ask if the appearance of Glass ceilings and covert discrimination might be a result of implicit attitudes that are unintended? Related to the theme for this thesis one might therefore assume that some male managers are not aware that they discriminate women, or at least they are not aware of how it might affect them.

Implicit and explicit attitudes can be seen as *dual attitudes*. With experience or socialization, many people might change their attitudes; however, their original one is not replaced. The original attitude stays in memory and becomes implicit, while the newest attitude becomes conscious and explicit. These explicit attitudes might change and evolve easily, while implicit attitudes are concerned about overlearning and habitual reactions. Implicit attitudes are also persistent and more difficult to change (Wilson, Lindsey & Schooler, 2000, cited in Dovidio et al., 2011).

When it comes to the explicit and implicit attitudes both genders have towards female authorities, Rudman and Kilianski (2000) claim that “defining implicit attitudes as the specific contrast between negative and positive facilitation for female authority primes, we found that attitudes toward female authorities were negative for men and women alike and more negative than were attitudes toward the other primes (male

authorities, low-authority females, and low-authority males)” (p. 1325). However, the research showed gender differences related to the measure of explicit attitudes, where women reported less prejudice against female authorities compared to men. Rudman and Kilianski (2000) also concluded that people that associate men with higher authority and women with the opposite tend to have prejudice against female authorities. Evidence for this was found measuring both implicit and explicit attitudes towards women as managers.

Are these attitudes also apparent when it comes to how much female leaders are allowed to act freely when they communicate externally? Do top managers have different perceptions than middle managers related to how they perceive the female leader? And are these perceptions unintended?

Empowerment

According to Richard L. Daft (2010), *empowerment* can be related to power sharing and the delegation of power or authority to subordinates in a company. The subordinates get the opportunity to get involved in processes that concern about their own work environment, where they are able to make their own decisions and promote their own opinions. Empowerment often gives strong motivation, which is also a higher need for most people. Research has also shown that many individuals have a need for self-efficacy, which can be defined as the capacity to produce results or outcomes, in other words; to feel that they are effective. Since most employees also have a need to do a good job, empowerment makes leaders release the motivation that already is apparent. When the responsibilities increase, it motivates employees to do their job as best as they can.

Furthermore, leaders get many benefits from the expanded capabilities when involving employees. This makes the leaders focus more on the vision and the big picture. It also makes it easier for the leaders if subordinates are able to respond better

and faster to the external market that they serve. Frontline employees are often better than the leaders when it comes to improve the work process, satisfy customers, or solve problems that might arise. When empowering subordinates, a leader makes sure that they understand that the job they are doing is important for the organization's mission and performance, therefore they get the opportunity to act more freely. Empowered employees might create flexibility, motivation, and superior performance capabilities for many organizations (Daft, 2010).

Finally, empowerment is also a process that takes time to achieve, but through this process women might increase their self-confidence, self-esteem, dignity, and self-identity and they will not let anyone to suppress and exploit them (Attanapola, 2005).

Methodology

Method and research design

There are two different methods one can consider when doing research; *quantitative*, that concerns about data collection in form of numbers and *qualitative*, that collects data in the form of visual images, words or sounds (Neuman, 2012). According to Neuman (2012), a good researcher knows about the existence of several different techniques, their strengths and limitations, and that quantitative and qualitative techniques can be blended. Different techniques of same method can also be blended, such as focus groups and interviews as in qualitative methods. Furthermore, typical qualitative methods can for instance in addition to interviews and focus groups be observations or participant observations in the field, while for quantitative methods it can be questionnaires, experiments, and etc.

Since this thesis describes how different leaders at different levels in an organization perceive and think about female leaders related to external communication, it seems best to go “into the depth” of the participants' minds, to get a

detailed view of their thoughts and attitudes. Therefore, a qualitative approach was chosen. No matter what type of qualitative technique a researcher chooses, some characteristics for all qualitative researches are that the researcher focuses on a narrow, particularly unilateral and geographical limited area and goes profoundly into it. Another characteristic is the closeness to the research process, for instance the interviewees. The researcher often stays for a while at the place where the data is collected and has the opportunity to use several different techniques, such as observing, writing notes, tape recording and etc. (Moen & Karlsdóttir, 2011).

Interviews were chosen as the most appropriate method for this research. This can be conducted by mail, telephone or face- to face. When having a face- to face interview the researcher gets the opportunity to observe the surroundings, has flexibility when asking questions, and can use nonverbal communication and visual aids. This form of interview also has the highest response rates (Neuman, 2012). Face-to face interviews with seven different leaders was thus chosen. However, some of the disadvantages the researcher must be aware of are that he or she can create biases, the validity of the answers are strongly influenced by the interviewees honesty and that the answers can be misinterpreted by the researcher (Kruuse, 1999).

There are three types of interviews. *Structured interviews* are planned and prepared in advance and all the participants get precisely the same questions. Usually there is a limited set of respondent categories. This is also the least flexible type. In contrast one has *unstructured interviews*, where the participants do not have to follow a limited schedule of questions and response categories made by the interviewer. The interviewer often has some key questions, but this type of interview is more like a conversation, since the participants more or less get the opportunity to act freely. Finally, one has *half- structured interviews*, which were chosen for this thesis, because

at the same time as the interviewer gets the opportunity to plan the questions/ the interviews in advance, he or she also gives the participants the opportunity to talk and act freely, thus this type of interview is some kind of a conversation, it is still limited around key questions (Postholm, 2010). This type of interview was chosen because I wanted answers about specific topics, at the same time that I did not want to lock the participants in limited response categories; I wanted flexibility, details and give the participants the opportunity to give me answers that were complementary among perhaps sensitive and difficult themes. But it was also important for me to have a certain control over the conversation, to get answers that are relevant for my thesis.

According to Neuman (2012), exploratory research is often the first stage in many researches, which was also seen as appropriate in this study. This made me find relevant theory, resulted in new ideas and a broader insight into the field of how female leaders are perceived in former studies.

Furthermore, the topics of this thesis are not something new. There are authors that have studied same or similar themes before, for instance about stereotypes, prejudices, gender roles, attitudes, and etc. However, the goal for my thesis was to describe how this occurs among a hierarchy of different leaders in an organization. Therefore, a *descriptive research* design was chosen. “The goal of descriptive research is to present a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship” (Neuman, 2012, p. 13).

Sample selection

Researchers use samples in both qualitative and quantitative methods. For quantitative researchers it is important to get as genuine representative sample as possible, in other words, having a sample that has all of the characteristics of the population from which it was chosen. Having a proper sample one gets the opportunity to generalize the results to the entire population (Neuman, 2012). In qualitative

research the goal is to sample aspects/ features of the social world that highlight or focus on important dimensions or processes in complex social lives. Furthermore, one chooses few participants to get clarity, insight, and understanding about topics or relationships among people. Having a qualitative sample, it is important to get a deeper understanding of larger processes, relationships, or social scenes. It also gives valuable information or perhaps new aspects (Neuman, 2011). “In qualitative research, it is their relevance to the research topic rather than their representativeness which determines the way in which the people to be studied are selected” (Flick, 1998, cited in Neuman, 2011, p. 241).

The population I want to test is the different leaders in a bar- and restaurant corporate group. From this a sample of seven leaders was chosen. I chose leaders with different ages, experiences, positions, educations, and of course both women and men. Therefore, I believe that this sample covers widespread viewpoints, and thus give a sufficient view of the situation among leaders at different levels in the chosen organization.

Qualitative methods have as mentioned earlier been chosen for this thesis, to explore and describe how leaders at different levels in organizations perceive female leaders related to external communication. Since this thesis concerns about themes that might be perceived as sensitive and difficult to talk about, I chose to keep the participants anonymous, thus making the atmosphere under the interviews more relaxed, and hoping to increase the validity of the answers; to get them to answer honestly. All the participants were working in the same organization, a bar- and restaurant corporate group (which also includes a hotel). I chose to focus on only one organization, because of the hierarchy of leaders, that was also the target for my thesis, and also that it is a bar- and restaurant corporate group, which I think is interesting,

because of my own situation; as a female leader in a large corporate bar- and restaurant group. I wanted to explore and describe perceptions of female leaders; what is common? And what can I expect for my predictable future job in the same business? The chosen corporate group was also kept anonymous, not just to get as honestly answers as possible, but also since I interviewed leaders at different levels, and that no matter what they answered; it cannot be led back to them. These leaders are important for the bars and/ or restaurants where they work, and it was extremely important for me to not destroy their image as successful leaders, especially, since some of them occur often in the media. Of course, there will be some limitations related to the representativeness of the sample since it only includes leaders from *one* corporate group, though it still gives a clear picture and indications of how some leaders perceive female leaders.

Data collection

Secondary and primary sources

Data can be divided into *primary* and *secondary* sources. Primary sources can be qualitative or quantitative data of people in the past and that have been taken care of and are still present, such as letters, diaries, newspapers, movies, novels, articles of clothing, photographs, and etc. While secondary sources can be qualitative and quantitative data used in historical research that are reported or written by others who were not directly involved in the events or the setting (Neuman, 2011).

In this thesis secondary sources have been used in the theoretical part, using several articles and some books from other authors, as well as it contributed to the creation of ideas related to what topics that were chosen, interview guide, methods and etc. Especially theory from Eagly and Karau (2002), Heilman (1997), Rudman and Kilinski (2000) and Palmer and Jones (2011) have been used to create the theory for this thesis, but it has also given me ideas related to research questions, and the

interview guide. The questions on the interview guide are all inspired by the theory used for this thesis. Gender roles, stereotypes, prejudices, role congruity theory, the lack of fit model and etc., are research conducted by some of the authors mentioned above. When it comes to methodology part, Neuman's books: *Understanding research* (2012) and *Social research methods* (2011) are the main theory used in this part of the thesis.

Furthermore, the questions used for the interviews conducted were tested using two focus groups. There were eight women in the first group and eight men in the second; all of them were working as subordinates in the same bar- and restaurant corporate group as the seven leaders. The questions used in the first group consisting of only women were improved (some word syllables, examples related to the topics, and etc.) before the second group consisting of only men. After finishing both of the groups, I got some new ideas, for instance question number 12 (appendix 1), which I included in the interview guide together with some re- formulated questions, to make the questions as relevant and understandable as possible.

The primary sources in this thesis are the data collected when conducting interviews and focus groups. Before conducting interviews, there are some considerations. On the one hand, the interviewer must keep the respondent "on task", must not be judgmental and try to make the respondent changes her or his opinions or beliefs, avoid misunderstandings and leading questions, and etc. On the other hand, the respondent should not evade questions and should also give as truthful and honest answers as possible. The respondent also provides all of the information, while the interviewer should not correct a respondent's factual errors (Neuman, 2011).

Conducting the interviews

The role of an interviewer is difficult, according to Neuman (2012), and there are many considerations one has to be aware of. The interviewer must for instance control

the conversation and its flow of interaction. He or she must also obtain cooperation and build rapport at the same time, as he or she remains objective and neutral. Furthermore, the interviewer tries to reduce embarrassment, fear and suspicion, making the respondents feel as comfortable as possible. A good interviewer also needs to help the respondents to feel that they should give truthful answers.

Some questions were also followed up with *probes*, which helped me as an interviewer to elicit an appropriate response when the respondent's answer was unclear or incomplete (Neuman, 2011). Probes were specially used when the answers were short and I wanted them to explain the reason *why* they had such opinion.

The interviews were mostly conducted in different restaurants or cafés belonging to the chosen bar- and restaurant corporate group. Some of the interviews were also conducted at the respondent's offices or working places. The interviews held in the restaurants were interrupted a couple of times from colleagues or other friends of the respondents, and I had to stop the tape recorder a couple of times. One of the interviews was also interrupted by a phone call and the respondent had to leave in the middle of the interview, and I had to come back later to finish my questions. However, most of the interviews were held with no significant interruptions. The interviews were held from the 27th until the 30th of March 2012. The shortest one lasted for 35 minutes and 25 seconds, while the longest one lasted for 1 hour, 3 minutes and 25 seconds. Summing all interviews together the average was 49 minutes and 72 seconds. Some questions were more "popular" than others, which resulted in more comprehensive answers compared to other questions.

All the respondents received request on e-mail in front of the interviews (appendix 2), including information and purpose of the study. Most of the respondents answered quickly, and after approximately a week, agreements about having interviews were

made. To record the interviews an Iphone 4s was used. There were no problems using this. The recordings were afterwards transferred to a computer, and then transferred to a CD, so that everything that was said during the interviews, was stored, and thus can be checked for authenticity.

Codes and analyzing of the data

After the data has been transcribed, translated (in this thesis; translated from Norwegian into English) and anonymized, one can start to develop *codes*. In qualitative data this is a central part of the analysis. Codes are often used to collect different issues, topics, ideas, opinions, etc., that is evident in the data into categories. They are mainly topics that are discussed by participants and afterwards identified through reading the data. Furthermore, some of these codes can be *inductive* and are raised by the participants themselves, while others might have been prompted by the interviewer using topics in an interview guide that were found in the literature and theory, and are called *deductive* codes. Deductive codes are thus chosen for this thesis. There are two purposes why one should identify codes. Firstly, it helps one to identify the range of issues in the data, and understand the meanings the participants give these issues. Secondly, codes are also used as topical markers to index the entire data set and therefore help the researcher to locate every place in the data where a certain issue is discussed (called coding). Later this helps the researcher to conduct a focused analysis of a specific issue in the data. It is important to remember that many qualitative studies comprise several hundred pages, and therefore sorting the data makes it easier and more lucid to read (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011).

The findings are organized and will be presented in the “Findings” section. Together with quotations, the findings are divided into three topics; “Social norms, gender roles, stereotypes and prejudices”, “The perceptions towards female leaders held by different leaders at different levels in an organization” and “Empowerment”.

These three topics are related to the three research questions mentioned earlier in this thesis. First, the background of the interviewees are organized and presented, and then the three latter are presented including some sub- topics. Every category is also presented with the main findings related to that particular category first, to make it as clearly and easily as possible to read. Further descriptions and how to read this will be presented in the “Findings” section.

Ethics

According to Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011), there are several different ethical considerations a researcher needs to be aware of, such as:

- *“Informed consent.* Individuals should be provided with sufficient information about the research, in a format that is comprehensive to them, and make a voluntary decision to participate in a research study.
- *Self- determination.* Individuals have the right to determine their own participation in research, including the right to refuse participation without negative consequences.
- *Minimization of harm.* Researchers should not do any harm to participants or put them at risk.
- *Anonymity.* Researchers should protect the identity of research participants at all times.
- *Confidentiality.* Researchers should ensure that all data records are kept confidential at all times” (p. 63).

In advance of the research all the 7 leaders got an e- mail that confirmed their anonymity (appendix 2). This was also confirmed when introducing the thesis and myself during the interviews. All the participants in the focus groups also got the same information before the discussion started. It was also important to not harm the interviewees, and no matter what they said; it would not be written in any negative

manner. The name on their working places were also kept anonymously; making sure that nothing can be led back to them. Questions in the interview guide might be perceived as difficult to answer honestly to, perhaps because of the need to be “political correct” and protect the organization and the leaders themselves. Therefore, anonymity was considered as extremely important when writing this thesis; to make the participants relax and answer as honestly as possible.

Reliability and validity

To have a valid and reliable research are central concerns in all measurements. However, it is not possible to get perfect reliability and validity, they are more like ideals that researchers strive to reach (Neuman, 2011).

To have *reliability*, a researcher has dependability or consistency in his or her measure. This means that the same thing occurs over and over again under the identical or similar conditions. The opposite of a reliable result is having an erratic, unstable, or inconsistent result that occurs because of the measurement itself (Neuman, 2011). In qualitative data study, two different researchers might not get identical results measuring the same thing. Perhaps one of the researchers uses a unique mix of measures that the other one does not use. These diverse measures and differences that exist among researchers illuminate many of the dimensions related to one particular case or setting. Furthermore, different researchers or different measures can give reliable measurement. However, it is not as reliable as quantitative research that creates a single, fixed, standard, and unchanging measure, but it is reliable by observing and measuring in a consistent and self-conscious way. Thus a researcher needs to measure in a self-conscious, consistent way and adjust to fit the specific research situation (Neuman, 2012).

The sample chosen for this thesis only consists of leaders from one particular bar- and restaurant corporate group. This decreases the reliability because one does not

know if the findings in this thesis will be the same if one does the same research in other bar- and restaurant corporate groups. But since the themes and concepts studied in this thesis are not something new; several researchers have studied the same or similar topics before, especially when it comes to gender roles, stereotypes and prejudices towards female leaders and so on, the reliability related to most of the concepts seems satisfactory. Therefore, one might say that earlier research indirectly increases the reliability of the study in this thesis, since many of the findings can be compared to earlier studies by other researchers.

All the interviews were recorded, and will be stored on a CD, and therefore can be examined for authenticity. When conducting the interviews, I did my best to not influence the interviewees in any direction to change his or her view. When writing the “findings”, all the views are written exactly as they were said during the interviews. This also contributes to make the measurement for this thesis consistent and self-conscious; meaning that everybody that participated in this research were treated the same way and that I as a researcher was truly aware of not influencing the interviewees in any directions, at the same time as everything was written as it was said when conducting the interviews.

Validity concerns about truthfulness, and how well it fits actual reality. If validity is not apparent, it means that the fit between the ideas or concepts that we try to analyze in the social world and what occurs in it is seen as poor. In other words, validity concerns about questions of how well we measure social reality using our constructs about it (Neuman, 2011). In qualitative data it is important that the measures have authenticity, meaning a fair, honest, and balanced view of social life from a person who lives in the social world. Validity in qualitative data gets an inside view

into the person that is being studied. The researcher gets a detailed account of how people he or she studies see, feel about and understands something (Neuman, 2012).

Validity can be seen as *internal* and *external*. Internal validity means that there have not been made errors internal to the design of the research that can create false conclusions (Neuman, 2011). In advance of the interviews theory about the chosen themes for this thesis was accurately studied. The questions on the interview guide also arrived from this theory, which contribute to make the questions fit the themes in this thesis, as it also increases credibility; it measures what it was set out to measure. The questions were also tested using two focus groups, to make them as understandable as possible when interviewing the leaders.

External validity concerns about whether a researcher is able to generalize a result that he or she found in a specific setting with a particular small group externally to other settings and other people (Neuman, 2011). Since the chosen sample for this thesis is obviously not a random one, and it only consists of seven leaders from one particular bar- and restaurant corporate group, it is difficult to generalize the result to other settings or other people. However, generalization might not be the main purpose doing a qualitative research as mentioned earlier; it is rather the relevance to the research topics than the representativeness that are important when choosing people to participate in the study (Neuman, 2011). Though, earlier research with same or similar results indirectly contributes to increase the external validity, including leaders in other bar- and restaurant corporate groups would certainly increase the external validity in this thesis. Including a quantitative method, such as a questionnaire would also made it easier to generalize, and can perhaps be seen as a recommendation for future research; to find out if the findings in this thesis also is apparent in other bar- and restaurant corporate groups.

Objectivity

When measuring something in the social world, Neuman (2011), claims it is important to try to be fair, honest, truthful, and unbiased in our research. We must choose to “walk a fine line” between intimacy and detachment and prioritize personal integrity and honesty. Personnel openness and integrity are central aspects when doing a qualitative study. Because of my own experiences so far in the bar- and restaurant business, and because of the fact that I have a position as a female leader in the same business, it might influence the questions in the interview guide in a “negative” direction. For instance, using many words that might be perceived negatively, such as “discrimination”, “stereotypes”, “prejudices” and etc. In other words, my own thoughts and experiences have to some extent influenced the wording of the questions used during the interviews. However, during the interviews, I did my best to not be biased, dishonest, and unethical, trying to create as relaxed and honest atmosphere as possible, and thereby receive truthful answers to my questions.

Findings

As mentioned earlier in the topic “Codes and analyzing of the data”, *deductive* coding has been used to sort out the findings, and the questions used for the interview guide arrive from the theory. Furthermore, the findings are divided into three main-topics, arrived from the research questions and named: “Social norms, gender roles, stereotypes, and prejudices”, “The perceptions towards female leaders held by different leaders at different levels in an organization” and “Empowerment”. Before these three main-topics, findings related to the respondents’ background are also included. The anonymity of the respondents are as mentioned earlier considered extremely important, therefore identifying them with numbers, and thus making it possible to verify and compare it to the content that was recorded if needed. The two

first main- topics include a couple of sub- topics that start with a short summary of the findings, making it easier and more clearly to read. The last part about empowerment has no sub- topics, but this will also be presented with a short summary in advance of the quotations.

All of the respondents have had some or extensive experience in advance of the positions that they now held. Most of them also have an education relevant for the bar- and restaurant business. However, some of them were not “easy” to talk to, and some needed repetitions and sometime more profoundly explained questions, resulting in the use of probes and a need for deeper explanations of some answers, especially, when it comes to the last part about empowerment. This third and last main- topic was therefore unfortunately less comprehended, compared to the other topics.

Some of the findings also might slip into each other, since the questions in the interview guide were related to each other, and thus the interviewees sometimes answered to two or more questions at the same time.

Some oral expressions or dialects in Norwegian were difficult to translate precisely into English, but I did my best to at least cover the meaning of these expressions, so that the contents seem sufficient. These oral expressions are highlighted with quotation marks.

Quotations

All the quotations from the interviewees will be written in italic font, and have single spacing. A parenthesis with three dots inside: (...) will sometimes illustrate a temporary end to a quotation, where some of the content is not included if it is already mentioned or irrelevant for the topic. However, everything is kept on the tape recorder. The quotation that often follows after the parenthesis, belongs to same interviewee, but does not necessary belongs entirely together with the quotation in front of it. Sometimes there will be parentheses where the italic font is removed, for instance if

the interviewee mention a well-known person using only his or her first name; the parenthesis will be used to explain who the person is. All together there are 118 quotations, which make an average of nearly 17 (16, 86) quotations from each interviewee.

As mentioned several times earlier, both the interviewees and the bar- and restaurant corporate group will be held anonymously. But as many of the interviewees got questions that concerned about their own working place or organization, some both/ or named it and also mentioned the names of others working in it while answering the interview questions. Since the need of anonymity was mentioned several times before the interviews started, I assume that this was only an unconscious mistake made by the interviewee. However, what was said was not anything negative, it was more used to get a better explanation of their viewpoints, and will not be given any attention. Therefore, when it comes to the quotations used in this thesis; the name on the organization and the persons that are mentioned will be named with an “X”.

The quotations will follow below a summary from each topic, where every quotation also was given a topic making it easier and more lucid to read. Perhaps this part of the thesis can be perceived as some extensive, but I thought it was important to include most of the answers from the interviewees, although some of the views are quite similar to each other; resulting in a wide spread view from all 7 leaders were included. Some quotations from the focus groups will also be included to get a more profoundly view of some questions, thus compare the opinions held by subordinates towards leaders in the same corporate group. The focus group consisting of the female subordinates will be presented like this (Fw), while the male focus group will be presented like this (Fm). Quotations from the focus groups will always be included at

the end of the topics, and are seen as contributions to the findings from the interviews held among the seven leaders.

The interviewees

The interviews were conducted among seven leaders at different levels in a bar- and restaurant corporate group (that also includes a hotel). A summary of their background, such as age, experience, education and etc., will be presented below.

- The interviewees consisted of four women and three men, the youngest one was born in 1988, and the oldest was born in 1973, making an average on 32 years (1980) for all the interviewees.
- All the seven leaders have had some experience in advance that is relevant for the position that they now held. Five of them have experiences as a waiter or a bartender (or both), while the two others have experiences as chefs. Six of them also worked in the same bar- and restaurant corporate group before they got promoted as leaders in the same organization. Furthermore, six of them also had leadership experience in advance of the position that they now held.
- Four of interviewees have a bachelor degree from Norwegian School of Hotel Management (NHS). One of them also has a master degree from the same faculty. One of the other interviewees also studied at NHS, but this study only lasted for a year, and was different than the bachelor program is today. Two of interviewees also have a certificate of apprenticeship as a chef. And two are educated as sommeliers.
- The leadership positions that they now held are as following (the numbers below will also be used to “identify” the quotations, so that the reader for instance know that a quotation belongs to the Head chef, if a parenthesis with number 7 is included at the end of the quotation);
 1. General Manager at a hotel (female).

2. General Manager at an Italian restaurant/ café at a mall (female).
3. Assistant general manager (Acting general manager from March, 2012) at a nightclub and a bar/ café (male).
4. Restaurant manager at a steak house (female).
5. Manager of operations of the bar- and restaurant corporate group (male).
6. Restaurant responsible (manager for two restaurants at one of the departments in the corporate group, this leader also has the restaurant managers in this department as her subordinates) (female).
7. Head chef at a steak house (male).

Social norms, gender roles, stereotypes and prejudices

This part of the findings includes how or if the seven different leaders believe social norms, gender roles and prejudices influence female leaders when representing an organization externally. It is divided into four sub- topics: “Representation of the organization”, “Gender roles and social norms”, “Discrimination” and “Stereotypes and prejudices”.

Representation of the organization

This section concerns firstly about the expectations the different leaders have towards a person who is representing an organization. Secondly, the leaders were told to describe how they “typical” see a female leader when she representing an organization. Thirdly, they were also asked to compare female leaders towards male leaders. And fourthly, they were asked if age or gender had any influence related to representing an organization.

Summary of the main findings:

All the seven leaders mean that a person who is representing an organization needs to have certain skills, such as being accommodating, outgoing, confident, and

knowledgeable and so on. A person's look was not mentioned or given any importance at all, however three of the interviewees said that the "dress code" was important, as one of them also mentioned the personal hygiene. One of the interviewees felt that a person who is representing the organization is usually a man above 30 years, and an "alpha- male".

Four of the interviewees meant that there are no significant differences between men and women when it comes to representing the organization externally. One of the interviewees said thus that a woman is typically accommodating, knowledgeable and has passion, but is also a little insecure. One of the leaders was also often skeptical to women in typical male- dominated businesses, such as car mechanics. There was also a view that women have to prove more/ work harder than men in work situations, and that women are weaker because they are afraid to do something wrong.

Age was important according to all of the interviewees. The majority believes that a person needs to have a certain age to achieve respect. Experience was also considered as important for some of them. One of them also meant that it is different in the bar-and restaurant business, where it is important to be young and thus reflecting the guests, compared to another businesses, such as the oil business. The interviewees did not believe that gender plays any significant role, however, one of them meant was that it is more difficult for younger women to achieve respect, especially when meeting older men.

Accommodating and good to talk:

This person is accommodating, representative, makes a good appearance, good to talk, and shows interest and involvement for the people that they meet and the organization they represent (1).

A person who is representing the organization needs to have a “serious” look:

The more serious a person looks, the more serious I will look at that person. But it also depends on the organization the person is representing. This person also needs to have loyalty towards the organization the person is representing, be positive, which again results in advertising for the organization. The person needs to prevent negative things. He or she also needs to be outgoing and have good “social skills” (2).

It depends on the company:

It depends on the company that they are representing. Many other claims that the manager needs to know all the functions of the company. But I disagree. I think it is important to delegate assignments and responsibilities. A leader has to trust other people, and know that they are better in some things than others. When it comes to clothes due to represent a company, a nice suit will be wrong for a person working at the “X” café where I work. But in other organizations, such as Statoil a nice suit will be important. It also depends on what a person will accomplish with the communication. There might be a more “loosely tone” in our business. I also believe that the prospectively amounts have an importance (3).

Enthusiasm, confidence and knowledge:

This person needs to be enthusiastic, confident and knowledgeable. These are almost the most important things. The person must not be insecure. I went to “Serviceforum” at the University; there was a woman there who talked about star classification of hotels with many from the hotel business apparent. She was not prepared, and I felt that this was disappointing, and that it was iniquitous for us women. Knowledge, no matter if you are a woman or a man, is the most important thing (...) (4).

This person must understand the “dress code”:

The person’s look has nothing to say. Personal hygiene is important. This person must also understand the “dress code” related to the setting he or she is in. It is also important to not talk negatively about the company or the competitors. And of course not be impaired by alcohol. The person also needs to welcome politely and have good skills when it comes to communicate and be outgoing (5).

Diplomatic, smart, honest and deliberated:

This person has to be diplomatic, smart, think in advance of the things that shall be said, honest, and deliberated. Our Manager of operations does this in a good way. “X” makes people follow him and uses humor. The person that is representing the company also needs to be objective, uses facts, and does not have to talk too much about things; but be precise (6).

Typical is an “alpha- male” in a suit and is above 30 years:

Often this is a man dressed in suit, and older than 30 years. He is often very authoritarian, clear, and especially if this person is a man; he is an “alpha- male”. These types show authority, and do not let others “pill them on the nose”. A person who is representing a company is confident (7).

Age is important, nobody wants to get instructions from a 10-year younger person:

When it comes to the representation of the organization it is important to have good personal skills, being professional and it is important to “sell a product” (...). Age is important, this is perceived as seniority. Nobody wants to get instructions from a 10-year younger person (Fm).

Women are often accommodating, but also a little bit insecure:

Women are what we want to be: Accommodating. A woman often shows this. But she is also a little bit insecure, knowledgeable; knows what she is talking about (which is very important), devoted and has passion. I feel that men and women are quite similar in this situation. But it depends on the setting (...). Women are often more humble (1).

I am skeptical to female car mechanics:

(...) Credibility is the same no matter if it is a man or a woman. But in a typical “man- business”, such as the car- business, I am skeptical if the car mechanics is a female. If a person uses his or her look, it is annoying. This is so wrong (...). In our organization it is very supplementary; our Manager of operations is very human and nice, while our General manager is decent and clear. All summed up it is good for our organization. It is important to “have our own opinions” (2).

No differences:

I mean that women and men are quite similar (...). The appearance is important, for example in the real estate business; one has to have a stylish look no matter if you are a woman or a man. The size of the company might also be important, but in the bar- and restaurant business such appearance will be wrong (3).

A woman often has to work harder to prove something:

It is typical for a woman to be knowledgeable. It might be tougher for women. They often have to prove more than men. When it comes to communication it is easier

for men, especially when it comes to humor. Women focus more on knowledge; they have to be serious. Women often react more than men on “coarse jokes” (3).

There are no differences:

Being a woman makes no differences. It is still important to understand the “dress code”, important to not speak negative about the company, communicative skills and be outgoing. One should avoid backbiting. Women are not worse or better in this situation (5).

Women and men are similar:

I do not believe that there are any differences between men and women (6).

I have experienced that women often behave as men:

Many women behave as men. I have experienced this. Women might have a weaker appearance, because they are afraid to do anything wrong (7).

Female leaders are strong, but they have to abet themselves, and women have bigger pressure:

Female leaders are better “to feel” the situation, they are more sensitive. But I have other experiences; men are calmer and do not make drama (...) I believe that female leaders are strong, but they have to abet themselves, be open towards everything and there are bigger pressures on women (...). It is more a matter of course that men instead of women get different treatment (...). If there are male leaders on the top, there are probably also differences on the levels beneath them. This is present in all organizations. Women are more concerned about the social parts, while men are more result oriented. However, well-being is important if one shall receive results. Men are more direct. Personality is important for both women and men. It is good to have both women and men as leaders. Women are often seen as a “bitch”, while for men it is ok (Fw).

A certain age is important:

The person that is representing the organization needs to have a certain age to achieve respect. I believe that this person needs to be at least 25 years old to achieve respect. I have experienced that men are the persons that shows little respect. I do not believe that gender plays any significant role; it depends more on the situation (1).

One might be skeptical towards young leaders:

I believe that age is dependent on what is being represented. For example in our company when comparing a middle leader towards a top leader: They are

representing different things. Stereotypes are dependent on age. A certain age is necessary. One might be skeptical towards young leaders. Our Manager of operations is almost “too young”. If a person has a personality that is too young he or she achieves less respect. I like to believe that it is similar between men and women, but I am not sure if this is the reality. I also believe that this depends on the business the person is representing. Typical is that “fathers” have stereotypes. Women might be perceived as typical secretaries. Younger men and women are better when it comes to gender equality (2).

It depends on the business:

When it comes to age it varies in the different businesses. It is negative in the bar- and restaurant business being too old, while in other businesses it is negative being too young. In the bar- and restaurant business it is important to have approximately the same age as the guests. But older people have more experience. When it comes to gender I do not believe that this has anything to say (...). Actually, I believe that there are fewer prejudices in this business compared to others, such as the oil business, because there are so many women working in the bar- and restaurant business (3).

It depends on the people the person meets:

If the person who is representing the organization is 40 years old, he or she has probably “lived a little bit”. But this person must not be too old. It depends on the group of people the person is meeting (...). An older person behaves differently because of experience. However, good leaders are apparent no matter what age. It is a process of learning. And one never gets enough training (4).

Age is more important than gender:

I believe that age is more important than gender, because of maturity, safety and experience. Older people have more safety and understanding. Age is the most important. It is a process of learning (5).

Experience is important:

Younger people can be perceived differently. But it might depend on the person. Experience is important for a leader (6).

More difficult for younger women:

It is more difficult for younger women to achieve respect. It depends on the situation. For example if a young women meets an older and more experienced man, this woman will automatically be “put in place”(7).

It depends on the company one is meeting:

Men are better when it comes to sale (...). I disagree, or perhaps it is so upward in the system. People climb upward the corporal ladder; men are better than women to climb. This is not favorably for women. But one has to look at the company one is meeting (...). The personality is the most important thing (Fw).

Gender roles and social norms

In this part the interviewees were given an example of women and a man that have “left their gender role”, or do something else than others might expect them to do. The interviewees were asked to declare their thoughts and opinions about this.

They were also asked if there were some occupations that suit better for female leaders compared to male leaders, and vice versa.

And finally, they were asked about their thoughts regarding the combination; being a female top leader and a mother.

Summary of the main findings:

The majority of the interviewees believe that people are affected by social norms when it comes to gender roles. One of the views was that this is unexpected; while another view was that there is “old prejudices” apparent but these are less important nowadays, and that people cares too much about what others think. The Acting general manager believes that people are more influenced by norms in the society compared to the company, which wants the women back as soon as possible after giving birth. The Restaurant manager believes that women are worse than men to judge other women, and often people that have “too much time” are worst. There was also a view that these norms often occur unconsciously.

Almost everybody thought that it is difficult for women being a leader in typical male-dominated businesses, such as the oil business. The General manager at the hotel believes it would be difficult for a woman to be a top leader in Statoil, because there might be a lack of respect, especially from older men. Three of the leaders considered

qualifications as the most important things when it comes to have a position as a leader. Most of the interviewees also claimed that the majority of leaders in the health, social, service and travel businesses were women. The Manager of operations also believed that women are seen as weaker and as sex- objects in many rough male-dominated environments.

Three of the interviewees thought that when it comes to the combination of having a position as a top leader and a parent; it is the same for women as it is for men. But there were also some views that claimed that it is more difficult for women, partly because of the infants and their dependence of the mother. Two of the leaders also pointed at the norms in the society that often expect women to stay home with their children. Making agreements, prioritizing and planning were mentioned from some of the leaders as important in a situation like this.

It is not expected that a woman “leave her gender role”, there are prejudices related to this:

This is fantastic. But this person will perceive prejudices. It is surprisingly and not expected. But there are many clever girls (1).

People cares too much about what others thinks:

I love this. I would have gone for this by myself. It is not typical for me belonging to a typical gender role. There is a room for options. Old prejudices are on their way out. But people are influenced by social norms; they care too much about what other people thinks. They can do whatever they feel like, but they care too much about what others think. There are many that “hide” themselves behind this (2).

The norms in the society are stronger than the norms in the company:

This is difficult if both have to work. But they need to make a choice; they need a discussion regarding that they want “to leave their role”. It depends on how one speaks together. I have no problems with this. But one must take other considerations, and she or he cannot decide this on their own. The norms in the society and company influence the choices. I believe that the norms in the society are stronger than the norms in the company, because women meet resistance in the society. The company wants women back as soon as possible after given birth (...) (3).

Social norms and other women play a major role:

This is fantastic. It is nice with such families. People can handle more today. But very many women have a traditional role. And many people have a meaning related to this. Other women specially influence women. The company is better than the society to arrange. Social norms play a major role. The people that "have too much time" are worst (4).

This is not the norm; the opposite is "the normal":

This is not the norm; the opposite is "the normal". "A4" is not as strong as it used to be, especially in cities. I register this, but I think it is ok. Many people are concerned about following this. I think that norms are apparent, but I also believe that people dare to "leave the gender role" today (5).

One must prioritize:

I have kids by myself. I think that this is very nice. But everybody must not do this. One must prioritize. This influences some people. The work demands a lot; it demands more than the society. The society is more "closed", for instance in our neighborhood (6).

Norms often influence people unconsciously:

It is the same for me what people choose to do. It is ok. People often get influenced by norms, by this is unconscious (...). Many people just believe that this is how it is (7).

It does not matter if the woman leaves her role:

It does not matter if the woman leaves her role. The reason why the majority of the top leaders are men, have to do with traditions and cultures (...). But I believe that women are able to do the same job as men do. But do they want this? Often they must work twice as hard, and there are many women who do not want to do this. People do not expect women to be housewives anymore. Older men (...) are more traditional when it comes to this (Fm).

It would have been difficult for a woman to have Helge Lund's position:

I do not believe that a woman can have Helge Lund's position (President and Chief executive officer of Statoil). If so, I would be surprised. A woman will struggle to receive respect having such position abroad. In large male-dominated businesses it will be difficult for women. They are qualified and good enough, but they do not get enough respect from older men. When it comes to younger men; the society is more modernized. They have mothers that have been working and have education (1).

It is difficult for a man to be a manager for only women, and vice versa:

I think it is best with gender equality everywhere. But it depends on the people that are working there. It is difficult for a man to be a leader for only women, and vice versa. But it is possible. There are many things to consider. There are many female leaders in the care sector. Men are often top leaders, but there are also many women who are top leaders in the politics. (...) Qualifications are the most important thing (2).

It is difficult for a woman to be a leader in a male- dominated business:

The qualifications are the most important thing. It would be difficult for a female leader in a male-dominated business, such as the oil- business. But in the service-business this would be ok. To be a female leader in an oil company would be difficult because of the culture in other countries. They will not receive enough respect. But women can make some choices in this case, such as wearing adequate clothes. Women have to make extra efforts (3).

Women are good leaders in the service- and travel- business:

Women are good leaders in the service business, and also in the travel- business. A female top leader is a role model (...). One often wishes to have more men in typical female- dominated occupations, such as kindergartens (4).

Women are better than men in the health- and care- business because of their attributes:

It is difficult for women in arduously industrial and rough environments. In these environments she might be seen as a "sex- object". She will not receive enough respect and will be seen as weak. Women are better than men in the health- and care-business, because of their attributes. Men are typical top leaders in the finance, bank and industrial sectors (5).

There are no differences:

This does not make any difference, also when it comes to male-dominated businesses (6).

It depends on the person:

Many people probably mean that some businesses suit better for women than men and vice versa. But I think it depends on the person, though I believe that it might be difficult to get entry into some businesses (7).

It is easier for men with physical jobs, while it is typical for women to prefer order, cleanliness and accuracy:

I had an experience with a female plumber who met resistance; she was not hired and was experiencing discrimination (...). I know that the fire department externally wants women, but many firemen are skeptical towards female firemen (...). It is important to have the same demands for both women and men (...). But the physical part can be a disadvantage for many women in many jobs (...). I admire women that choose to have a typical male job (...). The effort is important. Women complain too much (...). It is easier for men to have physical jobs. Men are often not clever when it comes to hygiene and washing. It is typical that women prefer order, cleanliness and accuracy (...). I disagree, when it comes to order and control there are no differences. The personality is the most important thing. There are no differences among leaders here (...). Women are still better when it comes to prioritizing (Fw).

I would not managed by myself to be a top leader *and* a mother at the same time:

I am not sure actually, but I would not managed to do this on my own. But it depends on the organization. In our organization I believe that this would be difficult, but others have managed to do it. I believe that it is more accepted for men. But if other women do this, I think it is fantastic (1).

One must make agreements, but it is the same for women as it is for men:

One needs to make agreements. But this is the same for women as it is for men. I think that Ellen Arnstad (Editor-in-chief for a magazine called "Henne") is annoying when she claims that it is possible to combine a leader position at the same time that she is a mother. This is not correct. She has a nanny and an assistant; therefore is it wrong to say that this is easy to combine. It is better if she admits this. Sacrifices must be made, everything needs to be planned; one must delegate the roles. Everybody can manage to do this, but one needs to prioritize. When it comes to top leaders, it is the same for men; one must "sacrifice" children if a carrier is wanted. And this is the same for men (2).

This is not a problem:

I do not believe that this is a problem. This is the same for men, but infants are dependent on their mother in the beginning (3).

It is possible to combine, and men are more concerned about family nowadays:

I believe that this is possible, but one needs planning. One learns how to appreciate things. One needs time; it might be "too much" work. A good leader must learn to delegate. How much does one actually manage to do? Is this what one really wants? I believe that women and men in such positions think the same. Men are more concerned about family nowadays. It is more equalized today. If one has a higher education: One is more reflected (4).

Employer needs to cooperate and facilitate:

I believe that this can be combined. I have experience from this, but the employer needs to cooperate. It needs to be facilitated. It is easier today than it was before. Flexibility is also important. But it is more difficult for women because of the infants who need the closeness from its mothers. She needs to be apparent to be a good mother (5).

More difficult for women because of the norms in the society:

Yes, absolutely. This concerns much about the contribution from one's network. If one feels confident at work, one can delegate. I believe that this is the same for women as it is for men. But sometimes it might be more difficult for women, because of the norms in the society. The norms expect more of women in situations like this (6).

The society often expects that women should be housewives:

This concerns about time and priorities. But it is possible. It is more difficult for women, because the society expects that women should stay home. But she can make an appointment with her man (7).

Women and men are built differently:

Combining a top leader position and at the same being a parent are the same for both men and women. It is stereotypical that women automatically take control home, but this has expired on date. Men still easier get away with things (...). But both can master this (...). But we are built differently. Women have a stronger connection with children, because children biologically have a closer relationship to their mothers (...). But "is it so" or is it biological (...)? Heritage and environment are important (Fm).

Women must "sacrifice" more often than men. It might prospectively be arranged, but this is not usual:

The gender role needs to be sacrificed, the role must be neutral. One has to distinguish between leisure and work. It is typical for women to gossip; they must sacrifice this. This is also worse upward in the hierarchy. Women want to be good friends. Men do not care about this (...). I have a different experience, but I believe that age and experience have something to say (...). Women must "sacrifice" family if they want to be a top leader. Women must "sacrifice" more often than men. It might prospectively be arranged, but this is not usual, for example if one has an au-pair (Fw).

Discrimination

The leaders were asked if they believe discrimination against women occur in Norwegian organizations, and afterwards; if they thought that this occurred in their own organization. Some probes were sometimes used to get them to explain how and why, and if they thought that this can be changed.

Summary of the main findings:

Everybody believed that discrimination occurs in Norwegian organizations, and the majority thought that this could be changed, but that is was difficult. To work against discrimination there were some views that claimed that it is important to realize that there is a problem and a need to change the attitudes. The Restaurant manager at the steak house also believed that it is important for organizations to avoid bad reputation when it comes to discrimination against women. There were also some views that claimed that top management often consists of “male clubs” who do not want to include others, such as women. Furthermore, two of the leaders thought that women were especially discriminated when it comes to pregnancy. The Restaurant responsible thought that women were discriminated when it comes to salaries. Women were also seen as too cautious, afraid to get “a no” as an answer, and weaker than men when it comes to pay negotiations. However, when it comes to their own organization, none of the leaders thought or mentioned that discrimination occurs.

“Male clubs”:

I believe it is easy to create “male clubs”, because the majority of leaders are male. But I am not sure if this is conscious. I believe that this happens because of “the children that are similar to each other plays best together”. I do believe that this can be changed, but then they have to realize that there is a problem. But one cannot deny people to create groupings (...). For instance, tickets to a football game have to be shared equally between men and women (2).

Women are often discriminated because of the expectations that they are going to give birth to children:

Generally, yes I think that discrimination occurs. To which extent this happens, I am not sure. I do not believe that this happens in our organization. Perhaps some people perceive that this happens, but this has to do with personalities. Women are quickly discriminated because of the expectations that they are going to have children. For example if a woman is 28 years old. This happens a lot, especially with employments. I do not believe that this happens in our company. I believe it is very evenly. There are “50- 50” of women and men that are leaders (...). The majority of the female leaders in our organization have got children, but still there have been employed several female leaders after this. To change this, attitudes must be changed (...). Maternity leave is a choice. But it is more difficult if the man has a job as a top leader versus the woman who does not have this. But is it really fair to use this? If a person is away one year from the job, this might be a problem (3).

It is important to not be too sensitive, and avoid bad reputation for the company:

Generally? Well, probably. One has to endure some, be tough. One shall be professional, but it is not always like that. It is important to not be too sensitive. Women must often work harder because she is a woman. It might be negatively if a woman gets pregnant. But this is not always conscious. It is difficult to change. Everything is not always as one thinks it is. It might be difficult with a substitute in a top leader position. Attitudes can be changed. One has to work with this all the time. The company must not get a bad reputation related to this (4).

Many male top leaders do not believe that women are good enough:

Yes, many male top leaders do not believe that women are good enough. They do not want to change things and the environment. I hope that this is not present in our organization; at least there is nothing among the top leaders. They are gender neutral. Women are better than men in this business. To change attitudes is difficult; this has to be changed among the top leaders. The top leaders have to be agreed (5).

Many women are too cautious and afraid to “receive a no as an answer”:

Yes, especially when it comes to salaries, but I think there is exceptions. They are rather good in our organization. There are many female leaders, but only men as top leaders. But there is probably some discrimination, perhaps when it comes to salaries? I think that this can be changed if the right and clever persons are apparent; both the new ones and the people that already are apparent. They have to do a good job, achieve results, and related to this one has to be conscious. One has to demand the same, for example when it comes to salaries, and so on. Many women are too cautious. They are afraid to receive “a no” (6).

It is naive to believe that this does not occur:

It is naive to believe that this does not occur, but hopefully it occurs to a lesser extent. I think it should be “the same salary for the same work and not the same salary

for the same position". It concerns about how clever a person is. Discrimination thus does not concern about gender. When it comes to pay negotiations, men are tougher than women. In our organization there are differences, and they are conscious about it, but it is not discrimination. For example: Salary. One has to negotiate this (...). Everybody must "go into itself and be honest towards each other (7).

A female leader is easier to talk to, and this might be exploited for example when it comes to absence:

There is a trend that the number of female leaders is increasing. A female leader meets more resistance, but it depends on what she is doing. A typical male job is easier for men. An authoritarian job is more difficult for women than it is for men. There are higher demands. Women give positive impulses. But it is more difficult for women. Working in a bar is easier for women, because there is a bigger "comfort zone". Service jobs. But jobs are changing; many earlier male-dominated jobs are changing. It is often better with female general managers, because they are easier to talk to. But this might be exploited for example when it comes to absence (Fm).

Much of the discrimination is not intentional, it is more meant as a joke:

Discrimination occurs. People working in the wardrobe are often called "wardrobe sluts", and they are given negative names. "Men are at the level above us". They talk much about women, and women have to "revenge" themselves. But it is not intentional, much of it is more meant as a joke (...). This takes time to change, since much of it is jokes, it is difficult to know. One must strengthen the solidarity (Fw).

Stereotypes and prejudices

This section includes questions about stereotypes and prejudices, whether they occur conscious or unconscious. The interviewees were also asked about stereotypes and prejudices related to how they might occur as direct and/ or indirect. And lastly, how other women look at female leaders.

Summary of the main findings:

The majority of the leaders believe that stereotypes and prejudices mostly occur as unconscious. When asking if men have more unconscious prejudices and stereotypes than women or vice versa, the interviewees had different opinions. The Acting general

manager at the nightclub and café claimed that there were no differences between women and men, and if prejudices and stereotypes were present, it does not necessarily have to be negative. The General Manager at the Italian restaurant at the mall, claimed that unconscious prejudices and stereotypes often are ingrained, and many “do not think about” it. While the Restaurant manager at the steak house said that there are many things that happens way back in time, and become visible later as unconscious, and can be changed through awareness.

Six of the seven leaders thought that stereotypes and prejudices mostly occurred as indirectly or as hidden. The majority also thought that women are worse than men, having indirect stereotypes and prejudices. The General Manager at the hotel claimed that one has to “dig” to find out. There were also some views that claimed that prejudices and stereotypes do not necessarily have to negative. The General Manager at the Italian restaurant at the mall also claimed that these also often were “accepted” prejudices. The Restaurant manager at the steak house thought that it often occur unconscious in their organization, because of the majority of young people that are working there, and also that it is worse among lower levels of management compared to higher levels. The Manager of operations thought that it often occur as unconscious in environments consisting of many women, and that men often could be needed to “soften up” this environment.

Three of the leaders thought that other women envy female leaders. But also admiration, jealousy and respect were mentioned. And two of the leaders thought that women often feel threatened by other women. The General Manager at the Italian restaurant at the mall believes that women often “push” other women down, while men do not do this. There was also a view that women are worse against each other in male-dominated organizations; women are also the biggest critics and female leaders in

these organizations often have to “prove” more than men. The Manager of operations believes that many women admire strong feminine leaders. And lastly, there was also a view that women easily are seen as “bitches” if they correct other people.

I hope it happens more unconsciously than consciously:

I hope most of it happens unconsciously. But I believe it is “50-50”. Men often have stereotypes and prejudices that are unconscious. Women are more conscious (1).

Unconscious prejudices are ingrained:

One has to avoid unconscious stereotypes and prejudices. This is ingrained. It is typical to search for girls for “girl jobs”. This is usual in this organization. Men are more conscious. Women are more unconscious. They do not “think about” it. They forget to think. For example, when it comes to cars; they have to make their own choice (2).

Unconscious stereotypes and prejudices are not always negative:

Generally, I believe that both conscious and unconscious are usual. And I believe that our organization reflects the rest of the society. For example, a leader who has to delegate assignments: When it comes to technical things, they believe men are better or have interest. Unconsciously, they give girls assignments that have to do with cleaning. But this does not have to be negative. I think there are less visible stereotypes and prejudices in our organization. There are no differences among women compared to men (3).

People work against conscious prejudices:

I am not sure... People work against conscious prejudices. Unconscious? Yes, humans are like that. They have prejudices; they are “people with emotions”. Many things might happened way back in time and thus become visible later as unconscious. But this can be changed if one meets someone who makes a good impression. Conscious prejudices are more difficult to change, because this is something one is aware of (4).

Unconscious is usual:

Unconscious is more usual than conscious. Men are more unconscious than women. I have experienced this (...) (5).

I am not sure:

I believe generally that both are usual. Perhaps it happens most unconsciously. I think that this is also usual in our organization. Or I am not sure... (6).

Experiences might lead to negative stigmatizing:

Many people have negative experiences that lead to negative stigmatizing. Unconscious happens automatically, and is more usual. Conscious also occurs. I have experienced this; people who do not want women at the kitchen. This exists. I have also experienced that Norwegian certificates of apprenticeships as a chef are what we are looking for instead of foreigners. Men are tougher when it comes to prejudices and stereotypes. Women are naturally skeptical and often have prejudices and stereotypes because of this (7).

In our organization: One must “dig”:

I believe that stereotypes and prejudices often occur indirectly or hidden. In our organization one must “dig” to find out. There is not much that is visible. Not today, but earlier. For example, there were many chefs from the Eastern parts of Europe who did not like women on the kitchen (1).

There are many hidden prejudices and stereotypes that people do not perceive:

Indirect is usual. This is usual among girls. There are many things that people do not perceive. There are prejudices that are used. They are not shown directly. But often people do not mean something bad about it. Prejudices are usual, but everything is not always negative. I do not interpret it negatively. For example, I was ordered to sell champagne. There are “adopted” directly prejudices. They are accepted, because it happens very often. I do not think so much about it (...) (2).

Women are less directly compared to men:

Here there are larger differences. And I believe that women are less directly than men. Men are better when it comes to “give messages” (3).

Our organization consists of many young people that contribute to stereotypes and prejudices that are indirect:

I believe that there are some indirect prejudices and stereotypes. There are many people that “talk behind” others backs. Women are worst, but not necessarily in our organization. Men also do this. Indirect are apparent especially in our organization because of all the young people that are working here. Therefore, we have something to “work against”. Direct is also usual. I also believe that this is worse among the

levels on the middle compared to higher levels. It is important to be honest. It does not work to “walk around and be irritated”. Generally, women are worse. I believe it is quite similar in our organization (4).

One often wishes to “soften up” environments consisting of only girls:

This happens. Indirect stereotypes and prejudices often occur in environments that consist of only girls. This is a classical perception and is also claimed by female leaders in our organization. One often wishes to include more men to “soften up” this environment (5).

There are many secrets:

I think that there are a lot of indirect stereotypes and prejudices. There are many secrets. It might often go from indirect to direct. For example in our organization when it comes to employments: “No one” shall know anything about it. The one that is hired approximately does not know about it oneself (6).

Women focus more often on trifles:

I believe that it happens indirectly, both generally and in our organization. When it comes to gender it depends on the situation. If the “problem” is big, men are focusing on this. Women focus more on trifles. Or this happens more often among women. I do not why it is so. That is just the way it is. However, I have experienced it among both genders (7).

Many perceptions towards women are not necessarily negative; women are better than men in some things and vice versa:

Everything is not necessarily negative. Women are better than men in some things, while men are better than women in other things. Very few attitudes are shown directly. Other influences one. It is worse for women. When backbiting men, it is often negligible gossip. They fight, but they stick together afterwards. Women are gathering (...). They are more indirectly, make drama and groupings. The atmosphere is important. One needs to adjust to this (Fm).

Subordinates both envy and respect their female leaders:

Among subordinates I believe it is usual to both envy and have respect towards female leaders. And some subordinates work against and some cooperate. Unfortunately. When it comes to other female leaders, I think it is the same. But it is important to be confident. Many women feel threatened (1).

Female leaders “push other women down”. Men do not do this:

I see myself in this. But if women “find themselves”, it is very positive. If they do not do this, it is not positive (...). It might be easier for men. Women feel threatened and are jealous. If a female leader behaves as a man, other women feel threatened. Female leaders often “push other women down”. Men do not do this (2).

Women are worse towards other women in male-dominated businesses:

I do not believe that there are any problems in organizations with many female leaders. But in organizations where there are not that many women there might be some problems. Here they must “prove more” for other women. Women are often the biggest critics (3).

Women who “leave their role” can be seen as negative:

If the female leader is a good leader, other women will look up to her. And this is the same for men. I believe it is easier for women who pull the “woman-card” against other women. There might be both positive and negative perceptions related to this. Women who leave their role might be seen as negative (4).

Many women admire strong feminine leaders:

I think it might be both negative and positive. Many women also admire strong and feminine leaders. But many women also are envious of female leaders. One example is Heidi Jeanette (Nygård, Commercial manager at Region Stavanger) who is a female leader, and many others look up to her. She is very feminine (5).

A lot of envy because of admiration:

I believe that there is a lot of envy because of admiration. There are many dominant women, and many women do not like this. A lot concerns about envy. Women might be disliked because of this (6).

Women who correct other people might be seen as a “bitch”:

Women are seen as good leaders as long as they do a good job. But female leaders that correct other people can be seen as a “bitch”. But mainly, they are shown respect, and seen as clever if they are clever (7).

Women cannot handle being yelled at by other women:

Women stay grumpy longer and are more sensitive than men. Women cannot handle being yelled at by other women. When it comes to “Janteloven”, women are worse than men. They are jealous and envy other women. Women counteract other women. Women are touchy when it comes to decisions that are not popular. It is easier to get fired by a man (...). I disagree, because women have to show that they are tough. It is worse if a woman does something wrong, therefore it is easier to break women down (Fm).

The perceptions held by different leaders at different levels in an organization

In this second part of the findings the purpose was to find out how the different leaders at different levels in an organization perceive leaders, thus comparing middle leaders towards top leaders, gender differences and also perceptions among the concept called the Glass ceiling. Furthermore, this part thus consists of two subtopics. The first one is called “The leader” and the second one is called “The Glass ceiling”.

The leader

The interviewees were first asked to describe a “typical leader”, and then comparing a “typical middle leader” towards a “typical top leader”. They were also asked to compare female leaders towards male leaders, and how or if these differences were apparent among all levels in the hierarchy in an organization.

Summary of the main findings:

Three of the leaders described a typical leader as having an attribute as authoritarian, while two of the leaders also focused on a leader as a typical devoted person. The General Manager at the Italian restaurant at the mall and the Acting general manager at the nightclub and the café meant that a leader also often “drags” other with him /her. While the Restaurant manager at the steak house and the Restaurant responsible claimed that a typical leader is fair- minded. In addition to this, leaders were typically also given attributes as being present, having “social antennas”, outgoing, strong, direct, professional, and confident, being an ideal and etc. When it comes to the prospective differences between middle leaders and top leaders; whether

there are differences or similarities, there were some different views. Both the General Manager at the Italian restaurant at the mall and the Restaurant responsible believed that a top leader must have an overview over the organization. While the General Manager at the Italian restaurant at the mall also claimed that a middle leader has to know more about the details. Two of the leaders also meant that a top leader does not necessarily need to have relevant experience. The Manager of operations believes that a middle leader typically is younger than a top leader, while the Head chef at the steak house believes that a top leader often is more distanced and professional compared to a middle leader who often is more personal.

Three of the leaders believed that a female leader needs to prove more or work harder compared to her male colleagues. The Restaurant manager and the Head chef at the steak house also believe that men are more concerned about the title than women. Additionally, the Acting general manager at the nightclub and café believes that norms in the company might contribute to a view that men are seen as stronger. The Manager of operations claimed that men are typically less concrete, there occurs “much talk”, they are tougher, willing to make decisions on the behalf of others and less structured compared to women. However, the Manager of operations claimed that it was not the same among the top leaders in their organization, and mentioned that the owner/ other top leader were very structured. Furthermore, women were among the different leaders given different attributes such as being more empathic, structured, systematic, better in creating good atmospheres, more human, more emotional, vulnerable, and personal and etc. When it comes to the comparison of middle leaders and top leaders, there were some different opinions. For example the General Manager at the Italian restaurant at the mall claimed that top leaders are “special types”, and the higher in the hierarchy one comes the differences increase because of fewer women. This manager

also claimed that women often are afraid, and that children and family often disable them from being a top leader. While the Restaurant responsible believed that many women do not want to be a top leader. The Restaurant manager at the steak house claimed that women must be tough, and need to put other things, such as family aside, while the Manager of operations believed that women who are tough or “act like men” easily are seen as “bitches”.

Present and some authoritarian:

I believe that a typical leader is apparitional, present and a little bit authoritarian. A typical leader shows some authority and is devoted (1).

A middle leader needs to know more about the details, while a top leader needs to be clever in seeing the whole all together and have good administrative and economical knowledge:

A typical leader is authoritarian, clear, devoted, and has clear ideas and visions. A leader “drag others” with him/ her. A leader is also a “human with good order”, good control economically, outgoing, and has “social antennas”. I believe that it is very important with the background. A leader can be clever in what he does, but he also needs to be clever to “drag others” with him. A top leader has often not that much knowledge about details, but he has to be clever in seeing the whole all together in all situations. The top leader also has the control over other leaders, and contributes with indirect directives. Being a top leader it is more important with administrative and economical knowledge. A top leader does not basically need relevant experience. A middle leader has to know the details (2).

A leader needs to know how to communicate and have a good education:

A typical leader needs to know how to communicate and have a good education. This is the most important. Whether if you are a man or a woman have nothing to say. It depends on the company you are working in. An engineer in the oil business is typically a man. This has to do with interests. Women are typically leaders in health care and in “details” business. It is not always necessary with relevant experience. Many leaders arrive straight from school. It depends on which type the person is. Many are natural leaders. A leader needs to know how to communicate, have a goal, and “get others to follow him/ her”. A leader does not necessarily need to be direct, strong and authoritarian. The leader needs to have emanation. A leader is strong (3).

A middle leader is often “too much pal” with the subordinates:

A leader is often authoritarian, knowledgeable and fair-minded. A middle leader is often “too much pal” with other employees. And this might make the relationship at work more difficult. Top leaders are often more confident on their work assignments. They also show a little bit more authority (4).

A middle leader is often younger than a top leader:

A leader takes responsibility and is comfortable with this. A leader is also ambitious and afterwards becomes “aware of the carrier possibilities”. The leader is also willing to work much in periods and prioritize work before privacy. The leader is also available. A middle leader can often become a top leader. A middle leader is often younger than a top leader, perhaps this have natural causes. They have probably not come that far in their carrier yet. The most important difference is competence, personal attributes and how ambitious one is (5).

A leader needs to have neutral and formal clothing and look serious:

A typical leader is confident, competent, professional, motivational, good in communication, “is able to teach others”, “sees every subordinate separately and is fair-minded. When it comes to the look, the leader needs to have neutral and formal clothing. The leader needs to look serious. This is the same in all businesses. Or perhaps it is different some places. A top leader has “walked through all positions”, has overview, the ability to delegate and has safety. A middle leader still has questions (6).

A top leader is more distanced and more professional:

A typical leader is a good leader, an ideal, teaches others, contributes “on the floor” and helps the employees. A good effort is not only a title; one also needs to work. A top leader is more distanced and more professional. A middle leader is more personal, but also professional (7).

A top leader is structured, has good administrative and economical skills, and is innovative, flexible and up to date:

When it comes to middle leaders, X (the leader for the doormen) is a good example related to the position he held. X is more direct compared to a top leader. A middle leader is often good when it comes to communication, delegation and social relations (...). A top leader is structured, has good administrative and economical skills, and is innovative, flexible and up to date. They are flexible when it comes to the market (Fm).

A typical leader is an ideal, has confidence, gives constructive critics, is a “good example”, authoritarian, a role model, clear, open and can handle self- critics/ suggestions:

A typical leader is an ideal, has confidence, gives constructive critics, is a “good example”, authoritarian, a role model, clear, open and can handle self- critics/ suggestions (...). When it comes to the look a leader often has a nice dress. Age often gives more respect. The first impression is important. A nice suit is expected from a leader. However, personality and charisma are more important. One looks up to older people. It is more accepted with a casual “dress-style” on middle leaders. One has to dress dependent on the situation or the work assignments (...). Gossip towards female top leaders is more usual than gossip towards a female middle leader (...). Female leaders at the top level of management are very serious, “A4” and confident. A middle leader is often more unsecure and flexible. A man is normally the top leader, and the middle leader often has to convince this leader. But if the leaders cooperate, they are a good team. To give feedbacks to the employees are easy for both female and male leaders. Women are often easier to give feedback to. It is often difficult to give an order to a man (Fw).

Women are “more human”:

Women are “more human”. Men are more “typical leaders”. Men often want to show this clearer (1).

Top leaders are “special types”. The higher in the hierarchy one comes the differences increase, because of fewer women:

Men often easier get away with things, especially with oral comments. It is more difficult for women; they have to prove more. They feel that they have to do some extra, and are more quiet and calm than men. I think that this is strange, since there are so many female leaders. Women are often afraid. Children and family might disable women. It is “special types” that become top leaders. And the higher in the hierarchy one comes the differences increase, because of fewer women (2).

The norms in the company might contribute to the perceptions that men perhaps are seen as stronger:

I think it is difficult to distinguish between how I believe it is and how it generally is. I do not think that the differences between men and women are that big. It concerns more about the personality. Men are perhaps stronger. This is perhaps not the way it is, but it is perceived like this. The norms in the company are like this. If a man uses

“control techniques” it is seen as positive. If a woman does this, it is seen as negative. I believe it is quite similar also upwards in the hierarchy (3).

I hope that the differences upwards in the hierarchy are equalized, but women need to be tough here:

When it comes to female leaders I have both bad and good experiences. Female leaders are often more emotional. They talk behind others back. They are more difficult to be related to, are more vulnerable and more personal. They are also better when it comes to care. I have met female leaders who handle this very well. Men are more concerned about the title, more than women. Men are more demanding, and they do not understand why other does not see the same. It is difficult to be honest here. I hope the differences upwards in the hierarchy are equalized. Women must be tough here. They must put other things aside, for example family (...) (4).

Among the top leaders in our organization it is different than it stereotypically is:

I have experience with many different leaders. X (one of the other top leaders) and I have a perception that women show more empathy for guests and coworkers, they are more structured when it comes to deadlines and assignments. They are also tidier, more systematic, better in creating good atmospheres or a “better eye” for creating good atmosphere. Men are less concrete when it comes to action, there is “much talk”, but they are tougher, willing to make decisions on behalf of coworkers and less structured. However, as higher up in the hierarchy one comes in our organization, this is not present. X (one of the other top leaders) is structured. A female leader is often perceived as a “bitch” if she is tough; acts in the same way as man do or tries to be a man (5).

Many women do not want to be a top leader. There are many female middle leaders:

A woman must worker harder. A female leader is confident, has a dominant effect, and is clear. Many women do not want to be a top leader. When it comes to male leaders, it is much the same. Men are perhaps more dominant. Men “get away” with things easier. There are many men that want to be a leader. Women have to prove more. Upwards in the hierarchy, I believe it is similar. But at the top levels one must have a lot of respect. There are many female middle leaders (6).

Women have to prove more both as middle leaders and as top leaders:

I have experienced many female leaders. This is difficult to answer to... I believe that they have to work harder to receive respect. But this might be positive. They feel that they have to prove something. Men have a title and are more relaxed with this. This is also present upwards in the system. But people are different. Girls have to prove more (7).

Female leaders are more sensitive and feel that it is important to be liked:

Women are good in caring. It is easier to give a sick leave to a woman. Men are direct, perhaps too direct? When it comes to women, it also depends on the position they have. Other easier influences women. Men take easier and more direct decisions, but this varies dependent on the person. Female leaders are more sensitive and feel that it is important to be liked (Fm).

The Glass ceiling

The majority of top leaders are men (SSB, 2011). Therefore, it seemed interesting to ask the interviewees *why* they believe that there are fewer women that are top leaders, and if a Glass ceiling is present in Norwegian organizations, and also more specifically; if it is present in their organization. They were also asked about their opinions regarding being a woman and her thought about climbing upward the corporal ladder.

Summary of the main findings:

The majority of the leaders believe that there exists a Glass ceiling in Norwegian organizations that prevent women from being a top leader. They believe that there are different reasons why this occurs, three of them claimed that it was because of the “male clubs”; who do not want women to enter their environment, while three of them also believed that women can blame themselves for not reaching the top level of management. The General Manager at the Italian restaurant claimed for example that women are afraid and hide behind this. And the Manager of operations and the Restaurant manager at the steak house believe that many women are unsecure or *choose* to not climb the corporal ladder. Children were by some of the leaders seen as a reason why many women are not reaching the upper level of management. Two of the leaders believe that norms or attitudes in the society contribute to this, since it might be expected that women shall have stay home with their children. Three of the leaders

also thought that it is more difficult for women to become top leaders than it is for men. The Manager of operations claimed that it does not exist any Glass ceiling in their corporate group, while three of the middle leaders claimed that this was present. However, there were also some views that believed that it is worse for women in male-dominated organizations compared to their corporate group that consists of several female middle leaders.

Five of the leaders believe that women have to work harder or prove more than men when climbing upward the corporal ladder. There were also some views that men have higher ambitions than women and that men *want* to become top leaders. The Restaurant manager at the steak house believes that women with children are not prioritized when choosing a top leader.

In our organization it is not possible for a woman today to become a top leader, because of the “male club”:

I believe that this is usual in Norwegian organizations. Perhaps this will change in the future. The organization needs to change its attitudes, and this demands hard work. In our organization it is not possible now for a woman to become a top leader. It is a “male club”, and they do not want to have a woman entering their club. A woman could perhaps have managed to do this, but I believe it would be difficult. When searching for a new top leader, a man would be preferred (1).

Women get “sweet” jobs. Men are more demanding, and are therefore chosen to top leader positions:

Generally, I believe that there exists a Glass ceiling. But I believe that women contribute to this on their own, and that many women hide behind this. Men perceive women as weak, less pragmatic, too sensitive. Women often believe that they cannot receive a top leader position if they are going to get children. Women are afraid for challenges. Men do not care; they are tougher. In our organization I do not believe that it has something to do with women themselves. Our organization “creates” its own positions/ new positions, because they want to keep some of the employees, and therefore provide them titles. This has to do with gender. Women receive “sweet” jobs. For instance X (the Restaurant responsible) was chosen instead of a man. Men have bigger demands, and are therefore chosen to top leader positions. Women are nervous. If it depends on qualifications, a woman will also be chosen. For example there is a female Sales manager (2).

Perhaps there exists a Glass ceiling in our organization, but I believe it is worse in more male- dominated businesses, for example in an oil company:

It depends on the business. Children give women fewer advantages. Men win because of this. I believe that this is considered when choosing top leaders. The norm in the society is that “everybody shall have children”. Among older women and men, this exists no matter what. But I am not sure what the reason really is, but I believe that there are a lot of prejudices. I have experiences from female leaders, and have positive experiences. I believe that experience plays a major role, and this has probably influenced me (...). In our organization it is the personalities among the top leaders that count. I am unsecure if X (one of the top leaders; the General Manager in the corporate group), has any issues by hiring women as top leaders, but I believe that X (one of the top leaders; the owner of the corporate group) would not have any problems with this. However, I believe that both consciously will choose someone without/ or finished with children. Perhaps there exists a little Glass ceiling in our organization, but I believe that there is less here, compared to other businesses, such as oil companies, or other male- dominated businesses (3).

It is worse for women, but I also believe that there exists a Glass ceiling because of the women themselves; do they really want to climb upward the corporate ladder? :

I believe that there is a Glass ceiling much because of the women themselves. Do they really want this? I do not believe that all women want to work that much. But there are also many old-fashioned thoughts. Gender roles. Many factors affect this. But I believe that it depends on the company. It is more difficult in male-dominated businesses. In our organization, it is also difficult to reach the top. But if one wants to, it is possible, but difficult. It is limited with top leader positions. One has to be a “good woman” to impress. One has to make a very good impression on the top leaders to get hired here. It is difficult to pass “the eye of the needle”, and it is more difficult for women (4).

Our organization is better than others:

I believe that women choose to not climb upward the corporal ladder by themselves. Environments dominated by men protect themselves against women, because “similar children play best together”. The “male club” wants to keep their environment, and do not want anybody to disturb what they already have. This is not based on knowledge. I believe it has changed a bit. Our organization is better than others, and I do not think it is apparent. A Glass ceiling is more usual in male-dominated businesses (5).

It is possible for women to become top leaders in our organization, but I believe that a man will be prioritized instead of a woman when hiring a top leader:

There are “male clubs” who do not want women as top leaders. They believe that many women are qualified for a good job, but perhaps not a job at the top level of management. There exists a Glass ceiling in Norwegian organizations. In our

organization it is possible for a woman to become a top leader, because this organization has many strong women. But if one has to choose between a man and a woman, the man still would be prioritized. This is because of the “male club”, especially when X (a former leader that was right below the top leaders) was hired (...) (6).

“Women shall stay home” and men have ambitions and want to become top leaders:

This has much to do with men’s ambitions to become top leaders. More men than women have higher education, especially earlier, and thus are better qualified. “Women shall stay home”; this attitude exists. It is possible today to climb, or I hope it is possible. I think qualification is the most important thing. But we will probably need to wait another generation before we get more female top leaders. In our organization I believe that it is difficult for women in some departments (...). I am not sure... The leaders in our organization are qualified; they are shareholders or have a master degree from NHS. But if a woman and a man had applied for a top leader position... I am not sure... Perhaps the best qualified person would be chosen. X (one of the top leaders; the General Manager of the corporate group) is ok here. If both have the same education and experience, I believe that it has more to do with the “face factor” or personal impression, because social assignments are also important (7).

I would have chosen a man instead of a woman if the woman were in her twenties, because these women often want to have children. I would thought this, but I would not tell anyone:

Few women are top leaders because most women do not want this. There are often many travels. The questions related to if women have children or not, are not allowed anymore. I would have chosen a man instead of a woman if the woman were in her twenties, because these women often want to have children. I would have thought this, but I would not tell anyone (...). There exists a Glass ceiling in male-dominated businesses. The age on the men among the top leaders also have something to say. Traditions consisting of only men are difficult to change, if one wants to include female leaders. Men have difficulties when it comes to trust women, while women trust more on men. It is difficult to change these perceptions among men. Women physically have to persuade them (Fm).

A Glass ceiling is usual:

A glass ceiling is usual (...). “Wow”, if a woman becomes a top leader. There exist prejudices related to this (Fw).

A woman must work harder:

I am not sure... It depends on what you are searching for. One must prioritize. Women must work harder to convince other (I).

I do not think that everybody wants to become a top leader, many just pretend. It is not ok for a leader to “not have ambitions”:

I do not think that everybody wants this. When having a leader responsibility, it is not ok to “not have ambitions”. One should have ambitions. People will ask: Why have you been here in 10 years? Women must prove more. Perhaps a little bit. When it comes to X’s (one of the top leaders; the Manager of operations) job, one must prove more if one does not have education, for example X and X (a female- and a male middle leader that do not have any higher education). But I believe that X (the male middle leader) probably could get the Manager of operation position. The female leaders would probably need some extra time, to convince them (2).

I do not believe that there are any differences:

When it comes to climb upward the ladder, I do not think that there are any differences between women and men (3).

Especially younger women want to climb upward the corporal ladder:

I would have done this by myself. Especially younger women want to climb upward the corporal ladder. But I think people with education will be prioritized instead of women with children. There are differences here. The interest is important. It is important to have freedom to choose. It is more difficult for women (4).

I believe that it has changed:

Women must prove more. They need to work harder to convince other. But I believe that it has changed a bit, and that competence is chosen before gender (5).

There are more men than women that want to be top leaders:

Many women want to become top leaders, but I believe there are more men that want to climb upward the corporal ladder. The numbers of women that want to become top leaders are increasing. But I believe that women need to prove extra (6).

Women feel that they are not good enough:

Some women want this, but then family and friends must be put aside. More men than women have leader ambitions. And many women feel that they are not good enough (7).

Empowerment

This last part of the findings concerns about empowerment, where the leaders were asked about their thoughts about an organization that includes this. They were also asked to which degree they thought that empowerment could be related to gender equality; whether this could “help” women, and lastly they received a question related to external communication; how “much” empowerment is necessary when communicating externally.

Summary of the main findings:

All the interviewees were positive when asked about their thoughts about an organization that includes empowerment. They believed that empowerment gives the employees different advantages, such as “freedom under responsibility”, increased involvement, enthusiasm, engagement, and etc. The General Manager at the hotel believed that most of the leaders in her organization are empowered, but not everybody, while the General Manager at the Italian restaurant at the mall focused on the importance to affect the decisions made in the organization, and did not believe that employees in her organization were allowed to do this. Some of the leaders also focused on the importance of the organization’s guidelines when it comes to communicate externally. The Manager of the operations believe for instance that too much “democracy” prevents progress, although it is important to a larger extent to empower the employees. Furthermore, the Manager of operations meant that it is important for the leader group to define “the whole picture”, and the leader must know when to interject. He talked about their own “How to welcome” campaign that included all the leaders.

Three of the leaders claimed that empowerment might contribute to gender equality. The Restaurant manager at the steak house believed that empowerment shows that the leader has no prejudices, while the Manager of operations believed that this

can help women, since many women are cautious and easily can be overlooked. The Restaurant responsible believed that empowerment might give women the opportunity to distinguish themselves in another direction, where they might be able to surprise.

All the leaders agreed that there had to be certain kinds of guidelines when communicating externally. The Acting general manager at the nightclub and café claimed that it is important to have common sense, and if one “crosses the limit”, the important thing is how *much* one “crosses this limit”. The Restaurant responsible also focused on the importance of being careful with sensitive information, so that the organization does not get a bad reputation. The Head chef at the steak house and the Manager of operations told about their own organization, where only the top leaders are allowed to talk to media. The Manager of operations claimed that this was important because of the experience that these leaders have.

Empowering middle leaders is usual in our organization, but not for everybody:

An organization that contributes to empowerment, gives employees “freedom under responsibility”. The involvement and the happiness increase, and it influence people to participate; they are involved. It also encourages people to be happy. However, one needs to have clear guidelines. One cannot work too much alone. In our organization we are given very much freedom. Obviously: I am sitting here today as a manager. I believe that most of the middle leaders are empowered, but not everybody (1).

This is very positive, but unusual. In our organization one does not have the opportunity to affect the decisions that are made:

This is very positive, but unusual. I do not believe that it is good to deliver out too many “leader roles”. One has to delegate responsibility in a company. This is very good, and makes one “grow”. This is a positive trend for everybody. But I have an experience for the opposite, where it was exhausting for the manager. If one gives away responsibility, the receiver must have the opportunity to affect the decisions that are made. In our organization one does not have this opportunity. One should have the opportunity to do this (2).

My female leader is very good in empowering her subordinates:

This is very good. My own female leader is very good to do this. Many subordinates have climbed because of this. This is good if you want to get clever subordinates (3).

A leader who empowers the employees is self-assure:

This creates enthusiasm and engagement. I want to have it like this. Empowerment shows that the leader is self-assure. The leader does not feel threatened, and does it for the company. This is a good leader (4).

Too much “democracy” prevents progress, although it is important to empower subordinates to a larger extent:

This is becoming more and more usual. But it was more extreme for some years ago. For 5- 7 years ago it was very popular with open-plan offices that should contribute to include the employees. However, too much “democracy” prevents progress, although it is important to a larger extent to empower the employees. A defined leader group has to secure “the whole picture”. Still the working environment must be included. In our organization we have this campaign where we focus on a “good welcome”. In this campaign it is important to include all the leaders. We have had many conversations related to this. In processes related to change, it is important to include everybody that is involved. This contributes to engagement. If there are too many opinions, the leader has to interject. The leader must know when to interject (5).

It is important for employees to also know something about budgets and other information:

This is very good. It makes the employees feel included. They can work with things that normally are the leader’s responsibility. They can try to include as many as possible. It is important for the employees to know something about budgets and other information (6).

It is important to include empowerment to a certain extent:

This is very good. This is an example of a good leader. It is important to participate to a certain extent. One receives respect and listens to the employees (7).

Empowering employees include them towards a common goal:

Empowerment is important. This includes the employees towards a common goal. Trust is important, but if this fails, this is not good. It is very important (Fm).

I am not sure if this contributes to gender equality:

I am not sure... Though, it is still equal treatment when it comes to gender. But I believe that it is the performances that are the most important. This is what matter the most (1).

I am not sure if it contributes to gender equality indirectly:

Maybe... Perhaps indirectly. The leader must delegate responsibility to the person that manages to handle it best. I am not sure... There is often not that many to choose from, especially when it comes to top leaders. In the waiter business there are many women to choose from (2).

Gender equality has to do with other things:

I do not think that this necessarily has something to do with gender equality. I believe it concerns more about the skills that the leader possesses. Gender equality concerns about other things (3).

Yes, because empowering the employees, shows that the leader does not have prejudices:

Yes. This is a leader without prejudices. And it is easier for women to abet themselves if they do a good job (4).

Since many women are cautions, and therefore easily can be overlooked, empowering women can contribute to help them by involving them in important processes:

Yes, because men are usually more direct. Women are more cautions. If a leader actively empowers women, it will help them. Women can be overlooked. This can help them. Men talk no matter what the circumstances are. This makes many women more visible (...) (5).

Yes, because women then get the opportunity to distinguish themselves in another direction:

Yes, because women then get the opportunity to distinguish themselves in another direction. They might surprise. Most people "grow" when they receive more responsibility. And many people wish to have more demands (6).

Yes, or it should contribute to gender equality:

Yes, or it should. But I am not sure... I think it is positive, since everybody gets the opportunity to contribute (7).

Perhaps this can contribute to gender equality, since women often are more “afraid” in many male-dominated businesses:

Perhaps, since women often are more “afraid” in many male-dominated businesses. Though, it is always nice to be asked (...). I disagree, many people like to receive orders, and this is typical for men (...). Women are often more “cozy” with people. Men prefer to receive orders more directly (Fm).

When it comes to external communication it must be held within the company’s guidelines:

I do not believe that anybody should have “free reins”. It has to be held within the company’s guidelines. It is important to receive trust from others. But I do not believe there has to be a specific limit (1).

It depends on the person; one must trust this person:

It depends on the person. One must trust this person. “Free reins” are best if one can trust this person, and if this person is clever. I would never choose a person that I do not trust (2).

If one “crosses the limit”; the important thing is how *much* one “crosses this limit”:

Common sense is important. The leader has to teach the employees where the limits are. And the employees need to understand this. The limits are obvious. If one “crosses the limits”; the important thing is how much one “crosses this limit”. One must not destroy anything. Personality is important; somebody needs limits (3).

All organizations must have clear guidelines:

All organizations must have clear guidelines. And everybody in the specific organization should report everything to his or her top leaders. This is difficult to answer to... (4).

In our organization none, except the top leaders, are allowed to talk to media. This has to do with experience:

There has to be guidelines: Experience and guidelines. It has nothing to do with gender. In our organization, the employees are not allowed to talk to the media. X (one of the top leaders; the owner of the corporate group), X (one of the top leaders; the General Manager of the corporate group) or X (one of the top leaders; the Manager of operations of the corporate group) shall always talk. This has to do with experience (5).

One must be careful with sensitive information:

It is important to be objective. There has to be a certain kind of freedom, at the same time that there are clear limits, for example when it comes to sensitive information, such as thievery. This can damage the company's reputation (6).

There have to be guidelines:

There has to be guidelines that describe what the work assignments are (...). In our organization we are not allowed to talk to media, or to make any economical agreements, purchases and etc., except if one plans to sell it to other people (7).

To have freedom when it comes to external communication is good as long as it is something positive:

This is good as long as it is something positive (...). But there are often many pretty women that are representing organizations. Anyway, the person that is representing the organization must have a positive focus, and not focus on negative things (...). Everybody in the organization should not get "free reins". They must be referred to a spokesperson. This is important (Fm).

The organization must be clear:

Empowerment is very important. One must not abuse this. It makes people feel responsibility and increase the performances. When it comes to the limits; goals and visions are important. The organization's guidelines must be clear (Fw).

Discussion

Social norms, gender roles, stereotypes and prejudices

All the seven leaders and the participants in both focus groups claimed that a person who represents an organization must have certain skills, such as being confident, diplomatic, precise, authoritarian, clear, outgoing and so on. Related to the theory from Eagly and Karau (2002, 2011) and Heilman (1997), these skills are typical skills that a man has, or according to Eagly and Karau (2002): *Agentic attributes*. As a matter of fact, the Head chef perceives a spokesperson as an "alpha- male" that is above 30 years. Given the fact that women typically are given communal attributes

(Eagly & Karau, 2002), such as being good in personal relationships, sensitive, warm and caring, it seems crucial to ask; *why* are the stereotypes that a man typically has, perceived to be important when representing an organization? When communicating externally, one should assume that the communal attributes typical for women are important? Obviously, since communication concerns about meeting other people, give/ receive messages and so on. Since women are according to the theory and to many of the participants in this research, given attributes as being more unsecure and weaker than men, it seems strange that they at the same time often are seen as knowledgeable and passionate. Both the theory and the majority of the participants also believe that women must prove more or work harder in work situations. Therefore, one might assume that “old” stereotypes and prejudices towards women still are apparent in organizations. But on the one hand, since this research is conducted using only *one* corporate bar- and restaurant group in Norway, it might be difficult to generalize the results to other bar- and restaurant corporate group, and thus of course difficult to generalize it to working women in general. But on the other hand, theory and research from other authors with similar results contribute indeed to increase the external validity of these findings.

Laws that prohibit discrimination shall protect women against being discriminated, but what are we able to do about thoughts, perceptions and norms that people have in organizations? One cannot refuse people to think or have diverse meanings, and old norms in the society might be difficult to change. People might also perceive things differently, and some stereotypes and prejudices might be perceived negatively among some people, while it is perceived less negatively among other people.

However, comparing male spokespersons towards female spokespersons, the majority of the interviewees believe that there are no differences, at the same time that

a typical spokesperson was given agentic attributes. Heilman (1997) has as mentioned earlier claimed that though both sex are given desirable traits, it is often well-known that those associated with men are higher valued in Western culture. Could this be some of the explanations why men more often are seen as typical leaders compared to women?

When it comes to the age of the leaders, all the interviewees believed this to be important. The majority of the interviewees actually believed that a leader must have a certain age to achieve respect, while gender was not considered as important for most of them. The focus group consisting of men, claimed that age was considered as seniority, and that nobody wants to get instructions from a 10-year younger person. Therefore, one might assume that a person that stereotypically is representing an organization is a person that is not “too young”, because seniority might be seen as important, since this perhaps increase the respect this person achieves. Though, this perhaps is apparent in the organization the interviewees belong to, it is difficult to generalize this to all other organizations, but it gives an indication of how it seems to be in the chosen organization the interviewees belong to. According to Mooney (2005, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011) there exists evidence that many older women often feel resented by younger women, especially if they are not given the respect they believe that they deserve, however none of the interviewees mentioned anything about the situation between older and younger women, they were as mentioned more concerned about seniority and experience.

One might ask how much women (and men) are affected by the social norms in the organization or society, especially when it comes to stereotypes and prejudices that exist in organizations. Do other people prevent or counteract women when trying to

become leaders? If there are any obstacles for women, are these obstacles visible or invisible?

The majority of the interviewees believe that people are affected by social norms when it comes to gender roles, meaning that it might be difficult for a woman to leave her gender role; being a housewife, subordinate, working in a female-dominated business, such as the health care. Since Heilman (1997) and Eagly and Karau (2002) claim in their research that a typical manager has attributes that also are typical for men, there might occur an incongruity between the gender role and the leadership role, and also a lack of fit, if a woman “leaves” her gender role and becomes a leader. Most of the interviewees also believe that it is more difficult for women becoming leaders than it is for men. Could this have something to do with the expectations that other people have towards women and their gender roles, and how they perceive the attributes a typical leader has? Because there was also a view that people, and thus women, often care too much about what others think. However, the research by Heilman and Eagly and Karau do not mention anything about this, and therefore since this was only a view that one of the leaders had, one does not know if this is a fact. Though, it can be considered as an interesting point of view. Furthermore, women were in this research given attributes that are not the same as the attributes that a leader stereotypically has. These findings might contribute to strengthen the findings from the research done by Heilman and Eagly and Karau, since their research also showed that the attributes that a leader stereotypically has are *not* the same attributes that women seem to have. And thus tell us something about the incongruity between the gender role and the leader role if a woman becomes a leader. Though no one claimed that it is a problem if women leave their gender role, women are typically not given the

desirable traits a typical leader “shall” have, and therefore, one can relate this part of the findings to Eagly and Karau’s Role congruity theory.

According to Heilman (1997), the Lack of fit model concerns about the expectations due to the fit between the attributes a person have related to the work setting and the perceptions of what the job requires when it comes to skills and orientation. If the fit is satisfactory, success is expected, likewise if the fit is seen as poor, then failure will be expected. Furthermore, the attributes and skills presumed to be required when having a position as a top leader does not fit the attributes that are stereotypical for women as a group. Many of the interviewees and also the participants in both focus groups considered female leaders as being tough, hard- working, clever and thus given attributes that were typical for male; showing that women who are leaders “leave” their gender roles; they do not fit the expectations related to the role as women *neither* the role as a leader, because a leader is stereotypically a male. Research by Heilman (1997) also shows that male managers rated female managers as more agentic than communal in general, though not as agentic as male managers. Therefore, it seems like both the interviewees and the participants in the focus groups *and* former research perceive women who leave their gender role as being more agentic than communal, though not as agentic as male managers. Thus one might ask; *if* women who become leaders are seen as more agentic than communal, *and if* there are norms in the organizations related to that there is a Lack of fit *and* an incongruity between the female gender role and what is expected of a leader in general; one might understand *why* many women have to work harder or prove more compared to their male colleagues? On the one hand, since men stereotypically already have attributes that are associated with being a leader, it seems that it is much easier for men, compared to women. But on the other hand, if men want to become leaders in typically female

dominated businesses, for example in the health care or in kindergartens, must they then become more communal? Seeing this the opposite way, one might believe that leaving the gender role is difficult for men as well.

The majority of the interviewees thought that it is difficult for women being a leader in typical male- dominated businesses, such as the oil business. The General Manager at the hotel believes for instance that it would be difficult for a woman to have Helge Lund's position, because there might be a lack of respect, especially from older men, while the Manager of operations believes that women often are seen as weaker and as sex- objects in many rough male- dominated environments. This is in some way also confirmed by former research, claiming that the majority of the leaders in powerful social roles, such as politics, law, religion and the military are men (Banaji & Greenwald, 1995; Eagly, 1987; Forsythe, Heiney, & Wright, 1997; Vianello & Siemienka, 1990, cited in Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). And that this stereotype of men might contribute to a belief that men are superior and thus are the right persons to control and receive more resources than women (Jost & Banaji, 1994, cited in Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). Furthermore, most of the interviewees and the participants in the focus groups also believed that the majority of the leaders in the health, social, service and travel businesses were women. Therefore, one might assume that these female- dominated businesses prefer typical female attributes as being caring, sensitive, good social skills and so on, but also that male- dominated businesses prefer agentic attributes because the majority are men, and that women, as most of the interviewees believe, will struggle in these male- dominated businesses. Some of the reasons might be the lack of respect. An interesting question might be to ask if it is tougher for men than women being leaders in typical female dominated businesses? Do the norms in the organization influence them? There is nothing in this research or former research

used in this thesis that can give an answer to this. However, since many of the participants in this research believe that women struggle more than men much because of pregnancy and infants, and that women often are seen as weaker, cautious and more humble, one might assume that it is difficult, (or at least this seem to be the view in the organization that the participants in this thesis belong to) for women to become leaders in typical male- dominated businesses, much because of this. And since pregnancy and the birth affects women physically in a larger degree than men, this is not a “problem” that men have related to become a leader, no matter if they want to become a leader in a male- or female- dominated business.

An interesting view occurred in the focus group consisting of men; where they claimed that they would have chosen a man instead of a woman, if the woman was young, and thus perhaps was going to be pregnant. They also claimed that this was not something that they would have said, but something that they would have thought. Perhaps much of the obstacles the female leaders then experience are invisible and thus difficult for women to discover? Because the norm is that women shall have children, and therefore one cannot refuse women getting pregnant, at the same time one has to consider what is profitable for the organization?

The interviewees did not believe that the combination of being a parent and a top leader was more difficult for women than it is for men. However, some claimed that it is more difficult for women to combine because of the infants. Though they also thought that this was something that could be negotiated and planned. Two of the leaders also thought that there are norms in the society that expect that women shall stay home with their children. There were also some views that claimed that women care too much about what other says, and that women often are influenced by this, or by the social norms in the society or the organization. Descriptive norms are according

to Eagly and Karau (2002) expectations about what a group of people actually does, and can might be related to how others' expectations influence the parents in their decisions related to how they want to solve the situation when having children.

Perhaps also the injunctive norms that are expectations concerning about what some people ought to do or ideally would do, influence to some extent their choices. But this is not confirmed in the theory used in this thesis, and since all the interviewees belongs to the same bar- and restaurant corporate group, it is difficult to generalize to other leaders in other bar- and restaurant corporate groups. Thus it gives an indication and a prospective explanation of why some women choose to stay home with their children instead of combining the role as a parent and a top leader.

Everybody in this research, both the interviewees and the participants in the focus groups believed that discrimination occurs in organizations. Some of them also talked about "male clubs" that do not want to include others, such as women. Salaries were mentioned as an area where women often are discriminated, which indeed is confirmed by "Statistisk sentralbyrå" (2011) that has done a research on this, and thus claims that women's salary is approximately 85 % of men's salary. This difference varies among the different occupations. However, none of the interviewees claimed or mentioned anything about if discrimination occurs in their own organization. Could it be that since discrimination, especially when it comes to salary, varies as mentioned above among the different occupations and that the bar- and restaurant businesses are one of the occupations where men and women get equal paid for equal work? In addition to the fact that women in general are still underrepresented as top leaders (SSB, 2011), as well as in the chosen organization for this research, many of the interviewees believe that it is difficult for women to reach the top management, also in their organization, much because of the "male clubs". This indicates that some of them actually believe

that there *are* some sorts of discrimination also apparent in their organization, although they answered no or did not answer the question related to discrimination at all.

Most of the interviewees believe that stereotypes and prejudices occur as unconscious. The Acting general manager at the nightclub and café claimed that these stereotypes and prejudices do not necessarily have to be negative, while the General Manager at the Italian restaurant at the mall claimed that stereotypes and prejudices often are ingrained and that people often do not think about it. This is confirmed by Fazio and Olson (2003, cited in Dovidio et al., 2011) that claim that implicit attitudes, or in this case; stereotypes and prejudices, often occur as unconscious and are unintended activated. Furthermore, one might relate this to what the female focus group claims are jokes, and thus not intentional. They also believe that since much of it is meant as a joke, it is difficult to change. The focus group consisting of men did not mention anything about this, but they believed that older men are worse than younger men. Could it be that these jokes have their origin from old traditions and culture that especially earlier were dominated by men, and that they do not know how to act towards women, since they are not used to have female colleagues? Since stereotypes are according to Heilman (1997) a work- saving mechanism that simplify and organize a complex world, these older men perhaps believe that “all” women have certain characteristics; though it might be inaccurate and exaggerations, it might help them “saving” time and create expectations and perceptions of how women are or act. Since much of it seems to be unintended and unconscious, it might be difficult to change, because *how* can one change these stereotypes and prejudices if it is unintended and if people are not aware of the consequences and how it prospectively affects others? And since people are different, and how they are affected, or if they are affected at all might change from one person to another person. Though the Restaurant manager at the steak

house believed that there are many things that happen way back in time and thus become visible later as unconscious, and can be changed through awareness. Rudman and Kilinski (2000) claim that with experience or socialization, many people might change their attitudes, however their original one is not replaced. It stays in memories and becomes implicit, while the newest one becomes conscious and explicit.

Therefore, awareness might be a suggestion to how one can change attitudes, for example being careful with jokes or statements that can be negatively interpreted by women. Or at least be careful with those attitudes that are or become explicit, since one *is* aware of these.

The majority of the interviewees also believed that stereotypes and prejudices occur as indirectly or as hidden, and that women are worse than men. Mooney (2005, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011) claims that women want to be perceived as professional and do not want to alienate each other, and therefore choose covert acts such as lying and sabotaging. There were some views among some of the leaders and the male focus group that women stereotypically often are jealous and envy other women. Could it be that the combination of being professional at the same time that “many women often” envy or are jealous towards other women are the reason why stereotypes and prejudices might occur hidden more often among women than men?

Many women are not being supportive when working together. They fail to support each other and they try to undermine their authority and credibility, and they even try to sabotage for one another. They are also the first persons to attack other women who get promotion (Heim & Murphy, 2003, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011). This was also confirmed by some of the interviewees and the male focus groups. There was also a view that women are worse against each other in typical male-dominated organizations, and that women are the biggest critics towards other women. Can this

have anything to do with women leaving their gender roles, and thus being more agentic than expected? And since women typically are given attributes as being sensitive, indirect, dependent, and etc., it might create jealousy towards women that are “tough enough” to leave their gender role? Therefore, there also might be an indication that especially female leaders working in male- dominated businesses struggle more than others, not just because of other women, but also because they have left their gender role; as being a leader and thus becoming more agentic at the same time as they do not reach the top level of management, probably because they are women and that the top management exists of men that want to maintain their “male-clubs”. Finally, also the fact that the women working in male- dominated businesses, such as in the oil, finance and military and etc., and do not work in the businesses that are typical for women; health care, being teachers or secretaries (Heilman, 1997) and so on, might “irritate” other women.

The perceptions held by different leaders at different levels in an organization

When the participants in this research were asked to describe a typical leader, they described a leader as having attributes that according to Eagly and Karau (2002) and Heilman (1997) are stereotypical for a male. However, the Manager of operations claimed that it is different among the top leaders in their organization, claiming that the owner of the bar- and restaurant corporate group had some typical feminine attributes, as being very structured. In addition to this, the male focus group indeed described a top leader as being structured. And while the male focus group believed that a typical top leader also is flexible, the female focus group believed that this was an attribute that a typical middle leader had. None of the leaders or the participants in the focus groups mentioned anything about who that is best suited for having a position as middle leaders nor as top leaders, though most of them believed that it is more difficult for women being a top leader. Furthermore, being a top leader was

typically by some of the leaders described as being older than a middle leader, and some of them believed that a top leader needs to have an overview, is more distanced and professional, and does not necessarily need to have relevant experience. Most of the participants also believed that a female top leader needs to be tough, and put other things aside, such as family. Though, one can ask if family is “women’s domain”, and that men do not have to put this aside; they can combine being a top leader and a parent easier than women? The Manager of operations believes that these women are viewed as tough and easily seen as a “bitch”. Seeing a female top leader as a “bitch”, can this have something to do with jealousy, since she is tough and leaves her gender role that expects her to be a housewife, subordinate, working part time and so on? But also since leaders are typically given agentic attributes, and a woman that is direct, independent and authoritarian, does probably not fit the expectations the norms in the organization and the society have towards women. There is a lack of fit and expectations of failure (Heilman, 1997) and an incongruity between the female gender role and the leadership role (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This might be relevant for the organization that the participants belong to, but it is difficult to generalize to other bar- and restaurant corporate groups, since I could not find any other theory to strengthen these findings. However, the different leaders and the focus groups in the chosen organization seems to have some different views when comparing top leaders towards middle leaders, though this seems to concern more about positions than gender.

The majority of the participants in this research believed that there exists a Glass ceiling in Norwegian organizations that prevents women from reaching the top level of management. Some of them claimed that the “male clubs” were the reason why this occurs. This is confirmed by former research (Elmuti et al., 2003; Linehan and Scullion, 2004, cited in Insch et al., 2008), that claim since top management mostly are

dominated by men, social activities such as golf, country club, gym memberships and so on are also often limited to male colleagues. And this social contact when meeting socially is often important when promotional opportunities arise, since top managers often choose people they trust and are comfortable with. Some of the participants in this research claimed that women are afraid and therefore do not want to climb upward the corporal ladder and become top leaders in environments mostly dominated by men. What about men? Are they also afraid, since they only include people they are “comfortable with and trust”, and thus men? Do they feel threatened by women? Research has shown that women who get the opportunity to become a leader are often viewed as a threat to others: *Both men and women* (Heifetz, 2007; Mooney, 2005; Sandler, 1986; Tanenbaum, 2002, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011). The employment level for women has increased dramatically since the 70s, and the number of women taking higher education and becoming leaders is increasing. And women spend less time on domestic work compared to earlier, at the same time as they are having children later in life compared to earlier (SSB, 2011). This might be an indication that the gender roles are changing; women and men are getting more similar and have the same opportunities. Though, still only 1 of 5 executive managers is women (SBB, 2011), one might ask *why*? Some of the participants in this research believed that women are affected by the norms or attitudes in the society that expect women to stay home with their children. This can be related to the Lack of fit model by Heilman (1997); if women become top leaders there might be an expectation of failure, because this is not “what women normally are”, and since being a leader and thus leaving her gender role and probably become more agentic than other women in general, there will again be an incongruity between the female gender role and the leadership role (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Furthermore, some of the interviewees and the male focus group believed that many women do *not* want to become top leaders, much because they are afraid or because they want to prioritize children instead of being a top leader. They also claimed that it is more difficult for women to become top leaders than it is for men. These findings can be strengthening by the findings by Daft (2010). He claims that many female leaders often feel that the costs of climbing upwards the corporal ladder are too high. And women often feel that they have to sacrifice personal time, friendship, or hobbies because they still do most of the domestic work, in addition to their business responsibilities.

When it comes to their own bar- and restaurant corporate group, three of the middle leaders claimed that there does exist a Glass ceiling, while the Manager of operations (one of the top leaders) was sure that this was not apparent. There was also a view among the interviewees that the top management in their organization also consisted of a “male club”. The Manager of operations believed that other organizations were worse, especially male- dominated organizations; this was also confirmed by some of the middle leaders. However, these findings are difficult to generalize to other bar- and restaurant corporate groups, since I could not find any theory that could contribute to strengthen these findings. But one might asks if men who are a part of the top level of management, are afraid to admit the reality? According to Sunstein (1996) political correctness occurs everywhere, and thus one might believe that this top leader perhaps has a need to say what seems to be the best thing to say? There was as mentioned earlier a view in the male focus group where they believed that they would have chosen a man instead of a woman if the woman were in her twenties, because these women often want to have children, and also that they would have thought this, but never mentioned it. Perhaps political correctness

then can contribute to “protect” for instance women against discrimination in employment situations? Or at least the chance might be bigger that they will never know the reason why they were not chosen. Obviously this is discrimination *if* it occurs in an employment situation and is mentioned as a reason why a man is chosen instead of a woman, but one cannot deny people to have thoughts about it. Therefore, one might understand some of the interviewees, when they claimed that many of the attitudes that people have towards women are difficult to change, since much of it is not shown directly.

Empowerment

All the leaders and both focus groups agreed that including empowerment is positive for the organization. Furthermore, they believed that empowerment gives employees different advantages, such as “freedom under responsibility”, increased involvement, enthusiasm, engagement and so on. This might be seen as a democratization process; involving others in decision making processes, delegation of responsibilities and etc. Many women are seen as better than men related to what modern societies require of people, such as paying attention, abiding by rules, good in verbal communication and better in social relationships (Daft, 2010) Many workplaces also work for increased democracy (Eagly & Karau, 2002, cited in Eagly, Koenig, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011).

On the one hand one might assume that empowering women can help women forward, since women stereotypical are seen as being weak, passive, with inherent attributes such as high level of indecisiveness, dependence, sensitivity, non-objectiveness and insecurity, and thus empowerment might contribute to involve women in important processes at work. Chamila T. Attanapola (2005) has at least in her doctoral thesis found out that through empowering women, it creates higher levels of self- confidence, self- esteem, dignity, and self- identity, and that they will not let

anyone to suppress or exploit them. Therefore, one can assume that empowerment “helps” women getting more confident and perhaps tougher, but this research by Attanapola does not say anything about gender equality; if empowering women can contribute to equal treatment of women and men in organizations, and more specifically due to being a woman and representing an organization externally. Though three of the leaders in this research believed that this could contribute to gender equality. The Manager of operations believed for example that this could help women since many women are cautious and easily can be overlooked. But since this is only a view among three leaders in one organization, this can only be seen as a view that perhaps is apparent in that particular organization. However, the Manager of operation’s opinion can be related to Attanapola’s research (2005); empowering women can help them to get more secure and visible.

On the other hand, there might be changes in stereotypes over time, much because of democratic relationships; where the employees who get involved in decision-making processes, delegations and team based leadership skills (Gergen, 2005; Kanter, 1997; Lipman- Blumen, 2000; McCauley, 2004, cited in Eagly et. al, 2011), and therefore the attributes that are typical for leadership roles are changing? Because, this “new” type of leadership is seen as less masculine than many other traditional leadership, as it include typical communal attributes as being unselfish and concerned with other, etc. (Eagly et. al, 2011). Thus, this can be seen as an indication that democratic relationships and *perhaps* empowerment already are increasing in many organizations, and indeed “help” or “fit” many women, since women are seen as better than men related to what modern societies demand of people. Related to this it also seems appropriate to ask if this “help” or “fit” women who have “left” their gender role and appear more agentic than other women in general? Though, stereotypes

related to each gender might be changing, but what about *the extent* of expectations or the social norms in the organization or society, when it comes to belonging a particular gender role? If men and women are given almost similar attributes, is it then important to “maintain” these gender roles; have men and women some inherent attributes that cannot be transferred to the opposite gender, or are men and women able to have all the same attributes?

All the leaders and the participants in both focus groups claimed that there have to be some guidelines when communicating externally. There were also some views that external communication should always be referred to the organization’s spokesperson, to avoid misleading information to come out, but also because of the experience that this person probably has. Empowering women can according to Attanapola (2005) make women more confident and self-assured, and thus includes them into important processes that they are involved in at work. But it might also be important to have certain guidelines to secure the external communication. In addition the Manager of operations believed that too much democracy prevents progress, although it is important to empower the employees to some degree. As mentioned among the interviewees and focus groups there seemed to be an agreement that there had to be certain guidelines for external communication, but none of them mentioned anything about gender, therefore one might assume that is general for both men and women. Therefore, it seems like *none* should have the opportunity to act freely when representing the organization; there should be some guidelines, according to the participants in this research. Finally, it might be important to see this only as a view among the participants for this research, since I could not find any former research to strengthen these findings, and therefore this cannot be generalized.

Limitations

There are some limitations related to this research. Especially, when it comes to the external validity for this thesis; whether this can be generalized to other leaders in other bar- and restaurant corporate groups. This seems rather poor, since this thesis only concerns about one organization. However, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, generalization might not be the main purpose when doing a qualitative research. It is the relevance for the research topic that it the most important (Neuman, 2011). And since seven different leaders at different levels in the chosen organization together with two focus groups consisting of eight men and eight women, there might at least be an indication of how it seems to be in that particular organization. Former research by other authors also contributes to strengthen many of these findings, and thus the external validity.

Another limitation was that two of the other top leaders (the Owner and the General manager) unfortunately did not have the opportunity to participate in this research, which probably could have given a more comprehensive view of how it is among the top leaders in the chosen organization. I also believe that if I had included perhaps two or three more middle leaders with other positions than those that participated in this research, such as the Sales manager, the leader for the doormen and perhaps a bar manager, it would have contributed to a more comprehensive view among the middle leaders in the chosen organization. Perhaps this would have contributed to more different views among the leaders, because I could not find any large differences among the participants in this research.

When it comes to the validity of the research, and thus the authenticity, the themes for this thesis might be sensitive and difficult to answer to, and perhaps there is also a “need” to give political correct answers. However, I tried to make the interviewees feel

as comfortable as possible, and the answers are written exactly as they appeared during the interviews. Though some word syllables were difficult to translate into English.

Some questions were also apparently more interesting or easier to answer to than others, resulting in some more comprehensive answers in the first part, concerning about social norms, gender roles, stereotypes and prejudices, and some short answers to other questions, such as those in the Empowerment part. It was also difficult to find relevant theory related to empowerment and female leaders who represent organizations externally, and therefore some of these findings are perhaps not as reliable as they ought to be and cannot be generalized. But it contributes to a detailed view of how it seems to be in the chosen organization among leaders and some subordinates, and is relevant for the topics in this research; as Neuman (2011) claims is important when having external validity in qualitative research.

Conclusion

Social norms, gender roles, stereotypes and prejudices

Both Heilman (1997) and Eagly and Karau (2002) have in their research shown that typical attributes related to being a woman (communal attributes) is for example being weak, affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing, dependent and gentle. While men (agentic attributes) often are seen as independent, direct, strong, active, rational, objective and confident. When the leaders and the participants in the focus groups in this research were asked to describe a typical person that is representing an organization externally, this person was given agentic attributes. However, when comparing male spokespersons towards female spokespersons, the majority of the interviewees believed that there were no differences. Therefore, one might assume that according to these findings, women must become or at least act more agentic when communicating externally, and as long

as she does this, gender does not play any major role. Age was seen as more important than gender, and spokespersons no matter if it is a man or a woman, “must” have a certain age to achieve respect.

The majority of the interviewees also believed that most people are affected by social norms when it comes to gender roles, for example that it is difficult for a woman to leave her gender role as being a housewife, subordinate and a part time working mother. But I could not find any former research to strengthen these findings.

Though no one claimed that it is a problem if a woman leaves her gender role, women are typically not given the desirable traits that a typically leader has. One might relate this part of the findings to the Role congruity theory by Eagly and Karau (2002) and the Lack of fit model by Heilman (1997), since women are typically given communal attributes there might be an incongruity between the role as a woman and the role as a leader, and also a lack of fit between the attributes a woman typically has and the perception of what the job requires when it comes to skills and orientation. If the fit is not seen as satisfactory, there will be an expectation of failure. Therefore, one might understand, why the majority in this research believe that it is more difficult for women than men to leave their gender role, and that they have to prove more and work harder. Since men stereotypically already have attributes that are associated with being a leader, it seems that it is much easier for men being a leader, compared to women. Though one might turn this the other way around; what about male leaders in female-dominated businesses; do they have to become more communal, and then leave their gender role? Perhaps leaving the gender role is difficult for men as well.

Most of the participants in this research believed that women struggle more than men when *combining* the leadership role and being a parent, mostly because of the infants, but also because of the social norms in the organization or the society. This is

not confirm by former research, and therefore it is difficult to generalize, but it is obvious that it is physically tougher for women during the pregnancy than it is for men, and therefore one can assume that this influences women who are or want to be pregnant in general. Sunstein (1996) have claimed that political correctness occurs everywhere. The male focus group claimed that they would have chosen a man instead of a woman in an employment situation because of the “fear” that the woman shall be pregnant. Though they would have thought this, they claimed that they would never have said this. Therefore, one can assume that among this focus group there occurs a view that discriminates women, but the “need” to be political correct prevent them to tell others about their opinion regarding this.

All the participants believe that discrimination against women occurs in Norwegian organizations. Some believed that discrimination occurs because of the top management consisting of “male clubs”, while other pointed at the salaries. Former researches confirm this, since top managements mostly are dominated by men, there occurs “male clubs”, especially when it comes to social happenings (Elmuti et al., 2003; Linehan and Scullion, 2004, cited in Inch et al., 2008), but also when it comes to salaries (SSB, 2011). Women are also underrepresented as top leaders in the chosen organization for this research, as the case also is for top leaders in general in Norwegian organizations (SSB, 2011). None of the leaders believed or said anything about discrimination in their own organization; however, the majority believed that it is difficult for women to become top leaders also in their organization, much because of the “male club”. Therefore, one can assume that discrimination somehow also is apparent in their organization.

Most of the interviewees believed that stereotypes and prejudices occur as unconscious and not always meant as negative. This is also confirmed by former

research by Fazio and Olson (2003, cited in Dovidio et al, 2011) that claim implicit attitudes often occur as unconscious and are unintended activated. Most of the interviewees believed that stereotypes and prejudices are difficult to change. Some of them believe that it can be changed by awareness and by realize that there is a problem. Earlier studies claim that experience and socialization can contribute to change attitudes among people (Rudman & Kilinski, 2000). Awareness might therefore be a suggestion related to how one can change attitudes that often are perceived as negative, for example being careful with jokes statements that can be interpreted negatively by women. Or at least be careful with attitudes that are or become explicit since one is aware of these.

Women use indirect or hidden stereotypes, this is both confirmed by the majority of the interviewees and by former research by Mooney (2005, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011); women use covert acts such as lying and sabotaging. They are neither seen as supportive (Heim & Murphy, 2003, cited in Palmer and Jones, 2011). One might relate this to the stereotypical attributes a woman has: Being sensitive and insecure, and perhaps they are afraid to tell other women face-to-face about their thoughts. Men are stereotypically seen as direct and self-secure, and therefore one might assume that they are more direct towards each other, and probably do not use indirect or hidden stereotypes in the same manner as women (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 1997).

Furthermore, related to this there obviously are many things that can influence female leaders when they represent organizations externally. For example: The social norms in the organization or the society, expectations about gender roles, stereotypes and prejudices; especially related to the incongruity between the female gender role and the leader role. The participants in this research gave a person who is representing organizations externally agentic attributes. Due to the expectations related to the

female gender role and what is expected by the role as a leader, one might understand why the participants in this research believe that women have to work harder and prove more than men when it comes to leadership positions *and* thus external communication.

The perceptions held by different leaders at different levels in an organization

Also when describing a leader the participants in this research gave this person agentic attributes. However, the Manager of operations claimed that it is different among the top leaders in their organization, claiming that the owner of the group has a typical feminine attribute, as being very structured. The male focus group confirmed this as they believed a typical top leader usually is structured. But summing their views all together, it seems like the interviewees believe that both a leader and a person who is representing an organization externally typically mostly has agentic attributes. When comparing the female focus group towards the male focus group there were few differences. One of them was that the male focus group believed that a typical top leader was flexible, while this was an attribute that the female focus group believed that a typical middle leader has. None of the leaders mentioned anything about who is best suited to be a top leader nor a middle leader, though most of them believed that it is more difficult for women than it is for men, because women has to be tough and put other things aside, such as family.

The Manager of operations believed that female top leaders are seen as tough and often viewed as “bitches”. Perhaps seeing women as “bitches” and as tough can have something to do with women leaving their gender roles, but also since leaders mostly are given agentic attributes, and a woman who is or becomes agentic does not fit the expectations the norms in the society and organization expects of her.

Most of the participants in this research claimed that there exists a Glass ceiling in Norwegian organizations, because of the “male clubs”. This is also confirmed by

former research (Elmuti et al., 2003; Linehan & Scullion, 2004, cited in Insch et al., 2008). Since only 1/5 of the top leaders in Norwegian organizations are women (SSB, 2011), one can assume that there at least is something that prevents women from being top leaders. If it is the Glass ceiling one does not know for sure, but since fewer women than men are top leaders and that top management perhaps consists of “male club”, there might be an indication that there is a Glass ceiling apparent in Norwegian organizations. A Glass ceiling that mostly is invisible since there exists laws that shall protect women from being discriminated, and perhaps a need to be political correct.

Some of the participants in this research claimed that women are afraid when it comes to climb upwards the corporal ladder. Daft (2010) has also confirmed this in his research. Since former studies (Elmuti et al., 2003; Linehan & Scullion, 2004, cited in Insch et al., 2008) claim that male top leaders often include others they are comfortable with and trust, one might assume that men also somehow are afraid when it comes to include women, since women are stereotypically seen as different than men; they want to maintain the “old boys club”. Research has also shown that *both* women and men view female leaders as a threat (Heifetz, 2007; Mooney, 2005; Sandler, 1986; Tanenbaum, 2002, cited in Palmer & Jones, 2011). Perhaps one can relate this to the gender roles and the expectations from the society or/ and organization, and that *both* men and women hesitate about leaving their gender roles at the same time as they “dislike” others who do this, and also that they care about the social norms. Some of the interviewees believed at least that women are affected by the social norms or attitudes in the society that expect women to stay home with their children. This can be related to Heilman’s “Lack of fit model”; if a woman becomes a leader, there will be an expectation of failure, and to Eagly and Karau’s (2002) “Role congruity theory”; there is an incongruity between the female gender role and the leadership role.

When it comes to the organization the participants in this research belong to, three of the middle leaders thought that there exists a Glass ceiling, while the top leader claimed that this was not apparent. Some of the middle leaders also claimed that there exists a “male club” among the top leaders. However, the top leader thought that this was worse among other organizations, which indeed was also confirmed by some of the middle leaders. One does not know if the top leader feels that he “must” be political correct when claiming this, or/and if he is afraid to tell the truth. Furthermore, when it comes to comparing the opinions held by the top leader towards the opinions held by the middle leaders, there were not any large differences aside from this. Including the two other top leaders and perhaps some more middle leaders would perhaps have given a more comprehensive view, and perhaps some more differences.

Empowerment

Everybody that participated in this research believed that empowerment is positive for organizations. They also believed that it can give employees different advantages, which can be seen as important parts of a democratization process. Attanapola (2005) claims that empowerment helps women; however her research says nothing about gender equality. Therefore, I could not find any former theory that could strengthen the view held by three of the leaders; that empowerment can contribute to gender equality.

There might be changes in stereotypes over time, much because of democratic relationships (Gergen, 2005; Kanter, 1997; Lipman- Blumen, 2000; McCauley, 2004, cited in Eagly et. al, 2011). Perhaps this can be seen as an indication that democratic relationships and perhaps empowerment already are increasing in many organizations, and “help” or “fit” women, since women are seen as better than men when it comes to what modern societies demand of people.

Furthermore, all the leaders and the participants in both focus groups believed that there have to be some guidelines when communicating externally, however, they did

not mentioned anything about gender, therefore one can assume that they claim that this is general for men and women, and that no one should be allowed to communicate freely externally.

Finally, it was difficult to write a conclusion, since the research was conducted among leaders (perhaps too few leaders) from only one organization, and thus many of the views were “only” a view that one or two of the participants had. Therefore, including more leaders can be a recommendation for future research. The lack of former research related to some of the concepts also made it difficult.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Introduction: Presentation of the thesis and myself. Anonymity has to be mentioned.

Background

1. Experience, education, age ...

Leader

2. Describe a typical leader. Middle leader versus top leader. *What attributes do you believe this person has?*

3. Differences between male and female leaders. In which degree do you believe that these differences are apparent upwards in the system?

Representation of the organization

4. What do you expect from a person that is representing an organization externally?

5. Imagine a female leader that is representing the organization externally. What do you see?

What is “typical” for this woman?

6. What about men?

7. In which degree do believe age plays any role? What do you think when it comes to gender?

Gender roles and social norms

8. (Explain gender roles) Imagine following: A family consisting of four members. The mother is working full time as an engineer, while the father is working part time in a kindergarten, to have the opportunity to take care of the their children. What do you think

about this? (*"Behaves different than expected"*). *Influenced by the social norms (formal/ informal) in the society/ organization?*

9. In which positions do you believe that female leaders fit better than male leaders?

10. In which degree do you believe that it is possible to combine being a mother, a top leader and having a social life? *Is this more difficult for women than it is for men?*

The Glass ceiling

11. Why do you believe that fewer women than men are top leaders? (Explain the "Glass ceiling") Do there exist a "Glass ceiling" in Norwegian organizations? *What about your organizations?*

12. What do you believe women think about climbing the corporal ladder? *Do you believe that they have to prove more than men?*

Discrimination

13. Do you believe that discrimination is apparent in Norwegian organizations? *What about your organization? If so; how/ why? Do you believe that this ca be changed?*

Stereotypes and prejudices

14. A person's stereotypes and prejudices might appear conscious or unconscious (unintended/ not on purpose). What do you believe is common? *Women versus men.*

15. Stereotypes and prejudices might also appear as overt or covert. What do you believe is common? *Women versus men.*

16. How do you believe other women look at female leaders?

Empowerment

17. (Explain empowerment) What do think about an organization that includes empowerment?

18. In which degree do you believe that this can be related to gender equality?

19. Related to external communication; how much “freedom” is necessary? Free reins? Or where are the limits?

Is there anything you will add related to these questions...?

Thank you very much for your contribution to my master thesis ☺

Appendix 2: Interview request e- mail

Dear...

As a graduate master student at the Norwegian School of Hotel Management at the University of Stavanger, I am finally writing my master thesis, as the last part of the master program. In this thesis I have decided to do a qualitative research, and therefore I would be truly grateful if you had the opportunity to participate in an interview. This interviews will last for approximately an hour, and will be held during March and the beginning of April, or when you have to opportunity to attend. The theme for the thesis is to explore what female and male leaders at different levels in a bar- and restaurant corporate group have experienced or think related to have a female leader that represents the organization externally.

The plan is to interview different leaders at different levels internal in your organization. The corporate group and the interviewees will be held anonymously. Neither the corporate group nor the opinions held by the interviewees will be used in any negative manner. I am only interested in your opinions and thoughts.

I would have been truly grateful if you had the opportunity to participate in an interview, and thus contribute to my accomplishment of my master thesis, as the last part in my study. I hope to hear from you as soon as possible to make an agreement.

Best Regards

Anette Nilsen

