



**An Exploratory Study into the Perceived Macro Level
Gender-Based Leadership Barriers in Ireland**

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the Master of
Arts in Human Resource Management

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Abstract

Title: An Exploratory Study into the Perceived Macro Level Gender-Based Leadership Barriers in Ireland

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Purpose: The aim of this study is to explore the perceived macro level gender-based leadership barriers among female senior leaders in Ireland. The objectives of the study are: to ascertain whether cultural constraints on women's own choices are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier, to establish if leadership perceptions are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier, to investigate if gender stereotypes are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier, and to determine if the inadequacies in legislation are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A mono-method qualitative study was conducted through the use of semi-structured face to face interviews to explore the perceived macro level barriers. Purposive sampling was used to select the five female senior leaders, and the data was analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings: Key findings suggest that cultural constraints on women's own choices, leadership perception, gender stereotypes, and inadequacies in legislation are perceived as macro level barriers for female senior leaders in Ireland.

Practical Implications: This study has practical implications at government and organisational levels, to address the barriers that were identified in this study

Originality/Value: This study extends the work of Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) and further develops knowledge in the area of macro gender-based leadership barriers. This research has developed a comprehensive framework that shows how these barriers operate at the macro level in society.

Key Words: Macro level barriers, Female Leadership, Culture, Perception, Gender stereotypes, Legislation

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Women are still underrepresented in higher managerial positions, with men holding a majority share throughout the world (Lammers & Gast, 2017; Pafford & Schaefer, 2017). Women currently outnumber men in higher education, holding 57 percent of bachelor's degrees, 60 percent of master's degrees, and 52 percent of doctoral degrees (Valerio, 2018). However, while there are clearly many talented and competent women in the workforce, they hold only about 15% of the highest titles in the Fortune 500 and represent 4.6% of Fortune 1000 CEOs (Thomas & McKee, 2016). In Ireland, women make up nearly half of the workforce and yet still only hold 33% of senior managerial positions (CSO, 2016). Thus, considering these statistics, while there are clearly many highly educated and experienced women in the workforce in Ireland, it is apparent that there is something limiting them from reaching senior management positions in Irish organisations.

Organisations have been making efforts to incorporate more women into leadership for many years and many organisations have introduced additional policies such as flexible working and family leave policies. There have been many attempts by some organisations to assist women in progressing to senior leadership positions including mentoring programmes. However, even with all of these initiatives in place, there is evidence that a significant number of women are still not gaining access to senior roles in organisations in Ireland.

There has been much focus in the existing literature on the barriers that exist at an organisational level. There have been a large number of publications on the lack of mentoring among women (e.g. Sahoo & Lenka, 2016; Sindell & Shamberger, 2016; Ibarra, et al., 2013). Whilst recently there has been extensive studies on the difficulties of balancing work and family (e.g., Pafford & Schaefer, 2017; Alonso-Almeida, 2014; Perrakis & Martinez, 2012; Hewlett, et al., 2008), the researcher argues that these studies are limited in that they are focused on a singular problem, with recommendations to address issues only at an organisational level. Thus, the researcher

argues that attempts to date have been inadequate, as women have encountered many barriers at a societal level, with existing literature focusing only on barriers that have existed within organisations. Despite recommendations by Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) to consider barriers at a societal (macro) level, the researcher has found little available research that has moved beyond the organisational level. Barriers at a societal level can have a significant impact on women's ability to advance to leadership, due to cultural constraints, leadership perception, gender role stereotyping, and lack of legislation amongst others.

This research will address this gap by exploring the macro-level barriers experienced by female senior leaders in Ireland. In doing so, this study will extend the work of Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) to the broader area of business and to a new geographical location to test if the phenomenon under investigation is true in an Irish context.

1.2 Overall Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to explore the perceived macro level gender-based leadership barriers among female senior leaders in Ireland.

The four research objectives of this research are:

- 1) To ascertain whether cultural constraints on women's own choices is perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland;
- 2) To establish if leadership perceptions are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland;
- 3) To investigate if gender stereotypes are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland;
- 4) To determine if the inadequacies in legislation are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland.

1.3 Contribution of this Research

Informed by the work of Diehl and Dzubinski (2016), the research will contribute to the developing knowledge of gender-based macro level barriers to female leadership and will provide practical implications and recommendations for organisations to address these barriers.

1.4 Structure of Dissertation

Following this chapter, chapter two will identify and critically evaluate the literature as it pertains to the macro level gender-based leadership barriers, including cultural constraints on women's own choices, leadership perceptions, gender stereotypes, and the inadequacies in legislation in Ireland. It will identify the gaps with the existing literature and demonstrate the importance of the literature to the study at hand.

Chapter three will describe the philosophical approach, the methodology choice, the sample strategy, and the research instrument. This chapter will also detail the data analysis procedure and ethical considerations.

Chapter four will interpret, analyse, and explore the findings and will attempt to link it back to the overall objectives of the research

Chapter five will critically evaluate the findings in light of the previous research conducted by Diehl & Dzubinski (2016) on the macro level gender-based barriers. It will also consider the practical implications of this research.

Chapter six will conclude this dissertation by reflecting on the key aspects of the research. It will highlight the overall contribution of this research, provide practical recommendations, acknowledge the limitations of the study, and propose areas for further research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Although it is more hidden in nature, gender discrimination is still evident in society, and although blatant forms are rare in today's society due to increasing legislation, there is evidence to suggest that gender discrimination has gone underground now instead (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000).

Men hold the majority of higher managerial positions globally (Lammers & Gast, 2017; Pafford & Schaefer, 2017). According to Valerion (2018) woman currently outnumber men in higher education, with 57 percent of bachelor's degrees, 60 percent of master's degrees, 52 percent of doctoral degrees. There are clearly many talented and competent woman in the workforce, yet they hold only about 15% of the highest titles in the Fortune 500 and represent 4.6% of Fortune 1000 CEOs (Thomas & McKee, 2016). In Ireland, woman make up nearly half of the workforce and yet still only hold 33% of senior managerial positions (CSO, 2016). The leadership space remains a male domain. Although there are many educated and experienced women in the workforce, something is limiting them from progressing to top leadership positions.

Existing literature focuses on one barrier at a time, primarily focusing on barriers at an organizational level. A large body on research has been published on the challenges for female leaders, with many researchers highlighting the balancing of family and work life (e.g., Pafford & Schaefer, 2017; Alonso-Almeida, 2014; Perrakis & Martinez, 2012; Hewlett, et al., 2008). There have been a large number of publications on the lack of mentoring among women (e.g. Sahoo & Lenka, 2016; Sindell & Shamberger, 2016; Ibarra, et al., 2013), and recently there have been extensive studies into gender stereotypes (e.g Lammers & Gast, 2017; Hernandez Bark, et al., 2016; Crites & Dickson, 2015; Paris & Decker, 2012). The limitations of these studies are that they are focused on a singular problem, with only a targeted singular recommendation to address one issue. Thus, this current research will attempt to address this gap by exploring multiple barriers at a societal level that women in leadership face and it will make recommendations at the end of the study to address them.

This literature review will identify and critically evaluate the literature as it pertains to the macro level gender-based leadership barriers. The chapter will begin by providing a justification for the research, followed by examining the academic literature that pertains to the macro-level barriers of this study, including cultural constraints on women's own choices, leadership perceptions, gender stereotypes, and the inadequacies in legislation in Ireland.

2.2 Research Justification

This body of work will take Diehl's and Dzubinski's (2016) cross sector analysis on gender based leadership barriers and will apply and adapt it to an Irish context within the business sector. The research will focus in on the macro level barriers that create gender inequalities in leadership, as identified within Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) study. The reason for this is that most current efforts to promote women into leadership focus on a few barriers, primarily those within organizations, thus failing to take into account those across societal levels. Even, Diehl's and Dzubinski's (2016) work primarily focuses on the organizational barriers, investigating 15 organisational or meso-level barriers and just 6 societal or macro-level barriers. The macro-level barriers identified were control of women's voices, cultural constraints on women's own choices, gender stereotypes, gender unconsciousness, leadership perceptions, and scrutiny. The researcher will be limiting this study to cultural constraints on women's own choices, gender stereotypes, and leadership perceptions, as these have not yet been tested in an Irish context. The researcher is of the opinion that control of women's voices, gender unconsciousness, and scrutiny can manifest at meso and micro-level and therefore it would be incorrect to categorize them as macro level barriers for the purpose of this study.

Diehl's and Dzubinski's (2016) study was applied to both higher education and evangelical religious organizations within the US. This current study, in contrast, will apply the concept to the business sector within Ireland. In doing so, this study will extend the work of Diehl's and Dzubinski's to the broader area of business and to a new geographical location to test if the phenomenon under investigation are true in an Irish context as a US one. Thus, this research seeks to address the call from Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) to extend the research to 'examine gender-based leadership barriers in sectors such as business'.

This study will also address the call from Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) to conduct a qualitative research to examine barriers with female leaders that have not been previously identified in their study. The author will attempt to address this by testing if the inadequacies in legislation in Ireland is perceived by female leaders as a barrier. The reason for this is that much emphasis has been placed on legislation since Diehl and Dzubinski's article was published in 2016.

This research will identify the barriers for females at senior leadership level. The reason for this is that senior leadership level or those that are just below the top tend to be male dominated and, as a result, appear to more strongly enforce gender stereotypes for women (Ljungholm, 2016). The highest levels of organisations are a salient space for examining gendered experiences, as this is where power and authority of the entire institution is most overtly exercised (Stainback, et al., 2016). According to Schein (2017), those at the top are most free to act according to their unconscious assumptions. Furthermore, while women have made significant progress into middle management, there is still a large gender gap at the highest levels in organizations (Brady, et al., 2011; Lammers & Gast, 2017; Pafford & Schaefer, 2017). This indicates a need for further consideration of obstacles at the very top (Dzubinski, et al., 2019)

The following sections document and discuss the literature as it pertains to the macro level barriers: culture constraints on women's own choices, leadership perceptions, gender stereotypes and the inadequacies of legislation. This is presented in the conceptual model in Figure 1.

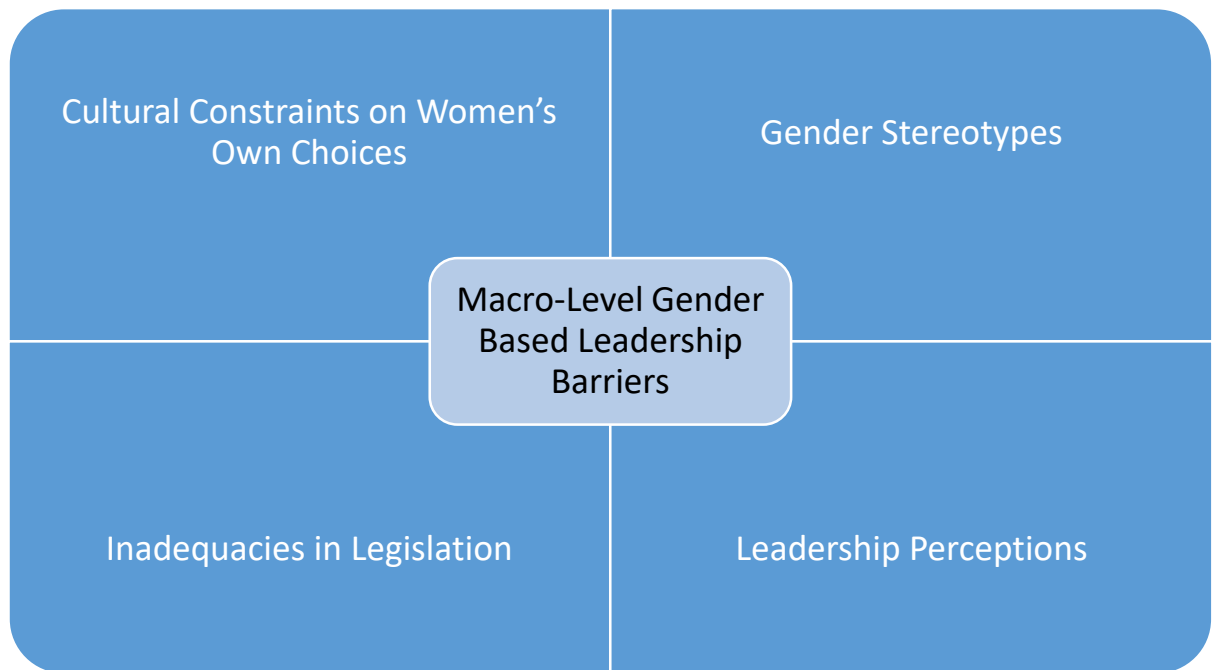


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

2.3 Macro-Level Barriers

Research shows that organizations replicate gendered structures of society. This is advantageous to men but forms many barriers to women's success as leaders.

Organizations, built in patriarchal societies represent and promote patriarchal values (Bierema, 2009; Stead & Elliott, 2009). Thus, women leaders have had to navigate in an organizational world that has been created primarily by men (Leanne, et al., 2019). Men have historically founded and dominated institutions related to law, politics, religion, the academy, the state, and the economy (Acker, 1992). Females have been shaped to both organizational and societal gendered norms (Acker, 2006; Eagly, 2007). It is therefore critical that more research is undertaken to identify and address the barriers at a macro level of society that are preventing women from succeeding or advancing in leadership positions (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). Macro level barriers are those that operate in society as a whole and that prevent women from advancing or succeeding in leadership. These barriers form challenges for women leaders to execute their leadership expertise and for both women and men to accept women leaders (Diehl, 2016). The following section will discuss the literature related to cultural constraints on women's own choices.

2.4 Culture Constraints on Women's Own Choices

One consideration for the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is the cultural constraints imposed on women's choices. Schein (2004) highlighted the need for expanded studies on leadership and culture as a means of understanding the underlying factor that affects organizations. Bissessar (2018) found that culture and its impact on leadership is an under-researched topic. More specifically, the researcher found scant evidence pertaining to the cultural constraints on female leaders. This led the researcher to investigate this barrier further and to ascertain whether cultural constraints on women's own choices is perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland

2.4.1 Theoretical Background – Choice of Study and Career

Theorists uphold the position that perceptions of women and their roles within leadership are based upon national culture. Psychologists reinforced the belief that sex is determined but that gender is constructed, based upon environmental factors, specifically those related to culture (Pagliassotti, 1993). The first step in addressing the challenges faced by women within the work place is to acknowledge that gender is a product of culture, while sex is biologically determined (Claus, et al., 2013). As a result, culture can limit women's choices and expectations. According to Haveman and Beresford (2012), women's choices are constrained by three cultural schemas: men are better than women at math and science, men belong at work and women belong at home, and men are more natural leaders. They discovered that these schemas could prevent women from attaining and aspiring to top management positions. Cabez-Garcia, et al. (2019) categorize cultural dimensions as informal institutions where people in society place constraints upon themselves. Thebaud (2010) indicates that men and women fall back on the gender beliefs of their society when assessing their own capabilities and research found that society constraints women's educational and career choices (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). This body of research indicates that culture may constrain women's choices in terms of study and career.

2.4.2 Masculine Culture

One of the most well-established frameworks for investigating culture is that of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory. Hofstede, Hofstede, and Monkov (2010)

defined culture as ‘the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others’ (p.9). The dimensions that Hofstede has identified to date are power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation and indulgence (Hofstede, 2019). Most important to this study is the dimension of masculinity versus femininity. Masculinity is most correlated with gender inequality (Cabez-Garcia, et al., 2019). According to Hofstede (2019), Ireland is classified as a masculine society, with a high score of 68.

A society that is high on masculinity is motivated by competition, achievement, and success. Males in societies with a high masculinity index are expected to be tough, brawny, natural leaders, materialistic and assertive (Bissessar, 2018). Females are expected to follow, be soft and gentle and more concerned with quality and nurturing (Hofstede, et al., 2010). In very masculine cultures, gender roles create a gap between men and women’s values in important areas such as income, recognition, progress, and challenges (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). When professions are described as masculine, women are less inclined to choose them because they perceive themselves as less able or specialized (Arvey, et al., 2007). Haveman and Beresford (2012) found that culture could explain women’s reluctance to study fields that require mathematics and to take up careers in science and engineering that are gateways to top management. The assumptions that can be drawn from these studies are that Ireland, being a masculine society, conditions women’s innate identity, beliefs, and expectations of what they can aspire to. The literature suggests that Ireland’s culture may be perceived as a macro level barrier to females in terms of the educational and career choices. The research will seek to test this barrier with female leaders in Ireland.

2.4.3 Constraints on Leadership Style

Many researchers have cited that feminine cultures are more accepting of female leadership than masculine cultures (Billing & Alvesson, 2002; Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2009). Cabez-Garcia, et al., (2019) empirical study found that gender ratios for women’s participation on boards are lower in masculine cultures. They also determined that this dimension has a clear influence on the presence of women in society in general and, specifically on business leadership. In these societies, there are less women in the professional workforce (Bissessar, 2018). Societal sexism results in unconscious bias regarding the capabilities and gender roles of woman (Sayers, 2012). This creates a dichotomy for women who are looking to advance into leadership

positions, as they try to balance valued masculine leadership characteristics with femininity, which is attributed to non-leaders (Calahan, et al., 2005). Males and females are expected to conform to society norms and thus conform to the perception of masculinity and femininity. Those that fail to conform to these perceptions are viewed as outsiders, for whom the journey towards acceptance and achievement is challenging (Claus, et al., 2013). Women face a difficult journey when they become leaders, as they no longer fit the social biases of femininity and if they are perceived to be feminine, they are then believed to lack the masculine traits necessary to be successful leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The research suggests that culture has a direct impact on women's choice of leadership style. Bissessar's (2018) qualitative study revealed that masculinity is linked to task-orientated leadership. However, this conflicts with the transformational leadership style which is predominantly adopted by females (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Lammers & Gast, 2017). This can form a predicament for women leaders. If they adopt their natural style, then they may risk failing in their careers and if they adopt a style that is seen as masculine, then they no longer fit with society's paradigm of a female leader. The research implies that Ireland having a masculine culture may place constraints of women's leadership choice.

2.4.4 Cultural Constraints on Work-life Balance

In addition, masculine cultures are less focused on the benefits of programs such as flexible benefits, workplace childcare, and maternity leave (Chiang, 2005). Taking up family friendly policies offered by organisations is viewed negatively and is feared as damaging to one's career (Alonso - Almeida, 2014; Pafford & Schaefer, 2017). This can make it extremely difficult for female leaders within masculine societies to balance work and family commitments. Work-family policies around childcare provisions are thought to help women maintain employment during childbearing years (Alonso - Almeida, 2014). These provisions would enable females to pursue and remain in leadership positions. While family policies enable women to balance family care and employment, some academics argue that this could have a limited impact where culture supports the female caregiver model (Budig, et al., 2012). Notwithstanding, Alonso-Almeida (2014) research shows that childcare provisions can work and are an important component in encouraging women to remain in the work force.

Many women not to continue with their careers because of the demands placed on them. Others opt for demanding careers over family. Indra Nooyi, CEO of PepsiCo has stated,

“I don’t think women can have it all” (Forbes, 2014). Everyday women must choose between job, wife, or mother. The biological clock and career clock are constantly at odds with each other (Forbes, 2014). Sheryl Sandberg, CEO of Facebook, makes the claim in her book *Lean In* (2013) that having it all is detrimental to women, as they are unable to succeed in both work and home life. The aforementioned literature indicates that the lack of support and provisions at a societal level appears to constrain women’s choices around career and family.

Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) identified that culture places constraints on women’s educational and career choices. The literature indicates that it may also constrain many more choices including a woman’s choice to see themselves as leaders, their choice of leadership style, and their choice to take up family friendly policies to enable them to balance work and family. It is evident from the literature that cultural constraints many of the choices that women make on women’s choices and may form a barrier inhibiting them from achieving leadership positions in Ireland.

2.5 Leadership Perceptions

Another macro level gender based leadership barrier is leadership perceptions. Perceptions are based less on reality and more on assumptions. They are what we have been told or learned to believe (Pafford & Schaefer, 2017). Perceptions can hamper progress enabling gender stereotypes to persist. Diehl and Dzubinski (2016, p.188) define the barrier of leadership perceptions “as associating leadership with masculinity”. Masculinity and femininity are significantly related to leadership perception within academic literature.

2.5.1 Associating leadership with masculinity

‘Think Manager think Male’ is a concept that has been bandied about since the 1970’s, where having masculine and dominant traits increase an individual’s likelihood of being perceived as a leader (Dzubinski, et al., 2019).

Empirical research has shown that the gender roles of women and men differ considerably. Gender role stereotypes are deeply embedded in society and organizations, where women are expected to be communal and men are expected to be agentic (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Communal traits are focused on others: being supportive, gentle, empathetic, and caring. Agentic traits are task orientated: such as

being assertive, ambitious, decisive, aggressive, dominant and competitive (Hernandez Bark, et al., 2016). The leadership role is still mainly associated with agentic attributes (Koenig, et al., 2011), with leaders being primarily evaluated on their ability to be agentic (Correll, 2017). The expectations on leaders are closely aligned to male stereotypes, whereby masculine stereotypes are considered more essential to leader success (Brandt & Laiho, 2013). This then leads to the tendency to perceive men as being more suited to leadership than women.

2.5.2 Role Congruency

Role congruency theory proposes that more favourable perceptions exist when the characteristics an individual display align with the social roles assigned to gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This affects women negatively, as the pressure to conform to these social role stereotypes creates a double-blind for women. Agentic and communal traits are opposites, yet leaders must possess some agentic behaviours. This can lead to disapproval for women, as it breaches the social expectations. Incongruities arise when females adopt these male characteristics which lead to inauthenticity and breakdown of effective leadership (Pafford & Schaefer, 2017). If female leaders do not display agentic behaviours, it can lead to the misperception that they lack the required competencies. The incongruity between gender role and leadership role expectations, makes it less likely that women can attain top levels of organizational leadership and thus creates doubts about their competence when they do enter the executive suite (Elliott & Stead, 2017). It may also explain the fact that when women do attain senior leadership positions, they only remain in those roles for a short time (Dzubinski, 2016). The aforementioned literature infers that role congruency may form a barrier for women in leadership roles.

2.5.3 Code Switching

Female leaders may find it necessary to frequently self-monitor and code switch between masculine and feminine styles to remain in their positions (O'Neill & O'Reilly, 2011). Women who monitor their style may be perceived as more likeable and successful. O'Neill and O'Reilly's (2011) study found that women who had higher degrees of self-monitoring had higher promotion rates and suffered less backlash for utilising agentic behaviours. Women who want to succeed in leadership in a male dominated leadership culture must monitor their demeanour and appearance through

dress, speech, communication style, and work patterns (Glass & Cook, 2016; Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010). Thus, it may be perceived to be beneficial for female leaders to refrain from discussing family, as this may be misperceived as not being fully dedicated to work (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014). It may be advantageous then to communicate in stereotypical masculine ways, such as deepening one's voice (Elliott & Stead, 2017). Paradoxically, females may feel the need to display femininity to avoid being dismissed as too masculine (Elliott & Stead, 2017), through their dress, by conforming to a masculine suit while wearing the feminine trimmings of makeup and heels. Muhr (2011) claims that females are super leaders and that in their quest for perfection transcend gender stereotypes while becoming excessively masculinized and feminized. However, the author argues that continual self-monitoring and code switching requires a huge amount of effort and attention that men do not have to contend with. This can distract women leaders from fully focusing on the job at hand. This may be perceived as another barrier for women.

2.5.4 How women as leaders are perceived

Being perceived as a leader allows one to exert greater influence (Dzubinski, et al., 2019). However, the literature indicates that women are perceived as less effective leaders when adopting male characteristics (Lammers & Gast, 2017; Pafford & Schaefer, 2017; Ingols, Shapiro, Tyson & Rogova, 2015; Sindell & Shamberger, 2016; Coder & Spiller, 2013). Women are negatively viewed when adopting male characteristics that help in leadership success (Sindell & Shamberger, 2016; Brandt & Laiho, 2013). Female leaders are perceived as being inauthentic when using agentic characteristics ascribed to men, and as such, women to this day receive derogatory titles by both male and females such as "battle-axe, dragon lady and ice queen" if they are perceived as acting masculine.

In addition, women are evaluated as less effective when they are in positions of power, such as leadership. Their power is perceived as illegitimate and they can suffer status loss from the use of power (Lucas & Baxter, 2012). Hernandez Bark et al.'s (2016) empirical study found that men were higher in power motivation than women. That is, they have a stronger desire to have authority and influence over others. They also found that power motivation was positively related to leadership role occupancy. Power is largely congruent with the male gender role. Thus, female leaders may be averse to exercising their power due to the way they and others perceive it.

2.6 Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are considered another macro level gender-based leadership barrier. Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) describe this barrier as fixed and oversimplified generalizations about women. Although gender stereotypes can occur within organizations (meso level) and between individuals (micro level), they are categorized as a macro level barrier because they operate across society.

The problem with gender stereotypes is that they are highly prescriptive specifying what a group should do. They specify that the traditional women such as housewives and secretaries are preferable to non-traditional professional women (Fiske, 2012). These prescriptive stereotypes lead to unconscious biases about who the primary carer should be, what females should study, what career path they should take, and ultimately makes women question whether they should lead. These gender stereotypes can be challenging for women within leadership roles.

2.6.1 Gender Stereotype – The Homemaker and Motherhood Penalty

In this 24/7 hyper-connected world, the stereotypical “ideal worker” re-enforces masculine norms and is portrayed as someone who can work eight hours continuously away from home with extra hours as needed, having no family responsibilities (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014). This stereotype makes it more difficult for female leaders with family responsibilities, as there is a gender stereotype that women should look after the children and housework above all else. According to Inglos et al. (2015), women are still doing the predominant amount of domestic work while looking to move up the career ladder.

Family, care, and domestic responsibilities are not equally shared and are more often taken on by women. Most of running the household is conducted by women in two income homes (Hewlett, et al., 2008) and women’s ability to participate in the labour market is constrained by the fact that they spend more time on unpaid work, four times as much on care work and twice as much on household work, than men (IBEC, 2019), regardless of the employment status of partners (IMF, 2013; Index, 2017) all of which makes women less available for labour market participation. This can thus marginalize women within senior leadership positions, as they are seen as less devoted than their male counterparts to the firm.

Ireland has one of the lowest female employment rates in Europe. The employment rate of men and women in Ireland is roughly equal until people hit their late 20s. However, between the typical childbearing years of 29-39, there is a permanent drop off in the female rate (CSO, 2016). Many Irish mothers would like to work, or work more, but they are constrained by family responsibilities (IBEC, 2016). Career gaps for caring reasons can result in a “motherhood penalty” (England, et al., 2018) due to interrupted employment, detachment from the labour market, and possible decline of skills and networks. The motherhood penalty is the term used when working mothers are considered less competent because they may not be able to do or handle the same work as a man or non-mother while having to take care of her children (England, et al., 2018). This can lead to lost opportunities for promotion, training, and salary increments, which would be gained while in employment. There are many highly educated and high achieving women choosing to leave executive jobs to stay at home with their children (Haveman & Beresford, 2012). A woman’s decisions to focus on family and not career presents a reason for the lack of women in senior leadership (Ransdell, 2014). Women scientists, engineers, and technologists feel strong conflict between earning promotions and maintaining a family life (Hewlett, et al., 2008). The literature indicates that stereotypes such as the “ideal worker” and the “motherhood penalty” may form barrier for female leaders with family responsibilities.

2.6.2 Gendered Roles and Choice of Study

The gender leadership gap reflects the persistent gender segregation of our labour markets. A number of sectors and jobs continue to be dominated by men or women, with women dominating education, health and caring professions, while men dominate technology and engineering (IBEC, 2019). Women are disproportionately employed in poorly paid professions and underrepresented in well-paid ones. Both men and women are expected to follow the gender stereotypes within the work model, which reproduces men in leadership positions and women in subordinate positions (Dzubinski, et al., 2019). As such, women are pressured to conduct themselves in ways to fit these stereotypes.

The roots of this gendered segregation lie in the traditional gender role stereotypes in society and lead to the different educational and career choices of men and women. It stems from the way children are introduced to learning and opportunities, which socialises children into an expectation of certain roles as “women’s work” or “men’s

work” and into the roles men and women often assume around caring responsibilities. Such beliefs can be reinforced, consciously or unconsciously, by teachers, parents, employers and society (Haveman & Beresford, 2012).

Schools, and in particular single sex schools, often fail to offer “gendered” subjects such as physics or mechanical drawing in all-girls schools or home economics in all-boys schools, or timetables are drawn up which pitch gendered subjects against each other. Furthermore, career guidance often seems to be deficient in bridging the knowledge gap for career choices and encouraging girls and boys to look at careers the fit outside the gender stereotypes. For example, women are underrepresented in apprenticeships in industries like engineering or transport (IBEC, 2019). This suggests that these career options may not have been encouraged or fully explored with female students, or the subjects needed may not have been offered in an all-girls school. Where subjects required for specific jobs are not available, career decisions are narrowed at an early stage.

Subconscious bias comes into play. Girls are hindered by the stereotypical belief that they are not as good as boys at maths and by the fact that maths and science are seen as a male domain (Haveman & Beresford, 2012). Boys outnumber girls three to one in leaving certificate physics in Ireland, and this imbalance continues into the workplace with only a quarter of the 120,000 people working in jobs using STEM are women (Group, 2016) . There are not as many females graduating with science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) qualifications as young males (Mullet, et al., 2017). According to the OECD (2017), the low proportion of women in STEM fields of study and employment makes a significant impact on the gender gap at management level in these sectors. The stereotypes around roles and study appear to form another macro level barrier for females in Ireland.

2.7 Inadequacies in Legislation

The literature suggests that inadequacies in legislation poses another macro level barrier to women in leadership. Gender diversity is triggered by the adoption of positive laws rather than by soft recommendations (Garcia, et al., 2019). This section will focus on the legal mechanisms that could be more efficient at bringing women at par to men in leadership. Garcia, et al.’s (2019) research found that gender diversity policies are more commonly promoted in countries where governments, corporations, and institutions are less masculinized. This would suggest that more could be done from a legislative

perspective in Ireland, which according to Hofstede (2019) is classed as a masculine society.

2.7.1 Gender Pay Gap Reporting

Legislation in Ireland could go further than the Employment Equality Act 1998-2015 when looking at gender diversity and gender balance in corporate leadership, and although the introduction of the gender pay gap reporting bill that came into effect in 2019 is a step in the right direction, the researcher argues that more could be done. Gender pay gap reporting currently requires employees with over 250 employees or more to publish information relating to the remuneration of their employees by reference to gender (Oireachtais, 2019). The threshold will reduce within two years to 150 employees or more and finally to 50 employees or more the following year. While measurement and reporting tend to be key drivers of change, gender pay reporting has no way of determining whether men or women are being paid less for the same work or subject to bias or discrimination (IBEC, 2019). The researcher also argues that gender pay reporting is limited, as it will exclude medium sized organisations with less than 250 employees for the first two years and will completely exclude small enterprises with less than 50 employees. In Ireland, small to medium enterprises make up 99.8% of the total number of business economy (CSO, 2016). The researcher found limited academic research in the area of gender pay gap reporting, thus this research will attempt to develop knowledge in this area by conducting an exploratory study to determine if there are perceived inadequacies regarding gender pay gap reporting in Ireland.

2.7.2 Gender Quotas

Positive laws imposing gender quotas has become increasingly important in recent years, with much focus within literature on its importance. Norway was the first country to introduce gender quotas into law in 2003, requiring 40% female directors on corporate boards. Other countries including Belgium, Finland, and Spain followed its example, in view of the positive results: in 2004, 22% of board members were women; by 2017 it was 42% (OECD, 2017). Ireland has failed to follow suit with such legislation however and has just 17.6% board members representing women in 2017. These statistics are indicative of the fact that there are inadequacies in the current legislation in Ireland. Grosvold, et al. (2016) suggest that legal institutions play a key

role in women's representation on boards of directors, while Cabez-Garcia, et al.'s (2019) research found that countries with positive laws imposing gender quotas on corporate boards, rather than corporate governance recommendations, had the most scope for improving gender diversity on such boards. Wang and Kelan's (2013) study in Norway found that the gender quota has, not only increased gender equality within the boardroom, but also had spill-over effects on top leadership positions. Legislation appears to be crucial therefore in determining board demographics and promoting women into top management positions. Action at political level is needed in Ireland to increase diversity on boards, which in turn will cascade down to all leadership levels.

2.8 Conclusion

This review of literature found that the existing literature focuses on one barrier at a time, primarily focusing on barriers at an organizational level. A large body of research has been published on the challenges for female leaders including the difficulties of balancing family and work life (e.g., Pafford & Schaefer, 2017; Alonso-Almeida, 2014; Perrakis & Martinez, 2012; Hewlett, et al., 2008), the lack of mentoring among women (e.g; Sahoo & Lenka, 2016; Sindell & Shamberger, 2016; Ibarra, et al., 2013), and gender stereotypes (e.g; Lammers & Gast, 2017; Hernandez Bark, et al., 2016; Crites & Dickson, 2015; Paris & Decker, 2012). The limitations of these studies are that they are focused on a singular problem and a targeted singular recommendation to address one issue. Thus, this current research will attempt to address this gap by exploring multiple barriers at a societal level that women in leadership face and it will make recommendations at the end of the study to address them.

There was limited research on macro level barriers for female leaders. Most current efforts to promote women into leadership focus on a few barriers, primarily those within organizations failing to take into account those across societal levels. The researcher found one piece of research that addressed the barriers for female leaders at a macro, meso and micro level, this was Diehl's and Dzubinski's (2016) cross sector analysis on gender based leadership barriers. However, Diehl's and Dzubinski's (2016) work primarily focuses on the organizational barriers.

The macro-level barriers identified were control of women's voices, cultural constraints on women's own choices, gender stereotypes, gender unconsciousness, leadership perceptions, and scrutiny. Through the literature review, the researcher found that cultural constraints on women's own choices, gender stereotypes and leadership

perceptions, were most relevant to this study. Also since Diehl and Dzubinski's work, there has been a great deal of emphasis from both a government and academic perspective on legislation. Diehl's and Dzubinski's (2016) study was applied to both higher education and evangelical religious organizations within the US. This study will apply the concept to the business sector within Ireland. In doing so, this study will extend the work of Diehl's and Dzubinski's to the broader area of business within a new geographical location to test if the phenomenon under investigation is true in an Irish context as a US one. Thus, this research seeks to address the call from Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) to extend the research to 'examine gender- based leadership barriers in sectors such as business'.

To date, the researcher knows of no other research that has explored the perceived macro level gender-based leadership barriers in Ireland.

The next chapter details the qualitative research design methodology used for this study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived macro level barriers faced by female leaders in Ireland. This chapter will begin by describing the philosophical approach and the methodology choice. Detail will be provided about the sampling strategy and research instrument employed, followed by an overview of the data analysis and finally ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to explore the perceived macro level gender-based leadership barriers among female senior leaders in Ireland.

To achieve this the researcher must achieve the following four research objectives:

- 1) To ascertain whether cultural constraints on women's own choices is perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland;
- 2) To establish if leadership perceptions are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland;
- 3) To investigate if gender stereotypes are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland;
- 4) To determine if the inadequacies in legislation are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland.

This study will extend the work of Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) on the macro level gender-based leadership barriers to the broader area of business and to a new geographical location to test if the phenomena under investigation are true in an Irish context, as proven with the US. Thus, this research seeks to address the call from Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) to extend the research to 'examine gender-based leadership barriers in sectors such as business'. The researcher will attempt to apply and examine this through objectives one, two, and three, as set out above. It will also address the call from Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) to conduct a qualitative research to examine barriers

that female leaders encounter that have not been previously identified in their study. The author will attempt to address this through the fourth objective, by testing if inadequacies in legislation in Ireland is perceived by female leaders as a barrier.

3.3 Philosophical Approach

The researcher's position and perspective are important considerations in qualitative research. The researcher worked from the social constructivist paradigm to research how women leaders perceive macro level barriers. Working within this paradigm, the researcher recognized that our own experiences shape our interpretation (Creswell, 2014) and that meanings are dependent on events that occur around them (Saunders, et al., 2016). The researcher sought to understand the different perceptions of the female leaders that participated in the study in order to make sense of the barriers they experienced in a meaningful way. This interpretivist research was taken in order to create a new and richer understanding of the barriers for female leaders in Ireland (Biggam, 2015). The author viewed face to face participation as fundamental to the research. The different perspectives across the diverse sample provided rich data from individual circumstances and realities.

A deductive approach was used to analyse the data and although the researcher recognises the limitation of this approach being too restrictive in relation to the issues revealed in the data (Saunders, et al., 2016), the researcher believed this was the best approach to achieve the research objectives, as it links the research to the existing body of knowledge in this subject area.

The researcher considers themselves to be an equalist, that is, they do not see gender as solely a females issue but sees gender as a central feature of society, with implications for both men and women (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). Qualitative research provided the author with the framework to recognize the information that was shared between the researcher and the participants.

3.4 Methodology Choice

The philosophy outlined in the previous section aligns to qualitative methodology adopted by the researcher. Qualitative research enabled the author to explore the perceived macro level gender-based leadership barriers among female senior level managers in Ireland and to achieve the four research objectives above. Whilst

quantitative research was considered, the researcher is of the opinion that statistical data will not provide the in-depth detail required to address the research questions of this study (Bryman & Bell, 2007). As qualitative research enables meanings to be explored and clarified (Saunders, et al., 2016), this will help answer the research questions in this study more adequately.

A cross sectional study was conducted through a mono-method approach. The research approach is interpretivist in nature, enabling different experiences and interpretations to be gathered using semi-structured interviews. The main reason for adopting a qualitative methodology and semi-structured interviews was because the answers could be probed, allowing interviewees to explain and expand on what they said. This leads to rich data that captures experiences, feelings, and motives (Anderson, 2011). Nevertheless, there are drawbacks with this time-consuming process, with data being varied, generalized, and complex (Saunders, et al., 2016). However, the richness of the process outweighs these concerns and this qualitative methodology approach is consistent with this area of research and was used by Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) to explore the macro gender-based leadership gaps. As it also addresses the call from Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) to conduct qualitative research to examine barriers with female leaders that have not been previously identified in their study, this approach taken in this current study is warranted.

3.5 Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling is used in qualitative research to identify and select informative cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas, et al., 2015). The sampling method used was purposive since the participants were selected because they were female, known to be senior leaders and held positions across different business sectors. The senior leaders were determined by those that were at senior manager level, reported to executive level, had direct reports who were manager level and who inputted into the strategical direction of their organisations. There were individuals with the responsibility for planning and directing the work of their direct reports (see Table 1 for the positions and organisational type of each participant).

Table 1: Participants position and organisation type

Senior Leader:	Current Position:	Organisation Type:
1	Senior HR Manager	Electrical Supply Company
2	Senior Finance Manager	Accounting Firm
3	Senior Engineering Manager	Engineering Firm
4	Senior Brand Manager	Marketing Company
5	Senior Manager of AML investor services and TA operations asset management	Financial Services Multinational

The research used maximum variation sampling similar to the sampling strategy used in the study conducted by Diehl & Dzubinski (2016). The differences between the two sampling strategies is the sample size. Diehl conducted face to face interviews with twenty six women, while this research used a smaller sample size of five. The reason for this is that a small number selected for a particular purpose would, according to Saunders, et al. (2016), provide the researcher with rich information to enable one to explore the research question and gain theoretical insights. Saunders (2012) suggests a minimum sample size of between five and twenty-five for semi-structured interviews. Although it appears a contradiction to use a smaller sample size, Patton (2002) argues that small number of diverse cases are a strength, as any patterns that do emerge are likely to provide interesting key themes as well as uniqueness.

Patton (2014) recommends identifying the diverse characteristics prior to selecting your sample. The sample selection criteria employed cut across a great deal of variation amongst participants. The five participants varied in terms of their leadership roles (accountant, engineer, compliance, human resources, marketing); business sector (accounting practice, engineering firm, financial services multinational, electrical supply company, marketing company) and personal characteristics (age, parental status, education, professional experience).

The control within this sample was also similar to that used by Diehl & Dzubinski (2016), in that participants were all senior female leaders. The reason for selecting senior leaders is that they tend to be male dominated and, as a result, appear to more strongly enforce gender stereotypes for women (Ljungholm, 2016). Furthermore, while

women have made significant progress into middle management, there is still a large gender gap at the highest levels in organizations (Brady, et al., 2011; Lammers & Gast, 2017; Pafford & Schaefer, 2017). This indicates that female leaders may provide more robust and richer experiences of gender barriers for the researcher to explore.

There were two key differences between the controls. Firstly, in this research, the females worked within the private business sector and secondly the study was based in a different jurisdiction Ireland. In Diehl & Dzubinski's (2016) study, the participants worked within the higher education and evangelical religious organizations within the US. This study will extend the work of Diehl's and Dzubinski's work to the broader area of business and to a new geographical location to test if the phenomenon under investigation is true in an Irish context as was identified in a US one. This research also seeks to address the call from Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) to extend the research to 'examine gender-based leadership barriers in sectors such as business'.

An email invitation was sent to ten potential participants (Appendix A) inviting them to participate in this research. After waiting one week, a follow-up email was sent (Appendix B). As a result of both emails, five individuals expressed interest to participate in the study.

The research developed and compiled a list of semi-structured interview questions (Appendix C). These questions were all supported in the literature with some questions adapted from Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) study. This was reviewed by the researcher's supervisor and amendments were made based upon the feedback received (Appendix D). A pilot was undertaken by the researcher with a participant that was known to the researcher. The participant was a female, of senior manager level within a Talent and Development role within a financial organization. They were not part of the sample for this research. The researcher amended the research questions based upon this pilot and on the feedback provided by the participant (Appendix E). Question 12 was added to allow the research to further investigate work life balance under the barrier of culture constraints on women's own choices.

The interview took place in a meeting room at the participants' place of workplace. This location was convenient, and the participants felt comfortable in their own work environments. As recommended by Saunders, et al. (2016), the meeting rooms provided a neutral, safe, and confidential space where participants could freely answer the open-ended questions. Prior to the commencement of each face to face interview, a debriefing

took place. The researcher provided each participant with a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix F) and allowed them enough time to read the form prior to conducting the interview and the researcher also invited questions or concerns. The researcher restated the purpose of the interviews, the use of the interviews, the researcher's background, and the aim of the study being undertaken. The participants were also informed that participation was completely voluntary, that they had the right to refuse to participate, the right to refuse any question, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. All participants signed a consent form (Appendix G) prior to commencing the interview. Each interview was recorded and lasted 60 minutes. At the end of each interview, participants were asked if they wished to view the preliminary findings from their interviews to enable clarification or if they wished to expand on points raised that they saw necessary.

3.6 Research Instrument

The research instrument used was a semi-structured interview that were 60 minutes each in duration. The semi-structured interview question guide (Appendix E) was formulated using key themes that were identified in the literature review and directly related back to each objective. Questions were open-ended and Collis and Hussey (2009) assert that one of the benefits of open-ended questions is that they enable the researcher to explore and gather information that is directly related to the research objectives. There were four key themes identified within the literature, with sub-themes identified within each theme (Figure 2).

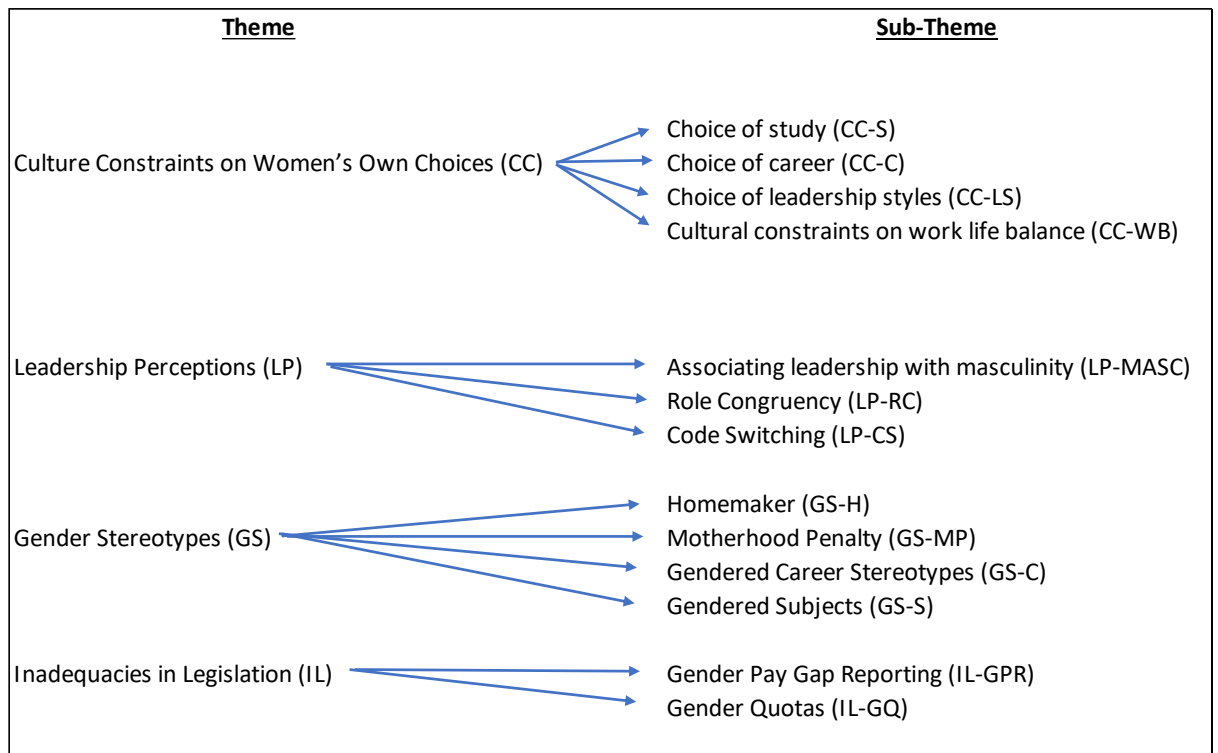


Figure 2: Graphical representation of themes and sub-themes

Each question was systematically categorized by theme and sub themes and was directly correlated back to the literature. Some of the questions were derived from those used by Diehl & Dzubinski (2016), while others were formulated by the researcher through the literature (see Table 2 below for themes, subthemes, relevant literature, questions, and questions origins).

Table 2: Themes, sub-themes, literature, questions, and questions origins

Theme:	Sub-Theme:	Literature:	Question:	Questions Origin:
Culture Constraints on Women's Own Choices	Choice of study	Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) study found that society places constraints on women's educational choices.	1. In your view, has culture constrained your choice of study? If so, in what way?	Diehl & Dzubinski (2016)
	Choice of career	Diehl & Dzubinski's (2016) research found that society places constraints on women's career choices. In addition, Haveman & Beresford (2012) found that culture can explain women's reluctance to take up careers in science and engineering.	1. In your view, has culture limited your choice of career? If so, in what way? 2. Have you ever felt prevented from applying for a leadership position? If so, can you tell me about it 3. Have you ever doubted your ability as a leader? If so in what way?	Diehl & Dzubinski (2016)
	Choice of leadership style	Women face a difficult journey when they become leaders, as they no longer fit the social biases of femininity and if they are perceived to be feminine they are believed to lack the masculine traits necessary to be successful leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007).	1. Would you describe your leadership style as masculine or feminine? 2. What leadership characteristics do you most use and why? 3. Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style (being more masculine or feminine)? If so, can you tell me about a time when you did change your style and why you felt the need to change your style? 4. Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style due to cultural conformity? If so, can you tell me about a time that you did change your style to conform and why you felt the need to change your style?	Formulated from literature and piloted by researcher
	Cultural constraints on work life balance	Masculine cultures are less focused on the benefits of programs such as flexible benefits, workplace childcare, and maternity leave (Chiang, 2005). Taking up family friendly policies offered by organisations is viewed negatively and is feared as damaging to one's career (Alonso - Almeida, 2014; Pafford & Schaefer, 2017).	Do you find it difficult to balance work and family commitments? If so, in what way? If no, have you ever found it difficult to balance work and family commitments?	Formulated from literature and piloted by researcher
Leadership Perceptions	Associating leadership with masculinity	Diehl & Dzubinski (2016, p.188) define the barrier of leadership perceptions "as associating leadership with masculinity".	What characteristics do you associate with leadership? What leadership characteristics do you perceive as being most effective to your current role? What characteristics are most well received by your employees? What characteristics are most well received by your manager?	Formulated from literature and piloted by researcher
	Role Congruency	Women are negatively viewed when adopting male characteristics that help in leadership success (Sindell & Shamberger, 2016; Brandt & Laiho, 2013).	Have you received any negativity or bias towards your style of leadership? If so, can you tell me about this experience	Formulated from literature and piloted by researcher
	Code Switching	Female leaders may find it necessary to frequently self-monitor and code switch between masculine and feminine styles to remain in their positions (O'Neill & O'Reilly, 2011).	1. Have you ever adopted characteristics that were outside of your natural leadership style? If so, what characteristics did you adopt? Can you tell me about a time when you adopted these characteristics? Why did you feel the need to adopt these characteristics? 2. Have you ever changed your style of leadership within your role and why?	Formulated from literature and piloted by researcher
Gender Stereotypes	Homemaker	Fiske (2012) proposes that the problem with gender stereotypes is that they are highly prescriptive specifying what a group should do. They specify that the traditional women such as housewives and secretaries are preferable to non-traditional professional women.	2. Have you ever encountered gender stereotypes on a personal or professional level? a. If personal, can you tell me about them and the effect that it had on you? b. If professional, can you tell me about them and the effect that it had on you?	Formulated from literature and piloted by researcher
	Motherhood Penalty	The motherhood penalty is the term used when working mothers are considered less competent because they may not be able to do or handle the same work as a man or non-mother while having to take care of her children (England, et al., 2018).	1. Have you ever encountered any gender stereotypes as a leader? If so, can you tell me about this experience?	Formulated from literature and piloted by researcher
	Gendered Career Stereotypes	According to Dzubinski et al. (2019) both men and women are expected to follow the gender stereotypes within the workplace model, which indicates that men are bred for leadership positions and women are assigned to be in subordinate positions.	1. What was your choice of career and why? 2. Did you feel pressured into your choice of career and why?	Formulated from literature and piloted by researcher
	Gendered Subjects	Girls are hindered by the stereotypical belief that they're not as good as boys at maths, and by the fact that maths and science are seen as a male domain (Haveman & Beresford, 2012).	1. What was your choice of study and why? 2. Did you feel pressured into your choice of study and why?	Formulated from literature and piloted by researcher
Inadequacies in Legislation	Gender pay gap reporting	Gender pay reporting has no way of determining whether men or women are being paid less for the same work or subject to bias or discrimination (IBEC, 2019).	1. In your view, will gender pay gap reporting help females in leadership positions? If yes, in what way? If no, how do you think this could be improved?	Formulated from literature and piloted by researcher
	Gender Quotas at Board Level	Garcia, et al., (2019) research found that countries with positive laws imposing gender quotas on corporate boards, rather than corporate governance recommendations had the most scope for improving gender diversity on boards.	1. In your opinion, would legislation around gender quotas at corporate boards help females in leadership positions? If so, how do you think it would help? If no, why do you think this would not help?	Formulated from literature and piloted by researcher

The demographic questions were derived from Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) study. These questions were directly relevant to the research (refer to Table 3 for theme correlation).

Table 3: Demographic theme correlation

Demographic Question:	Theme:
Ethnicity	Culture Constraints
Marital Status	Cultural constraints
Children (Number, Ages)	Cultural constraints
Education (Degrees/Fields of study)	Gender Stereotypes
Current Position	Gender Stereotypes

Demographic questions were also asked on age profile to establish if the barriers identified by the participants cut across age groups or if they were specific to one.

Each interview was audio-recorded and key notes were taken in the interview. Participants were informed of this prior to taking part and provided their written consent (Appendix G). During the interview notes were taken to back up the audio recording and it helped to record the non-verbal cues. Mind mapping was used to take the notes as this enabled the researcher to concentrate on what was being said. Immediately after each interview, a detailed record of the interview was compiled along with the contextual data which included location, date, time, setting, background information, and the researcher's impressions of how the interview went. These are all means to control bias and produce reliable data (Saunders, et al., 2016). The limitations with this data collection method are that the audio recording may inhibit some interviewee responses and reduce reliability (Saunders, et al., 2016).

To ensure the anonymity of the participants, the interview notes and the audio-recordings were stored on two different devices and with separate secure impersonal passwords. The recordings were stored on a tablet device and the interview notes were transcribed onto the researcher's home PC. The researcher had sole access to this information until after degree has been conferred. All identifying information was removed from the transcripts and this document. This information was outlined to each participant within the interview debrief and through the participant sheet (Appendix F) and consent form (Appendix G).

3.7 Data Analysis

Yin (2014) suggests a deductive approach which enabled the researcher to formulate a framework (refer to Table 2) derived from theoretical propositions to organize and direct the data analysis. This body of research commenced by formulating themes and subthemes that were derived from the literature (Table 2). This framework was used as means to start and direct the analysis of the data.

The interview data was analysed in several stages as recommended by Saunders, et al. (2016) using thematic analysis methodology. The procedures followed in this methodology involved: becoming familiar with the data, coding the data, searching for themes and recognising relationships, refining themes and testing propositions.

The procedures adopted involved:

1. Stage One: Familiarisation of the data involved the researcher fully transcribing the data (Appendix H), reading, and re-reading.
2. Stage Two: Initial codes were derived from the existing themes that were formulated from the existing academic literature. These codes were then applied to the appropriate units of data in each transcript. The initial categories were hierarchical (see Figure 2). These codes were assigned to the interview transcript, using sentences as units of data. Those units of data that were coded with more than one category suggested interrelationships.
3. Stage Three: Themes, patterns and relationships were identified from the data. A logical analysis across the codes took place creating themes that related back to the research questions. The researcher firstly decided on the themes to further the analysis. Then, the researcher defined the themes and the relationship between them. Some themes were main themes and others were secondary-level themes. Outlying information was also gathered and categorized accordingly. Although outliers are often considered as an error or noise, they may carry important information.
4. Stage Four: The last stage of the process involved refining the themes and revising the relationship between them. From this, testable propositions were developed. A coherent analysis was undertaken by the researcher through rigorous testing of the propositions against the data and through the analysis of the outlying data. The validity of the researcher's conclusions was verified through their ability to withstand the outlying information. The outlying

information helped to refine credible explanations. According to (Maimon & Rokach, 2005) outliers can carry important information that may offer a more valid explanation of association. This outlying information helped the researcher to avoid bias and their own personal beliefs and expectations; thus, avoiding leading information and misinterpretation of the data.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are a critical component of any research project. Ethical concerns are greatest where research involves human participation (Saunders, et al., 2016). The researcher followed all ethical guidelines and procedures outlined by the college. To comply with these guidelines an ethics review form (Appendix I) was submitted to the college at the proposal stage of this study. This was approved by the ethics committee.

Every effort was made by the researcher to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018. An email was sent to participants requesting them to take part in the study (Appendix A). Each participant was informed of the purpose of the study and was sent a participant information sheet (Appendix F). The participant sheet provided information about the purpose of the study, what was involved in taking part in the interviews, why they were selected to take part, and how the data would be gathered, stored, and protected. They were also informed about the protection of their identity and their right to refuse participation, refuse any question, and withdraw.

Each interview was audio-recorded and key notes were taken in the interview. Participants were informed of this prior to taking part and provided their consent to participate by signing the consent form (Appendix G). There were no ethical issues in relation to consent as each participant was an adult and not classified as a vulnerable person. To ensure data protection the interview notes and the audio-recordings were stored on two different devices and with separate secure impersonal passwords. The recordings were stored on a tablet device and the interview notes were transcribed onto the researcher's home PC. The researcher had sole access to this information.

The information gathered will be retained for the purpose outlined in this document. The anonymity of all participants will be protected by a profile as recommended by Bryman and Bell (2007).

3.9 Conclusion

A mono-method approach was undertaken using semi-structured interviews. The research used maximum variation sampling to interview five female senior leaders. The interview was recorded and fully transcribed. Qualitative research enabled the author to explore the perceived macro level gender-based leadership barriers among female senior level managers in Ireland and to achieve the four research objectives of this study.

The interview data was analysed in several stages, as recommended by Saunders, et al. (2016) using thematic analysis. The procedures followed in this methodology involved: becoming familiar with the data, coding the data, searching for themes and recognising relationships, refining themes and testing propositions. All ethical guidelines and procedures outlined by the college were followed and every effort was made by the researcher to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018. The information gathered will be retained for the purpose outlined in this document. The anonymity of all participants will be protected by a profile as recommended by Bryman and Bell (2007).

The next chapter will present and discuss the findings.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the findings obtained from the research data gathered during the interview collection phase of this study. The chapter will begin by describing the demographic profile of the participants followed by describing the approach taken to analyse the interview data. The majority of the chapter will explore the findings in relation to the objectives of the research and will conclude with an overview of the findings and insights in light of the research conducted by Diehl & Dzubinski (2016).

4.2 Demographic Profile

Similar to the study conducted by Diehl & Dzubinski (2016), the research has included context, in terms of age profile, children, education, and working environment as important characteristics when looking at questions relating to the macro level barriers being explored. As such, Table 4 sets out the demographic profile of interviewees who participated in this study.

Table 4: Demographic Profile of the Female Leaders

Senior Leader (SL):	Age Profile:	Nationality:	Marital Status:	Children (Age and Numbers):	Education:	Current Position:	Organisation Type:
1	55-60	Irish	Married	3 children aged 35, 33, 29	Degrees in Psychotherapy, Higher diploma in Coaching and Mediation	Senior HR Manager	Electrical Supply Company
2	45-50	Irish	Married	2 children aged 16 & 13	Certified Accountant, Diploma in IT, Master's degree in Science	Senior Finance Manager	Accounting Firm
3	40-45	Irish	Married	2 children aged 10 & 12	Master's degree in Engineering	Senior Engineering Manager	Engineering Firm
4	35-40	Irish	Married	2 children aged 2	Degree in Marketing	Senior Brand Manager	Marketing Company
5	40-45	Irish	Married	None	Hon Degree in Business, L2I	Senior Manager of AML investor services and TA	Financial Services Multinational

Senior Leader (SL):	Age Profile:	Nationality:	Marital Status:	Children (Age and Numbers):	Education:	Current Position:	Organisation Type:
					Compliance officer exams	operations asset management	

All the participants described in Table 4 were purposefully selected due to the fact that the research concerns female senior leader experiences, as opposed to men in leadership positions. Participants were selected from a range of organizations, thereby providing a comprehensive view of experiences across sectors, and all candidates interviewed had a minimum standard of degree level education. The next section sets out the data analysis methodology used.

4.3 Approach to Qualitative Data Analysis

As outlined in the research methodology chapter, this research is underpinned by an interpretivist research stance using thematic analysis. The research instrument used was the semi-structured interview. The data collected was rich and comprehensive and provided different perspectives from individual experiences and circumstances. All interviews were recorded and transcribed (Appendix H) with the permission of participants. A thematic analysis was then conducted in line with the research objectives. Codes (see Chapter 3 Figure 2) were derived from the existing literature and were assigned to the appropriate units of data in each transcript. The themes that emerged from the data were then related and aligned to each research objective (Table 5).

Table 5: Research Objectives and Related Themes and Sub-Themes

Research Objective:	Theme:	Sub-Theme:
To ascertain whether cultural constraints on women's own choices is perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland	<i>Cultural constraints on women's own choices</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Choice of study 2. Choice of career 3. Choice of leadership style 4. Cultural constraints on work life balance
To establish if leadership perceptions are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland	Leadership perceptions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Associating leadership with masculinity 2. Role Congruency 3. Code Switching

Research Objective:	Theme:	Sub-Theme:
To investigate if gender stereotypes are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland	Gender stereotypes	1. Homemaker 2. Motherhood Penalty 3. Gendered Career Stereotypes 4. Gendered Subjects
To determine if the inadequacies in legislation are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barriers in Ireland	Inadequacies in legislation	1. Gender pay gap reporting 2. Gender Quotas at Board Level

The next section will describe the findings from the data analysis phase.

4.4 Findings

The findings in this study will be presented under each research objective through the emerging themes and sub-themes outlined in Table 5.

4.4.1 Objective 1: To ascertain whether cultural constraints on women's own choices is perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland

This objective was identified by the theme of cultural constraints on women's own choices and the data was analysed by the four sub-themes choice of study, choice of career, choice of leadership style, and cultural constraints on work life balance.

4.4.1.1 Sub-Theme 1: Choice of study

Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) study found that society places constraints on women's educational choices. However, the findings from this study differ and they disagree with this, as four out of the five women interviewed stated that culture did not constrain their choice of study. However, the following was stated by one individual who believed that their choice of study was constrained:

"It was limited from very early on. Maths was not taken seriously in the school that I went to for women. Yes, it limited me in that sense. I remember in the school system men

did not go to home economics back then. That was for females only while the guys did the sciences and biology.” (SL 1)

Senior Leader one’s age demographic was older than the other candidates so this may have been a factor. The participant also pointed out that they did not go to third level until their early thirties and that at that stage they stated that

“My choice of study was driven by my interest in the field.”

Nevertheless, as stated above, most interviewees agreed that culture did not limit or constrain their study choices and their choices were mainly driven by economic factors and interest. One observation and a critical point made by one participant stated

“Being in a school with both girls and boys was very important. Culturally I say this is something that should change. There was a group of us that academically competed with the boys and we did well. In Ireland, culturally how we separate boys and girls into different schools is a bad thing. I don’t think that single sex schools are a good thing.” (SL 2)

4.4.1.2 Sub-Theme 2: Choice of Career

Based on the literature review, Diehl & Dzubinski’s (2016) research also found that society places constraints on women’s career choices. In addition, Haveman & Beresford (2012) found that culture could explain women’s reluctance to take up careers in science and engineering. Again, the finding from this study disagree with these findings, as none of the participants believed that their choice of career was constrained by culture. Another interesting finding from the study conflicted with the findings from Avery, et al.’s study (2007), which states that ‘when professions are described as masculine, women are less inclined to choose these professions because they perceive themselves as less able or qualified’. None of the participants in this research felt they were prevented or constrained from applying for positions in their career of choice, even though their organisations were predominately masculine, both in terms of their employee gender and the nature of their specialisation. However, what did emerge from the data was that culture placed limitations on their progression in their chosen career. The following trends emerged.

“No, it doesn’t limit your entry to a career. There are a lot of females in accounting. It limits your progression in that career. I would say in accounting practices it’s 50/50.

However, walk into the senior management of these practices and its predominantly men.” (SL 2)

“There was double the amount of men to women going for the job. Therefore, they had more chance of succeeding. It delayed my progression.” (SL 1)

“I find this process for progression a little more geared towards the men. I find myself stuck were I am. I am at the point where I still believe I have a lot to give but I feel that I can’t move anywhere.” (SL 3)

“The company I worked for had been pulled up for having just males in some high-level meeting, in one sector of the organisation. This was reported in the newspaper. Certainly, the ratio of men to women is higher as in there are a lot of lower ranking females to men.” (SL 5)

As a result of the above findings, the researcher believes that further study is required on the topic of cultural constraints on a woman’s ability to progress within their chosen career. The researcher found a lack and a gap of information in the academic literature on this topic.

4.4.1.3 Sub-Theme 3: Choice of Leadership Style

One study (Eagly & Carli, 2007) suggests that women face a difficult journey when they become leaders, as they no longer fit the social biases of femininity and if they are perceived to be feminine they are believed to lack the masculine traits necessary to be successful leaders. The research indicates that culture has a direct impact on women’s choice of leadership style. Bissessar’s (2018) qualitative study suggests that masculinity is linked to task-orientated leadership. However, this conflicts with the transformational leadership style, which is predominantly adopted by females (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Lammers & Gast, 2017). This can form a predicament for women leaders. If they adopt their natural style they may risk failing in their careers and if they adopt a style that is seen as masculine they no longer fit with society’s paradigm of a female leader. While literature suggests that a woman’s leadership style is constrained by society, all participants in this study agreed and were adamant that cultural conformity did not form a barrier to their style of leadership. The style adopted by the females in this study was instead determined by the direction of the organisation and to meet with the objectives of the company’s strategy. This was supported by the following quotes:

“At times you would adapt your leadership style to the strategy.” (SL 1)

“I have adapted to the style of the organisation.” (SL 2)

“There would be certain situations where you would need to change your style.” (SL 5)

4.4.1.4 Sub-Theme 4: Cultural Constraints on Work life Balance

There was evidence from the literature that masculine cultures are less focused on the benefits of programs such as flexible benefits, workplace childcare, and maternity leave (Chiang, 2005). The findings in this study supported this statement, one of the participants stated that “their organisation had no work-life family policies in place” (SL 4).

Others articulated that, while there were written policies, they believed that they were not affective and lacked consistency across the organisation:

“There is lack of consistency and management discretion as to how they’re implemented and how they work. Working from home, works best for me but from a work life balance perspective no. No, I can’t say that they were effective for me given the workload.” (SL 1)

“The policies are not as fluid as you might like, and it is not across all levels. So, for instance a senior manager could not go to a four-day week. I couldn’t go to a four-day week. It’s not going to happen.” (SL 5)

“There are policies there that say they allow it but then there are unwritten rules. In certain parts of the organisation it is difficult to get them approved. I don’t think those unwritten rules should be there and the manager should try to accommodate.” (SL 3)

“I used my parental leave to take two half days on a Monday and Friday to collect the kids. But you go on an 80 % contract and you work 110%. Now I have never begrudged that, but the organisation thinks they are doing people a favour but is getting free labour.” (SL 2)

Many participants agreed with the literature, that taking up family friendly policies offered by organisations was viewed negatively and feared as damaging to one’s career (Alonso - Almeida, 2014; Pafford & Schaefer, 2017).

“If you want a senior position it can be hard. There is this idea of get your senior position then use the policies. If you use them and are trying to get into a senior position, that can be difficult in terms of your career.” (SL 2)

“Yes, I would find it difficult to request a lot of the work life benefits. It’s at a corporate level they wouldn’t want you to work from home.” (SL 5)

Indra Nooyi, CEO of PepsiCo stated “I don’t think women can have it all” (Forbes, 2014). Everyday women must choose between job, wife, or mother. The biological clock and career clock are constantly at odds with each other (Forbes, 2014). Sheryl Sandberg, CEO of Facebook makes the claim in her book *Lean In* (2013) that having it all is detrimental to women as they are unable to succeed in both work and home life. Again, the findings from this study align with the above and indicate that cultural constraints have influenced the career and family choices of the participants in this study.

“I had to make my own decision on certain things. I have two children and if I had a third child, I would have found it impossible to do the job because it is very stressful. It was stressful as it was with two kids and work, so a third kid was out of the question. I regret this decision. I think I made the wrong choice and I would possibly have been happier as a teacher.” (SL 3)

When asked about future career goals, one participant stated the following: *“I want a career change. I’m finding it too difficult to juggle work and family commitments.” (SL 4)*

4.4.2 Objective 2: To establish if leadership perceptions is perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland

This objective was categorized by the theme of leadership perceptions. The data that emerged correlated to each of the sub-themes, associating leadership with masculinity, role congruency, code switching, and choice of leadership style

4.4.2.1 Sub-Theme 1: Associating Leadership with Masculinity

As stated in the literature review, masculine stereotypes are considered more essential to leader success (Brandt & Laiho, 2013). Diehl and Dzubinski (2016, p.188) define the barrier of leadership perceptions “as associating leadership with masculinity”. Having masculine and dominant traits increase an individual’s likelihood of being perceived as a leader (Dzubinski, et al., 2019). The findings in this study agreed with the aforementioned research. The participants who stated that they adopted masculine dominant traits also stated that they were perceived as effective leaders.

“I’m seen as strong and trusted. I am a hard worker and I expect that from my staff.”
(SL 1)

“I’m perceived as very direct; I get things done and I’m quite strong.” (SL 2)

“I’m seen as an effective leader. Very methodical, I get things done, reliable, dependant and organised.” (SL 5)

These participants also associated masculine characteristics with leadership, where the leadership role was still mainly associated with agentic attributes (Koenig, et al., 2011).

“Strong, driven, capable, stakeholder management, relationship with the rest of the people within the organisation, influencing and charismatic.” (SL 1)

“Giving good direction, strategic, and understanding what’s important and what’s not and focusing in on that.” (SL 2)

“Excel in confidence, organised, have structure, be a good communicator, be able to manage a debate, driven, ambitious and collaboration.” (SL 5)

In contrast, the participants who articulated that their style was predominantly female, adopting more communal characteristics, had received negative feedback towards their style of leadership. One participant received feedback from an interview that they were not suitable for the next level in senior management, citing that:

“In an interview last year, I was told that I would not be good for the next level of senior management. I received feedback that I was too emotional.” (SL 3)

A second participant received negative comments about her capabilities, stating:

“I have had some derogatory comments from the VP in the US, they have said you don’t know anything about this market. Even though I have loads of experience working with the US market in previous roles. They have made comments on the way I am doing things, even though I should be leading them.” (SL 4)

This participant also stated that they were advised to *“dial up my more decisive and dominant traits.”* (SL 4)

4.4.2.2 Sub-Theme 2: Role Congruency

The literature review argues that women are negatively viewed when adopting male characteristics that help in leadership success (Sindell & Shamberger, 2016; Brandt &

Laiho, 2013). The participants who adopted a masculine style in this study claimed the opposite to this literature, and only one participant who adopted male characteristics claimed that they received negative feedback.

“My leadership style would be very direct, and I was told to tone that down and to bring people in more. My manager has said that I can be a little hard on the staff.” (SL 2)

The researcher found that the stated feedback was not as negative nor as biased as the feedback listed above, which was provided to the participants who had adopted a female leadership style.

4.4.2.3 Sub-Theme 3: Code Switching

O'Neill and O'Reilly (2011) suggest that female leaders may find it necessary to frequently self-monitor and code switch between masculine and feminine styles to remain in their position. The findings were consistent with the literature, with four out of the five participants agreeing with the above. Participants were asked if they ever adopted characteristic that were outside their natural leadership style (as in using more masculine or female characteristic's). The following was stated:

“Yes once. A person was not pulling their weight. My normal style would be to have a difficult conversation with them, but I realised that there was a lot going on for them home wise. I changed my style to be more empathetic and understanding of that person whilst still getting the same results. It was more to do with the situation.” (SL 1)

“Listening, collaboration, patient rather than trying to get something done.” (SL 3)

“Yes. I have had to bring out more of the red in me, as in be more dominant and stronger. I have had to dial that up, because if I don't, I might be seen as weak.” (SL 4)

“Yes collaboration.” (SL 5)

O'Neill and O'Reilly's (2011) study also found that women who had higher degrees of self-monitoring, and had higher promotional opportunities, suffered less backlash for utilising agentic behaviours. This was supported by the findings:

“No, I will not change my style and it has had an impact on my career.” (SL 3)

4.4.3 Objective 3: To investigate if gender stereotypes are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland

Diehl & Dzubinski (2016) describe this barrier as fixed and oversimplified generalizations about women. These following findings were identified under the sub-themes of homemaker, motherhood penalty, gendered career stereotypes, and gendered subjects.

4.4.3.1 Sub-Theme 1: Homemaker

Fiske (2012) proposes that the problem with gender stereotypes is that they are highly prescriptive specifying what a group should do. They specify that the traditional women such as housewives and secretaries are preferable to non-traditional professional women.

“When I was growing up women did all the housework and the men went out and earned the money. Women mainly stayed at home. It’s getting better but I would say that it has still a knock-on effect of where we are today.” (SL 1)

A key finding from this research study identified a trend that women were stereotyped as the homemaker and did the lion’s share of childcare arrangements, family responsibilities and housework. This aligned with the following research from the literature review. There is a gender stereotype that women should look after the children and housework, and women are still doing the predominant amount of domestic work while looking to move up the career ladder (Ingols, et al., 2015). Family, care, and domestic responsibilities are thus not equally shared and are more often taken on by women, and most of running the household is conducted by women in two income homes (Hewlett, et al., 2008). These gender stereotypes were evident through the following statements.

“Women are still seen as the homemaker even though women are equally educated or more educated in some cases.” (SL 1)

“I do find that men never take parental leave. Even my husband wouldn’t take it. I made him take it.” (SL 3)

The literature highlighted that in this 24/7 hyper-connected world the stereotypical “ideal worker” re-enforces masculine norms and is portrayed as someone who can work

eight hours continuously away from home, with extra hours as needed, having no family responsibilities (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014).

This research indicates that stereotypes make it more difficult for female leaders with family responsibilities. This was a key finding, with participants supporting this with the following statements:

“If young females have a family, the hours they are expected to work does not lend itself to progressing. Most of the leadership team are male in this organisation.” (SL 1)

“You leave to collect the kids at 2pm; the kids be gone to bed at 8pm and you worked from 9pm to 11pm. If you think about that in a man’s world, he is working 9am to 6pm and then finished for the day. That is probably the bit that was difficult for me personally. The more hurdles you have, eventually you fall. That is why boardrooms are full of men not women because of the hurdles.” (SL 2)

“There are loads of women that would be in leadership positions, but I do believe they have to sacrifice a lot more than men do in similar positions. If they want to have a family, if they have kids. I think it is very, very difficult. Women have to make a lot of sacrifices.” (SL 3)

4.4.3.2 Sub-Theme 2: Motherhood Penalty

Other research identified in the literature review, claims career gaps for caring reasons can result in a “motherhood penalty” (England, et al., 2018) due to interrupted employment, detachment from the labour market, and possible decline of skills and networks. The motherhood penalty is the term used when working mothers are considered less competent because they may not be able to do or handle the same work as a man or non-mother while having to take care of her children (England, et al., 2018). This parenting factor was another significant finding within this study, with participants stating:

“Women have children not men. The time you decide to have children is probably at the most pivotal time in your career. To take that break out, come back and then you might want to go to a four-day week. In my opinion and in my experience, that is probably the biggest macro one.” (SL 2)

“If you are interviewing someone who is maybe 24 or 25 you may be thinking, how long before they will be going on maternity leave maybe. Then it progresses up to mid-30’s if

they have one child, will they be having a second child. I would say it is predominantly women's availability due to their commitment to child rearing.” (SL 2)

“I don't think children are an obstacle, but I am conscious that it may come across like I have more baggage when going for jobs as opposed to someone who doesn't.” (SL 4)

This study indicates that there was an overarching trend in the findings, that having children hampered the participants in their careers, as most of the participants mentioned parental choices hindering their career progression. However, there was one outlier in this study who did not encounter any stereotypes across all the sub-themes:

“society has moved on from women staying at home and rearing children. It is progressing an awful lot between having your career and having your family for sure. I don't think that forms a barrier for women anymore.” (SL 5).

It is important to note that this participant did not have children.

4.4.3.3 Sub-Theme 3: Gendered Career Stereotypes

According to Dzubinski et al. (2019), both men and women are expected to follow the gender stereotypes within the workplace model, which indicates that men are bred for leadership positions and women are assigned to be in subordinate positions.

This study found a common trend amongst the participants, which supported this literature finding, where the women interviewed believed that gender stereotypes are evident today and supported this by the following statements:

“They are not encouraged towards managerial roles. You see women going for nursing, teaching, HR but not really encouraged into the more masculine seen roles such as leadership.” (SL 1)

One senior female engineer encountered more gender stereotypes once entering the workforce and stated:

“I never felt any difference when studying. I felt a difference immediately when I started working. I was the only women on my team. I felt barriers to progression in work.” (SL 3)

The findings also indicated that senior positions within their companies were targeted towards men.

“I applied for a further senior level position, but I find it difficult as a woman to get to that level, just in the way it is done. You must be extremely flexible in this company; you must agree to being re-located. You are not applying for a role; you are applying for a senior leadership position. This more senior leadership position meant that they can send you anywhere they want. As a woman having kids, I can’t move my family around or have the kids moved to different schools. I find the process a little more geared towards the men. I am not saying it is impossible, but it would be very difficult. I don’t think I will apply for a position in the future unless it is very specifically advertised for a specific role, but that’s not the way it’s done.” (SL 3)

Another participant felt that it was advantageous to their career to choose companies that promoted gender balance within leadership. This participant noted the gender difference was disproportionate, when they were appointed to a senior role in a company that was predominately male.

“I have chosen companies quit carefully in the past. I have purposely chosen business’s that have a good amount of male and female leadership. My current role would be contradictory to that as I work in a male dominated organisation, whilst I don’t think it is overtly apparent, it feels like they are not putting the right plans in place to get a more equal gender basis in leadership.” (SL 4)

Another interesting finding was the exclusion of females from stereotypical male exclusive networking events in the workplace. One of the participants cited the following:

“Sometimes I would be excluded from some events such as golfing outings and five aside football that my male colleagues would be involved in. Where they network a little bit more. I am not a footballer but probably the golfing outings would be something that I would like to be invited to but I would be the only female among them so that is not likely to happen. You lose out on the networking side because it’s not about the golf it’s work talk. I miss out on that side of things.” (SL 1)

In contrast, another of the participants stated:

“I think men are more diplomatic than women. I would sooner work with 50 men than ten women. I think that women can have a shorter fuse. I think sometimes power is viewed differently by women than men.” (SL 5)

This indicates that stereotype perceptions are not always gender specific.

4.4.3.4 Sub-Theme 4: Gendered Subjects

Girls are hindered by the stereotypical belief that they are not as good as boys at maths, and by the fact that maths and science are seen as a male domain (Haveman & Beresford, 2012). Such beliefs can be reinforced, consciously or unconsciously, by teachers, parents, employers, and society (Haveman & Beresford, 2012). This was supported by the finding:

“I did physics and chemistry for my leaving cert. I remember when I arrived with my friend into the physics class, we were the only two girls in a class of 25. The teacher put us sitting up the front because he didn’t know what to do with us. We were poor at some of the experiments, and the teacher said girls if you had brains you would be dangerous. We both did well in our leaving cert in both physics and chemistry. People have this perception that boys do physics and girls don’t.” (SL 2)

Another participant acknowledged that more needs to be done for women through the promotion of subjects that are stereotypically male orientated.

“Having more choice in today’s educational system, for women to seek third level education and more encouragement for women to take up those roles perceived as male such as maths, engineering, science. It is changing and that is good.” (SL 1)

4.4.4 Objective 4: To determine if the inadequacies in legislation are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barriers in Ireland

Gender diversity is triggered by the adoption of positive laws rather than by soft recommendations (Garcia, et al., 2019). The findings were examined under the two sub-themes of gender pay gap reporting and gender quotas at board level.

4.4.4.1 Sub-Theme 1: Gender pay gap reporting

While the gender pay gap reporting is a step towards changing the landscape for women’s equality in relation to pay parity, it has no way of determining whether men or women are being paid less for the same work or subject to bias or discrimination (IBEC, 2019). There was consensus across the sample with this statement, with the majority believing there were inadequacies with this piece of legislation; most thought that the report did not go far enough and had reservations about its effectiveness.

“I hope that it’s more than a tick box exercise. I don’t think it goes far enough as you don’t have to report on the positions that those people are in.” (SL 1)

“No, it will not help. I think it is hard to get any conclusions out of those stats.” (SL 3)

“It will be shocking but there will be excuses for it.” (SL 2)

“No, it’s lip service.” (SL 5)

4.4.4.2 Sub-Theme 2: Gender Quotas at Board Level

Garcia, et al.’s (2019) research found that countries with positive laws imposing gender quotas on corporate boards, rather than corporate governance recommendations had the most scope for improving gender diversity on boards. Wang & Kelan’s (2013) study in Norway found that the gender quota has not only increased gender equality within the boardroom but also had spill over effects on top leadership positions. The majority of participants agreed with the literature and thought that the introduction of gender quotas at board level would address some of the barriers for female leaders:

“Yes, I think there should be a quota. I feel it would bring better equity and balance into the corporate world.” (SL 1)

“I don’t think it will be liked as it is a load of men that it is affecting. It will help break a barrier. I believe most people can do a job; some people will do it better than others. So put the women on the boards and let women see positive role models.” (SL 2)

“Yes, I think it would set a good example for women aspiring to be leaders.” (SL 4)

“Yes, for sure. I think if they had a minimum number of females sitting on boards, it would help it to become a level playing field.” (SL 5)

However, one participant strongly disagreed with gender quotas and raised an interesting point

“No, I do not like those quotas. I am not in favour of them. It is my opinion and the women on my team’s opinion, that it creates the perception that a woman gets a job not because she deserves it but because it is to fill a certain quota.” (SL 3)

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the data analysis resulting from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the five senior female leaders across different sectors of industry in Ireland. The aim was to meet with the four objectives of the research project, to expand on the existing knowledge from previous studies into the areas of barriers, leadership, and gender parity for women in senior management roles. A thematic analysis was undertaken using a coding path that was taken from the literature.

The themes were categorised under the four research objectives as outlined earlier in Table 5. Within objective one ‘to ascertain whether cultural constraints on women’s own choices is perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier’, the findings indicated that there was a strong emphasis placed on the cultural constraints on women’s choices between balancing work and family. Another important finding was that culture did not constrain women’s choice of career but that it did hinder their progression within their chosen career. A key output from the study signified that there was a strong inference that leadership was associated with masculinity. The participants who adopted masculine dominant traits were perceived as being more effective in their leadership role. However, majority appeared to code switch between masculine and feminine styles. The only participant that did not code switch felt that it had affected negatively their career. Many of the participants experienced gender stereotypes within society with regards to their family status as in motherhood, which again had a negative effect in terms of their career paths and progression. Lastly, there were clear findings in terms of legislation, with most participants doubting that the gender pay gap reporting will have any credence on pay or gender parity. The consensus among the participants implied that there is still a clear gap in the legislation and that more needs to be done to improve the bill. They also professed that the introduction of positive legislation imposing gender quotas on corporate boards would make a significant difference for women.

The next chapter will critically evaluate the findings in light of previous research. It will also look at the practical implications of these findings.

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will critically evaluate the findings in light of the previous research conducted by Diehl & Dzubinski (2016) on the macro level gender-based barriers. This study extends the work of Diehl and Dzubinski's by exploring if the macro gender-based barriers identified in their research apply to the broader area of business and are true in an Irish context as a US one. Thus, this research seeks to address the call from Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) to extend the research to 'examine the macro level gender-based leadership barriers in sectors such as business'.

The chapter is structured in terms of the four objectives of this research:

1. To ascertain whether cultural constraints on women's own choices is perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland;
2. To establish the degree to which leadership perceptions is perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland;
3. To investigate if gender stereotypes are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland;
4. To determine if the inadequacies in legislation are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland.

We will begin by discussing the findings in relation to each of the objectives and conclude by looking at the practical implications.

5.2 Objective 1: To ascertain whether cultural constraints on women's own choices is perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland

Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) study found that society places constraints on women's educational and career choices. However, the findings from this study differ and contradict these findings, as most of the women in this study stated that culture did not constrain their choice of educational studies or their career choices. What did emerge from the findings was that culture placed limitations on their progression within their

chosen career. They also inferred that the progression process within their organisation was targeted towards men. The literature examined for this research study did not show this finding. Therefore, this was a new insight, thus highlighting a gap in the literature around this area. Another critical finding was that Ireland's culture constrained women's choices between balancing work and family. All the participants found it difficult to juggle career and family, with many choosing between career and family. This may be due to the finding that there was a "lack of consistency" and "management discretion" in the implementation of work life policies with one participants organisation having no policies in this area. One of the participants was not aware of any such policies within their organisation. This finding aligned with the literature which found Ireland being classified as a masculine society (Hofstede, 2019), as such places less focus on the benefits of family friendly programs such as flexible benefits, workplace childcare, and maternity leave (Chiang, 2005). Several of the participants believed that taking up the family friendly policies offered by their organisation would be viewed as negative and inappropriate to their senior level position. This was consistent with the literature that taking up family friendly policies offered by organisations is viewed negatively and saw it as damaging to one's career (Alonso - Almeida, 2014; Pafford & Schaefer, 2017). Overall, the findings showed that culture constrains women's choices around work and family and negatively impacts on their progression within their chosen career. The findings infer that the work life family policies are inadequate, inconsistent, and that there is insufficient and a lack of support within organisations for female leader to progress. The process for promotions appears "geared towards the men". These findings have practical considerations for organisation to put career paths for women in place, targeting females for succession planning, gender-equity workshops, the implementation of work life family policies and management training to ensure consistency and fairness across organisations upon implementation of these policies.

5.3 Objective 2: To establish if leadership perceptions is perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland

Another macro-level barrier identified by Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) was leadership perception. They defined this barrier as "associating leadership with masculinity". The finding of this research was consistent with this definition. Those participants that adopted male characteristics were perceived as effective leaders and thus associated masculine characteristics with leadership. They also received less negative feedback than participants whose style was predominantly female. Those who adopted

predominantly female characteristics were not perceived as being fit for leadership. This was evident through the following statement *“In an interview last year I was told that I would not be good for the level of senior management. I received feedback that I was too emotional.”* (SL 3). The findings indicate that leadership is predominately perceived as masculine and that presenting a feminine leadership style can be a barrier for females to progress.

An additional finding in this study was code switching. The majority of participants in the study code switched, which supports O'Neill and O'Reilly's (2011) study that found that female leaders might find it necessary to frequently self-monitor and code switch between masculine and feminine styles to remain in their position. The one participant that didn't code switch felt that it *“had an impact on my career”*. The researcher recognises the limitations of this study and suggests a further consideration, that by including men in the study would provide a comparative, rounded, and more conclusive results. Further studies could examine if men experienced the same feedback, perceptions, and behaviours and investigate if they also felt the need to code switch.

The findings suggest that leadership perception is perceived as a macro level barrier for those whose natural style is feminine and for those who do not code switch. This has practical considerations at organizational level for leadership training that promotes diversity and equality, and for understanding the effectiveness of utilising various leadership styles in management and leadership.

5.4 Objective 3: To investigate if gender stereotypes are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland

A key finding in this area from this research study was that women were stereotyped as the homemaker and did the lion's share of childcare arrangements, family responsibilities and housework. This again supported the literature reviewed for this study. Women are still doing the predominant amount of domestic work while looking to move up the career ladder (Ingols, et al., 2015). This gender stereotype of women being categorised as the homemaker was also highlighted in Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) study. In addition, this research found that the gender stereotypes formed a greater barrier for those female leaders with family responsibilities. Due to these participants taking on the larger share of family commitments, they were unable to live up to the stereotype of the “ideal worker” that re-enforces masculine norms and is

portrayed as someone who can work eight hours continuously away from home, with extra hours as needed, having no family responsibilities (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014).

Another interesting insight was the “motherhood penalty” that these female leaders experienced. The motherhood penalty is the term used when working mothers are considered less competent because they may not be able to do or handle the same work as a man or non-mother while having to take care of her children (England, et al., 2018). This was an additional stereotype encountered by the participants who had children. The impact of these gender stereotypes on women with children warrants further consideration and research.

Analysis of the interviews highlighted the barriers that women leaders experienced with gender stereotypes within their careers. Evidence of these career stereotypes were expressed through their experiences of not being encouraged to progress to leadership positions, the targeting of senior positions towards men and the exclusion of females from male orientated company networking events. These findings support the literature that both men and women are expected to follow the gender stereotypes within the workplace model, which indicates that men are bred for leadership positions and women are assigned subordinate positions (Dzubinski, 2016).

The finding provided evidence that gender stereotypes are still evident with regard STEM subjects, whereby these subjects are still perceived as stereotypically male. This is reinforced through the literature that girls are hindered by the stereotypical belief that maths and science are seen as a male domain, with such beliefs reinforced, consciously or unconsciously, by teachers, parents, employers and society (Haveman & Beresford, 2012).

There is clear evidence from these findings to suggest that gender stereotypes around homemaker, careers and educational subjects are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland.

5.5 Objective 4: To determine if the inadequacies in legislation are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barriers in Ireland

The findings from this research were examined under the two themes of gender pay gap reporting and gender quotas at board level. Gender pay gap reporting was perceived by many of the participants in this study as inadequate, with the findings suggesting that the report did not go far enough and there were reservations about its effectiveness. The

findings aligned with the report from IBEC (2019) that suggests that, while gender pay gap reporting is a step towards changing the landscape for women's equality in relation to pay parity, it has no way of determining whether men or women are being paid less for the same work or subject to bias or discrimination. Whilst this contributes to the research in this area, it is suggested that further considerations be made as to the effectiveness of this report. There are practical implications for the government with regard imposing additional stats to be produced so it can be determined if men and women are being paid the same for the same work and roles, and to ensure enforcement and accountability by organisations to ensure equal pay and gender parity.

There are no positive laws imposing gender quotas on corporate boards in Ireland. The findings in this study supported the introduction of legislation to impose gender quotas at board level. Participants thought that the introduction of gender quotas at board level would address some of the barriers for female leaders. Many cited that it would bring better "equity and balance" into the corporate world whilst providing "positive role models" for aspiring female leaders. This finding is supported by Wang & Kelan's (2013) study that found gender quotas, not only increase gender equality within the boardroom, but have spill over effects on top leadership positions.

Overall, the findings suggested that the inadequacies in the legislation, that gender pay reporting does not go far enough and gender quotas at board level needs to be more balanced. Currently, the lack of these are perceived as macro level gender-based leadership barriers for women in Ireland

5.6 Comparative Analysis of Key Findings

One of the most salient features of this study was the unconscious level that these macro level barriers operated at, as Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) and Ely et al. (2011) have emphasised in their studies.

Whilst the findings of this study mainly agreed with that of previous research conducted by Diehl and Dzubinski (2016). There were some variations and additional insights. The table below highlights comparisons drawn between this research and the study conducted by Diehl & Dzubinski (2016).

Table 6: Comparative Table and Practical Implications of Macro-Level Gender-Based Leadership Barriers

Macro Barrier	Diehl's Findings	Research Findings
Cultural Constraints on Women's Own Choices	Society places constraints on women's educational and career choices	1. Culture contains women's progression within their chosen career 2. Culture constrains women's choices to balance work and family
Leadership Perception	Leadership associated with masculinity	1. Leadership associated with masculinity 2. Code switching between masculine and feminine styles of leadership
Gender Stereotypes	Reactively fixed and oversimplified generalizations about women as the homemaker	1. Gender stereotyped as homemaker 2. Gender stereotyped in careers 3. Gender stereotyped in study
Inadequacies in legislation	Not explored	1. Inadequacies in legislation with respect to Gender Pay Gap Reporting and Gender Quotas on Corporate Boards

5.7 Practical Considerations/Implications

The practical implications of this research are highlighted in Table 7 below. This table highlights the practical implications of this study's findings for organisational and government level.

Table 7: Practical Considerations

Barrier:	Findings:	Practical Implications:	Stakeholder:
Cultural Constraints on Women's Own Choices	1. Culture constrains women's progression within their chosen career 2. Culture constrains women's choices to balance work and family	1. Career Paths 2. Targeting females for succession planning 3. Gender-equity workshops 4. Implementing robust work life family policies 5. Training to ensure consistency and fairness of work life family policies	Organisations
Leadership Perception	1. Leadership associated with masculinity	1. Leadership Training	Organisations

Barrier:	Findings:	Practical Implications:	Stakeholder:
	2. Code switching between masculine and feminine styles of leadership		
Gender Stereotypes	1. Gender stereotyped as homemaker 2. Gender stereotyped in careers 3. Gender stereotyped in study	1. Career Paths 2. Targeting females for succession planning 3. Gender-equity Workshops	Schools, Colleges and Organisations
Inadequacies in legislation	1. Inadequacies in legislation with respect to Gender Pay Gap Reporting and Gender Quotas on Corporate Boards	1. Implement more robust reporting 2. Introduce legislation on Gender Quotas on Corporate Boards	Government and Organisations

5.8 Conclusion

Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) study found that society places constraints on women's educational and career choices. The findings from this study differ and conflict with this finding, as this study found that culture did not constrain women's educational or career choices. What did emerge from the findings was that culture placed limitations on their progression within their chosen career. It also showed that culture placed constraints on women's choices between career and family life. Another macro-level barrier identified by Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) was leadership perception, which they described as "associating leadership with masculinity". This study agreed with this finding with both participants and their organisations associating leadership with masculinity. A key finding from this research study highlighted that women were stereotyped as being the homemaker. This was supported in Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) research findings. However, an additional finding to this was that the women in this study were also stereotyped in their studies and career which is emphasised in studies conducted by Haveman and Beresford (2012). The final barrier encountered by the female leaders in this study was the inadequacies of current legislation in Ireland. It was strongly highlighted by the participants that more needed to be done in the areas of Gender Pay Gap Reporting and Gender Quotas on Corporate Boards. Overall, the study concluded that the perceived gender-based macro level barriers for females in Ireland are cultural constraints on women's own choices, gender perceptions, gender stereotypes, and inadequacies in legislation.

The last chapter will conclude this dissertation by clarifying the key findings of the explorative study of the five senior female leaders along with practical recommendations, limitations, and further research.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1 Overview

The aim of this research was to explore the perceived macro level gender-based leadership barriers among female senior leaders in Ireland. The research was based on the work of Diehl's and Dzubinski's (2016) which explored gender based leadership barriers at a macro (societal), meso (organisational) and micro (individual) level. This research focused on the macro level barriers that create gender inequalities in leadership and the researcher limited this study to three of the macro level barriers identified by Diehl and Dzubinski (2016), which included cultural constraints on women's own choices, gender stereotypes, and leadership perceptions, as these had not yet been tested in an Irish context. This study extended the work of Diehl and Dzubinski on the macro level gender-based leadership barriers to the broader area of business and in a new geographical location to test the validation of the phenomena under investigation in an Irish context. Thus, this research sought to address the call from Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) to extend the research to 'examine gender-based leadership barriers in sectors such as business'.

It also addressed the call from Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) to conduct a qualitative research to examine barriers with female leaders that had not been previously identified in their study. The fourth barrier explored in the study was the inadequacies in legislation in Ireland, as much emphasis has been placed on legislation since Diehl and Dzubinski's article was published in 2016. The four barriers identified lead to the development of a conceptual model (refer to page 7 figure 1). Four research objectives were examined to achieve the aim of this study. These were

- 1) To ascertain whether cultural constraints on women's own choices is perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland;
- 2) To establish if leadership perceptions are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland;
- 3) To investigate if gender stereotypes are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland;

- 4) To determine if the inadequacies in legislation are perceived as a macro level gender-based leadership barrier in Ireland.

A qualitative study was conducted through purposive sampling with the use of semi-structured interviews. There were five participants all were senior female leaders across various industries. There was a striking similarity of leadership barriers discussed, with all linked to being a female in a senior level position, regardless of the type or organisation.

One of the most salient features of this study was the unconscious level that these macro level barriers operated at, as Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) and Ely et al. (2011) have emphasised in their studies. Whilst the findings of this study mainly agreed with that of previous research conducted by Diehl and Dzubinski (2016), there were some variations and additional insights captured. The findings from this study supported Diehl and Dzubinski (2016), in so far as our findings suggested that cultural constraints on women's own choices, leadership perceptions and gender stereotypes were perceived as macro level gender based leadership barriers. However, the findings differed in terms of the impact of these barriers on female leaders. Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) study found that society places constraints on women's educational and career choices. The findings from this study contradicted this and found that culture did not constrain women's educational or career choices. However, what did emerge was that culture placed limitations on their progression in their chosen career. It also showed that culture placed constraints on women's choices between career and family life. The study did agree with the findings in Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) that leadership perception was associated with masculinity. A key finding from this research study highlighted that women believed that they were stereotyped as being the homemaker. This was supported in Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) research findings. However, an additional finding to this was that the women in this study were also stereotyped in their studies and career which is emphasised in studies conducted by Haveman and Beresford (2012). The final barrier encountered by the female leaders in this study was the inadequacies of current legislation in Ireland.

This study extended the work of Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) thus contributing to developing knowledge in the area of macro gender-based leadership barriers. This research has developed a comprehensive framework that shows how these barriers operate at the macro level of society. In exploring these barriers, the research has argued that they are deeply embedded in society and as a result are evident in the organisations

represented in this study. The analysis of the literature shows that current efforts to promote women into leadership positions focus on a few barriers, primarily those at organizational (meso) level. This research will recommend broader strategies that will address barriers at a macro level.

6.2 Recommendations

Due to the lack of research in the Irish context, the researcher recommends that further research is required to examine the research in the broader geographical context. However, there were several recommendations identified in this study that will help address the macro level barriers identified in this study at a government and organisational level. They include the following:

Government Level

1. Implementation of positive laws imposing gender quotas at board level. The women in this study believed that this would have a cascading effect across their organisations,
2. Improve the criteria around the new gender pay reporting. It was highlighted in this study that the report did not go far enough.

Organisational Level:

1. Introduce management training on gender equality,
2. Implement gender policies and training on the policies for consistency in their application across companies,
3. Fully implement work/ life balance programmes and improve on existing policies,
4. Develop career paths for female leaders,
5. Introduce succession planning for all future leaderships roles to include the right female to male ratio.

The below table details costing and timeframes associated with the recommendations outlined above for organisations to implement. These are ranked in terms of priority and will address the macro level barriers encountered by the female leaders in this study.

Table 8: Recommendations, Benefits, and Costs

Priority:	Recommendations:	Business Stakeholders:	Benefit:	Cost per hour:	Timeframe:
1	Gender Equity Workshops	Talent and Development Team	To promote females in the workplace and in leadership.	N/A	1 month
2	Implementation of Work Life Balance Policies	External Consultant and HR team	To enhance employee value proposition of organisation in attracting and retaining high potential female leaders to the organization.	€200 per hour	2 months
3	E-learning Management Training on Work Life Balance Policies	External E-learning Provider	To ensure consistent and fair approach.	€30,000	1 month
4	Leadership Training	Talent and Development Team	To promote diversified leadership styles whilst upskilling senior management team.	N/A	3 months

Priority:	Recommendations:	Business Stakeholders:	Benefit:	Cost per hour:	Timeframe:
5	Career Paths	Talent and Development Team	To enhance employee value proposition of organisation in attracting and retaining high potential female leaders to the organization.	N/A	3 months
6	Succession Planning for all future leaderships roles to include the right female to male ratio	HR in collaboration with Senior Management	To ensure gender diversity at leadership level	N/A	3 months

6.3 Limitations

While this study has contributed to the existing research and has provided useful additions to the body of research concerning macro level gender-based leadership, the researcher recognises some limitations.

- 1) The first limitation was the sample size. Whilst the researcher attempted to include a diverse pool of participants, the researcher recognises that the research could have benefited from a larger sample size of female leaders. The researcher is of the opinion that conducting a larger study through a mixed method approach involving a survey based quantitative study would increase the validity of the results and provide more robust insights into this area;
- 2) Secondly, the research was conducted with senior female leaders only. Including both men and women in the study might have provided comparative insight, more rounded data, and therefore fuller and comprehensive results;
- 3) Thirdly, this research looked at cross business sectors without focusing on any organisational type, therefore it was not possible to highlight trends in a specific work environment;
- 4) Fourthly, the researcher focused on the business sector and did not examine if these barriers applied within other sectors such as political, public, and non-profit;
- 5) Lastly, the researcher is aware that there may be additional macro level gender-based barriers that were not identified through the course of this research.

6.4 Further Research

Considering the limitations highlighted in the previous section, it would be beneficial to conduct further research into the research topic. This would extend the existing research and add to the knowledge on the macro level gender-based leadership barriers. The researcher suggests the following:

- Apply the questions in this research using a mixed method approach with the use of both qualitative and survey based quantitative studies to increase the validity and reliability of the results;
- Conduct this study with male and female leaders to compare experiences, providing more robust and more conclusive results;

- Investigate the macro level barrier through a case study to highlight trends in a work environment;
- Examine the macro level barrier in a different sector such as political, public, or non-profit;
- Conduct an inductive qualitative study to examine macro level gender-based barriers, with the view to identifying additional barriers.

Personal Learning Statement

Introduction

Year One

In September 2016, I began the Human Resource Management Masters Course with National College of Ireland. This had always been a dream for me as I always wanted to complete a master's degree and coming from a talent and development background this course was a natural fit. However, I knew that this was going to be both challenging and daunting as I had been away from academia for over ten years after completing a business degree. In addition, as a mother, wife and working in a full-time role this added to the challenge. The class of 2016 was a mix of both male and female, all from different backgrounds, organisations with varying experience and careers. Looking back, I believe that this diversity enhanced the learning experience.

The course itself was two year and part-time, the commitment was two evenings per week and two full Saturdays per month. We covered ten subjects in total, with a dissertation to complete in the final year. The modules covered all aspects of HR, the subjects included the practical experience of the recruitment process, conflict management and mediation, talent acquisition and employment law amongst others. This gave me an understanding of the role HR plays in the strategic direction of the business. From a personal perspective employment, law was my favourite subject, I was enthralled by the cases and the various aspects of legislation. It was never a chore studying or writing up my assignments. This has encouraged me to actively pursue further education within this field.

However overall, I found the course very intense and time consuming and while I had lots of family support, I felt the course to be overwhelming and a struggle at times. Nevertheless, I was on top of my studies and scoring well with assignments and exams. Just when I thought that things were getting easier, I discovered that I was expecting my second baby. While I was delighted, I knew this would have an adverse effect on my studies. The rest of this year was full of ups and downs between tiredness and pressure I found it quite difficult to get the work done. However, undeterred, three weeks after my beautiful daughter was born, I sat my final exam.

Year Two

Heading into year two enthusiastic with a research topic of my choice I thought that this was a great opportunity to work on my dissertation. With no work pressures and being on maternity leave, I believed that I would have lots of free time and planned to finish my masters by the end of 2018. I met with my supervisor and I cannot thank her enough for the support I received. However, with a new demanding infant I found that it was impossible to study, having made half-hearted attempts and picking up the books here and there, I finally realised that it was pointless. Upset and disappointed I rang my supervisor to discuss my options, she was empathic, compassionate and completely understanding and simply said, “Sinead, sometimes life gets in the way and you should not feel guilty for wanting to be with your baby, there is always next year” with great relief I deferred for another year.

Year Three

I took up the mantle again determined to complete my Masters. My supervisor stood by me and I began the journey again. My research topic examined The Barriers for Female Leaders. This was not an easy journey, and I was back in work and now had two small children to care for. There were times when I felt like given up, times when I believed it was not worth the effort, times when it was difficulties and challenging. There were times especially within the final months where I spent long hours away from my children that I missed then so much. I cried often, I was frustrated and angry, but I refused to give up and on the worst days I focused on my graduation and imagined myself being conferred.

The research study was unnerving as this was my first experience of developing a questionnaire and conducting interviews, sitting in front of strangers asking questions about their careers and family circumstances was at times both challenging and yet fulfilling. Through the research, I met the most amazing, strong, powerful women who faced their own challenges both in the workplace and in their personal lives. Another challenge was analysing and interpreting the data, as I had far more information than needed and identifying strong and important themes was difficult. Looking back, I realise that I should have given myself more time, as I felt under enormous pressure in the final weeks before the submission deadline.

In hindsight, if I was starting this thesis again, I would have conducted both qualitative and quantitative research to give a more robust understanding of the subject matter. In addition, I would have included male managers, as this would have given a competitive experience to further validate the findings.

However, I learned so much through the literature and my writing, and I am much more informed about research and my subject matter. In addition, I also learned so much about myself, I can be full of self-doubt while at the same time I can also be quite resilient. Now almost ready to hand in my thesis I am so glad I embarked on this course.

Key Learnings

- Developed a quality questionnaire that would align with the research objectives and deliver on these objectives,
- Conducted rich and qualitative research interviews,
- Analysed and interpreted research data to produce meaningful findings,
- Identified key and relevant themes,
- Planned and organised workload,
- Analysed the literature,
- Contrasted and compared the literature reviews,
- Made solid arguments.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in Study

Dear «Name»

My name is Sinead Mangan and I am completing a master's level program in HRM with the National College of Ireland. This research I am conducting is in for my dissertation in part fulfilment of my Master of Arts in HRM. The aim of the research is to explore the perceived macro level gender – based leadership barriers in Ireland

I am inviting you to participate in this research study as you are a woman serving in a senior leadership role.

The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Participation in this study will involve an individual interview approximately 60 minutes in length. Questions will relate to your experiences with personal and/or professional barriers or challenges occurring in the past or present. Information from your interview will be used to help understand barriers faced by women in the business sector in Ireland. It is hoped that insights gathered from this research can prove helpful to women aspiring to leadership.

Let me assure you of a couple things:

1) Your interview will be private and confidential. You will be assigned a pseudonym which will be attached to your interview data and used in final report findings. 2) Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without consequence. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence.

Please find attached the participant information sheet for more detail.

For more information or to participate in this project, please contact me, Sinead Mangan, at sinead.mangan@ncirl.ie

Regards,

Sinead Mangan

Appendix B: Follow-Up Email

Dear «Name»,

My name is Sinead Mangan and I am completing a master's level program in HRM with the National College of Ireland. This research I am conducting is for my dissertation in part fulfilment of my Master of Arts in HRM. The aim of the research is to explore the perceived macro level gender – based leadership barriers in Ireland. Recently I mailed you a letter inviting you to participate in my study.

Would you be willing to participate? All that is required is one 60-minute interview at a location of your choosing. Your participation will be a valuable addition to my research.

The attached letter contains pertinent details about my study.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about this project. To participate in this study or to get answers to any questions you may have, please contact me Sinead Mangan, at sinead.mangan@ncirl.ie

Regards,

Sinead.

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Guide Draft One

Demographics

1. Age profile (between 30-35, 35-40, 40-45, 45-50,50-55, 55-60, 60-65)
2. Ethnicity
3. Marital Status
4. Children (Number, Ages)
5. Education (Degrees/Fields of Study)
6. Current Position
7. Organisation Types
8. Professional Path to Current Position

Adversity

1. What does the term 'adversity' mean to you?
2. Tell me about a time when you've experienced the most significant adversity in your life, either personal or professional. How did you get (or how are you getting) through this experience?
3. What effect does/did this experience have on your personal life?
4. What effect does/did this experience have on your professional life?
5. How, if at all, has this experience changed you?
6. How, if at all, has this experience related to or impacted your leadership?
7. Overall, what does this experience mean to you?
8. You've told me about a (professional/personal) adversity, what do you think was the most significant (personal/professional) adversity that you've faced?
9. What did that experience mean to you?

Leadership Barriers

1. Have you experienced barriers or obstacles in the past as you rose to your current position? If so:
 - a. What were they?
 - b. How did you handle these?
 - c. What do these experiences mean to you?

2. Are you presently dealing with any barriers or obstacles in your leadership? If so:
 - a. What are they?
 - b. How do you handle these?
 - c. What do these experiences mean to you?

Barrier - Culture Constraints on Women's Own Choices

1. Has society placed any constraints on your choices?
 - a. If so, what constraints did they place
2. Would you describe your leadership style as masculine or feminine?
3. What leadership traits do you most use?
4. Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style due to cultural conformity?
 - a. If so, in what way?
5. Do you feel pressure from society to take on more household duties and career responsibilities at home?
 - a. If so, in what way?
 - b. If so, do you feel that these constraints make it difficult to find work like balance and in what way?

Barrier - Leadership Perceptions

1. What leadership characteristics do you perceive as being most suited to your current role?
2. What characteristics are most well received by your employees?
3. What characteristics are most well received by your manager?
4. Have you changed or ever changed your style of leadership within your role and why?
5. Have you received any negativity or bias towards your style of leadership? If so, can you tell me about this experience
6. Have you ever been harshly evaluated as a leader? If so, can you tell me about your experience

Barrier - Gender Stereotypes

1. What was your choice of study and why?
2. What was your choice of career and why?
3. Would you have liked to study something else and if so, why did you not pursue this?
4. Would you have liked to have chosen a different career and why did you not pursue this?

Barrier - Inadequacies in Legislation

1. Do you feel there are enough childcare provisions in Ireland?
 - a. If so, which ones most benefit you?
 - b. If so, why not? And have they impacted upon your career?
2. Do you think more could be done from a legislative perspective to enable women to obtain or succeed as leader?
 - a. If so, what would help you?
 - b. If so, what would have helped you in the past?

Future

1. What are your future career goals?
2. Do you anticipate any obstacles in the pursuit of your goals?
 - a. If so, what obstacles do you anticipate?
 - b. If not, why not?

Other: Is there anything that I didn't think to ask, which you think would be helpful to add for the purpose of this study? Would you be interested in reviewing and providing feedback to my preliminary research findings?

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Guide Draft Two

Demographics

1. Age profile (between 30-35, 35-40, 40-45, 45-50, 50-55, 55-60, 60-65)
2. Ethnicity
3. Marital Status
4. Children (Number, Ages)
5. Education (Degrees/Fields of Study)
6. Current Position
7. Organisation Types
8. Professional Path to Current Position

Macro-level Gender Based Barriers

1. Have you experienced barriers or obstacles in the past as you rose to your current position? If so:
 - d. What were they?
 - e. How did you handle these?
 - f. What do these experiences mean to you?
2. Are you presently dealing with any barriers or obstacles in your leadership? If so:
 - d. What are they?
 - e. How do you handle these?
 - f. What do these experiences mean to you?
3. What does the term gender-based leadership barriers mean to you?
4. What would you perceive to be the main barriers or challenges for women that operate at a societal level (macro barriers)?
 - a) Tell me about a time in your life when you've experienced any of these barriers/challenges, either personal or professional. How did you get (or how are you getting) through this experience?
 - b) What effect does/did this experience have on your personal life?
 - c) What effect does/did this experience have on your professional life?
 - d) How, if at all, has this experience changed you?
 - e) How, if at all, has this experience related to or impacted your leadership?
 - f) Overall, what did this experience mean to you?

Barrier - Culture Constraints on Women's Own Choices

1. In your opinion has Ireland's culture placed any constraints on your choices.
 - b. If so, what constraints did they place

2. In your view, has culture limited the choices you have made in life either personally or professionally?
 - a. Can you tell me about a time when they did limit your choices?
 - b. What impact did this choice have on you personally or professionally?
3. In your view, has culture constrained your choice of study?
 - a. If so, in what way?
4. In your view, has culture limited your choice of career?
 - a. If so, in what way?
5. Have you ever felt prevented from applying for a leadership position?
 - a. If so, can you tell me about it
6. Have you ever doubted your ability as a leader?
 - a. If so in what way?
7. Would you describe your leadership style as masculine or feminine?
8. What leadership characteristics do you most use and why?
9. Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style (being more masculine or feminine)?
 - a. If so, can you tell me about a time when you did change your style and why you felt the need to change your style?
10. Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style due to cultural conformity?
 - a. If so, can you tell me about a time that you did change your style to conform and why you felt the need to change your style?
11. Do you find it difficult to balance work and family commitments?
 - b. If so, in what way?
 - c. If no, have you ever found it difficult to balance work and family commitments?
12. Do you find it difficult to request the family friendly practices offered by your organisation?
 - a. If so, which policies?
 - b. If so, why?

Barrier - Leadership Perceptions

1. What characteristics do you associate with leadership?
2. What leadership characteristics do you perceive as being most effective to your current role?
3. What characteristics are most well received by your employees?
4. What characteristics are most well received by your manager?
5. Have you ever adopted characteristics that were outside of your natural leadership style?
 - a. If so, what characteristics did you adopt?
 - b. Can you tell me about a time when you adopted these characteristics?
 - c. Why did you feel the need to adopt these characteristics?
6. Have you ever changed your style of leadership within your role and why?

7. Have you received any negativity or bias towards your style of leadership?
 - a. If so, can you tell me about this experience
8. How do you perceive yourself as a leader?
9. How do your employees perceive you as a leader? (Have you had any feedback on their perception of you as a leader?)
10. How does your manager perceive you as a leader? (Have you had any feedback on their perception of you as a leader?)
11. How have you been evaluated as a leader?
12. Have you ever been harshly evaluated as a leader? If so, can you tell me about your experience

Barrier - Gender Stereotypes

1. Have you ever encountered any gender stereotypes as a leader?
 - a. If so, can you tell me about this experience?
2. Have you ever encountered gender stereotypes on a personal or professional level?
 - a. If personal, can you tell me about them and the effect that it had on you?
 - b. If professional, can you tell me about them and the effect that it had on you?
3. What was your choice of study and why?
4. Did you feel pressured into your choice of study and why?
5. What was your choice of career and why?
6. Did you feel pressured into your choice of career and why?
7. Would you have liked to study something else?
 - a. If so, why did you not pursue this?
8. Would you have liked to have chosen a different career?
 - a. If so, why did you not pursue this?

Barrier - Inadequacies in Legislation

1. In your opinion could be done from a legislative perspective to enable women to obtain or succeed as leader?
 - c. If so, what would help you?
 - d. If so, what would have helped you in the past?
2. In your view, will gender pay gap reporting help females in leadership positions?
 - a. If yes, in what way?
 - b. If no, how do you think this could be improved?
3. In your opinion, would legislation around gender quotas at corporate boards help females in leadership positions?
 - a. If so, how do you think it would help?
 - b. If no, why do you think this would not help?

Future

1. What are your future career goals?

2. Do you anticipate any obstacles in the pursuit of your goals?
 - c. If so, what obstacles do you anticipate?
 - d. If not, why not?

Other: Is there anything that I didn't think to ask, which you think would be helpful to add for the purpose of this study? Would you be interested in reviewing and providing feedback to my preliminary research findings?

Appendix E: Final Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Demographics

1. Age profile (between 30-35, 35-40, 40-45, 45-50,50-55, 55-60, 60-65)
2. Ethnicity
3. Marital Status
4. Children (Number, Ages)
5. Education (Degrees/Fields of Study)
6. Current Position
7. Organisation Type
8. Professional Path to Current Position

Macro-level Gender Based Barriers

1. Have you experienced barriers or obstacles in the past as you rose to your current position? If so:
 - g. What were they?
 - h. How did you handle these?
 - i. What do these experiences mean to you?
2. Are you presently dealing with any barriers or obstacles in your leadership? If so:
 - g. What are they?
 - h. How do you handle these?
 - i. What do these experiences mean to you?
3. What does the term gender-based leadership barriers mean to you?
4. What would you perceive to be the main barriers or challenges that operate at a societal level (macro barriers) for women?
 - g) Tell me about a time in your life when you've experienced any of these barriers/challenges, either personal or professional. How did you get (or how are you getting) through this experience?
 - h) What effect does/did this experience have on your personal life?
 - i) What effect does/did this experience have on your professional life?
 - j) How, if at all, has this experience changed you?
 - k) How, if at all, has this experience related to or impacted your leadership?
 - l) Overall, what did this experience mean to you?

Barrier - Culture Constraints on Women's Own Choices

1. In your opinion has Ireland's culture placed any constraints on your choices.
 - c. If so, what constraints did they place
2. In your view, has culture limited the choices you have made in life either personally or professionally?

- c. Can you tell me about a time when they did limit your choices?
- d. What impact did this choice have on you personally or professionally?
- 3. In your view, has culture constrained your choice of study?
 - b. If so, in what way?
- 4. In your view, has culture limited your choice of career?
 - b. If so, in what way?
- 5. Have you ever felt prevented from applying for a leadership position?
 - b. If so, can you tell me about it
- 6. Have you ever doubted your ability as a leader?
 - b. If so in what way?
- 7. Would you describe your leadership style as masculine or feminine?
- 8. What leadership characteristics do you most use and why?
- 9. Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style (being more masculine or feminine)?
 - b. If so, can you tell me about a time when you did change your style and why you felt the need to change your style?
- 10. Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style due to cultural conformity?
 - d. If so, can you tell me about a time that you did change your style to conform and why you felt the need to change your style?
- 11. Do you find it difficult to balance work and family commitments?
 - e. If so, in what way?
 - f. If no, have you ever found it difficult to balance work and family commitments?
- 12. Does your organisation have work life balance policies?
 - a. What are they?
 - b. What policies have worked for you?
 - c. In your opinion are they effective or could more be done?
- 13. Do you find it difficult to request the family friendly practices offered by your organisation?
 - c. If so, which policies?
 - d. If so, why?

Barrier - Leadership Perceptions

- 1. What characteristics do you associate with leadership?
- 2. What leadership characteristics do you perceive as being most effective to your current role?
- 3. What characteristics are most well received by your employees?
- 4. What characteristics are most well received by your manager?
- 5. Have you ever adopted characteristics that were outside of your natural leadership style?
 - d. If so, what characteristics did you adopt?
 - e. Can you tell me about a time when you adopted these characteristics?
 - f. Why did you feel the need to adopt these characteristics?
- 6. Have you ever changed your style of leadership within your role and why?
- 7. Have you received any negativity or bias towards your style of leadership?
 - a. If so, can you tell me about this experience
- 8. How do you perceive yourself as a leader?
- 9. How do your employees perceive you as a leader? (Have you had any feedback on their perception of you as a leader?)

10. How does your manager perceive you as a leader? (Have you had any feedback on their perception of you as a leader?)
11. How have you been evaluated as a leader?
12. Have you ever been harshly evaluated as a leader? If so, can you tell me about your experience

Barrier - Gender Stereotypes

1. Have you ever encountered any gender stereotypes as a leader?
 - b. If so, can you tell me about this experience?
2. Have you ever encountered gender stereotypes on a personal or professional level?
 - c. If personal, can you tell me about them and the effect that it had on you?
 - d. If professional, can you tell me about them and the effect that it had on you?
3. What was your choice of study and why?
4. Did you feel pressured into your choice of study and why?
5. What was your choice of career and why?
6. Did you feel pressured into your choice of career and why?
7. Would you have liked to study something else?
 - b. If so, why did you not pursue this?
8. Would you have liked to have chosen a different career?
 - b. If so, why did you not pursue this?

Barrier - Inadequacies in Legislation

1. In your opinion could more be done from a legislative perspective to enable women to obtain or succeed as leader?
 - e. If so, what would help you?
 - f. If so, what would have helped you in the past?
2. In your view, will gender pay gap reporting help females in leadership positions?
 - c. If yes, in what way?
 - d. If no, how do you think this could be improved?
3. In your opinion, would legislation around gender quotas at corporate boards help females in leadership positions?
 - c. If so, how do you think it would help?
 - d. If no, why do you think this would not help?

Future Career Goals

1. What are your future career goals?
2. Do you anticipate any obstacles in the pursuit of your goals?
 - e. If so, what obstacles do you anticipate?
 - f. If not, why not?

Other: Is there anything that I didn't think to ask, which you think would be helpful to add for the purpose of this study? Would you be interested in reviewing and providing feedback to my preliminary research findings?

Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet

Project Title: An Exploratory study into the perceived macro level gender – based leadership barriers in Ireland

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether to take part.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT?

My name is Sinead Mangan and I am a part-time student at the National College of Ireland. This research is being used in my dissertation as part fulfilment of my Master of Arts in HRM.

The aim of the research is to explore the perceived macro level gender – based leadership barriers in Ireland

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

Participation will involve answering a series of questions that are directly related to the research. This will be conducted through a semi-structured interview. The topics will include demographics, leadership barriers, macro level gender-based barriers, culture constraints on women's own choice's, leadership perception, gender stereotypes, inadequacies in legislation, future career goals and supports.

The interview will be recorded and will take place at your preferred location.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

You have been selected to take part in this study because you meet the sample specifications – a female leader at senior management level.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Participation is completely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse participation, refuse any question and withdraw at any time without any consequence whatsoever.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

The research will seek to identify the macro level gender – based leadership barriers and will provide recommendations for organizations to address these barriers.

There are no physical or psychological risks identified by the researcher, that may occur to a participant as a result of taking part in this study. Please be informed that if a participant informs the researcher that themselves or someone else is at harm, they will report it to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?

All information pertaining to the identity of participants will be removed from the dissertation and transcripts. Every effort will be made by the researcher to protect the identity of participants and all information provided is for the sole use of this research.

HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?

Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained on the researcher's secure device, will be password protected and only the researcher will have access to this information until after my degree has been conferred. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legalisation, you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

The results will be used for the sole purpose of submitting my dissertation.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

Researcher Name: Sinead Mangan	Supervisors Name: Colette Darcy
Researchers contact number: 08*****	Supervisors Contact Number: 01 4498538
Researchers e-mail: sinead.m.mangan@ncirl.ie	Supervisors e-mail: colette.darcy@ncirl.ie

[THANK YOU]

Appendix G: Consent Form

Consent form to take part in research

Project Title: An Exploratory study into the perceived macro level gender – based leadership barriers in Ireland

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves conducting a recorded semi-structured interview which will form part of a qualitative study into the macro level barriers for female leaders for submission of a dissertation in partial fulfilment for a Master of Arts in Human Resources Management
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the submission of a dissertation in partial fulfilment for a Master of Arts in Human Resources Management to the National College of Ireland.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained on the researcher's personal device, with a secure password that the researcher only has access to until the exam board confirms the results of the dissertation in October 2019.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from October 2019.
- I understand that under freedom of information legislation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Names and contact details of researcher and academic supervisor

Researcher Name: Sinead Mangan	Supervisors Name: Colette Darcy
Researchers contact number: 08*****	Supervisors Contact Number: 01 4498538
Researchers e-mail: sinead.mangan@ncirl.ie	Supervisors e-mail: colette.darcy@ncirl.ie

Signature of research participant

Signature of participant Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Signature of researcher Date

Appendix H: Interview Transcripts

Interview 1: Senior Human Resource Manager, with Electrical Supply Company

Leadership Barriers

Interviewer: Have you experienced barriers or obstacles in the past as you rose to your current position and what were they?

Interviewee: Yes. When I went for interviews and promotions the ratio of men going for the job was a lot higher than the number of women. I work for a predominantly male organisation. There was double the amount of men to women going for the job. Therefore, they had more chance of succeeding.

Interviewer: How did you handle this?

Interviewee: I always asked for feedback after the interviews to see what I could work on. I educated myself where I saw there was gaps in my capabilities.

Interviewer: What did this experience mean to you?

Interviewee: It delayed my progression

Interviewer: Are you presently dealing with any barriers or obstacles in your leadership?

Interviewee: Not really in role. Sometimes I would be excluded from some events such as golfing outings and five a side football that my male colleagues would be involved in. Where they network a little bit more.

Interviewer: How do you handle this?

Interviewee: I accept them now at this stage. I am not a footballer but probably the golfing outings would be something that I would like to be invited to but I would be the only female among them so that is not likely to happen.

Interviewer: What does this experience mean to you?

Interviewee: You lose out on the networking side because it's not about the golf it's work talk. I miss out on that side of things.

Macro-level Gender Based Barriers

Interviewer: What does the term gender-based leadership barriers mean to you?

Interviewee: My immediate thought is that there is a bias towards women in leadership roles and the barriers that prevent that from happening.

Interviewer: What would you perceive to be the main barriers or challenges that operate at a societal level (macro barriers) for women?

Interviewee: Women aren't encouraged in schools or in third level education. Women are still seen as the homemaker even though women are equally educated or more educated in some cases. They are not encouraged towards managerial roles. You see women going for nursing, teaching, HR but not really encouraged into the more masculine seen roles such as leadership.

Interviewer: Tell me about a time in your life when you've experienced any of these barriers/challenges, either personal or professional. How did you get (or how are you getting) through this experience?

Interviewee: A simple thing was I was buying a car recently. My husband came with me and the sales representative just spoke to him all the time and ignored me completely. It was as if I knew nothing about the car even though he knew I was purchasing. I was so annoyed by it, that I walked out and went to a different garage.

In my work life, I suppose earlier on in my career I experienced male jokes or language. Even though I found it offensive I didn't speak up about it. I didn't allow it really to affect me, but I would speak up about it now.

Interviewer: How, if at all, have these experiences changed you?

Interviewee: One thing that it has done. We have put in a buddy program for female engineers when they enter the organisation so that they have support. Especially when they are out on site or out in the field so that they have support and a buddy type mentor. So that they have a go to person if they are experiencing any difficulties especially with the guys

Interviewer: How, if at all, has this experience related to or impacted your leadership?

Interviewee: They've made it stronger and it has made me determined to look out for other females that were coming through the organisation, to ensure that they get the opportunities. From the point of view of hiring graduates I try to make sure that there is a 50/50 were possible intake.

Interviewer: Overall, what did this experience mean to you?

Interviewee: It meant that there will be biases and gender differences and that's probably normal but that you just have to become strong and stand up to it.

Barrier - Culture Constraints on Women's Own Choice

Interviewer: In your opinion has Ireland's culture placed any constraints on your choices? If so, what constraints did they place

Interviewee: I was an early school leaver as in I left school after my leaving cert. At this stage there was two options open to us. There was the bank or civil service. But there was never any encouragement around maths type roles. For women it was typing and cashiers' jobs in banks. Those type of jobs were more attractive for women.

Interviewer: In your view, has culture limited the choices you have made in life either personally or professionally?

Interviewee: I would say yes. When I was growing up women did all the housework and the men went out and earned the money. Women mainly stayed at home. Not too long before I entered the work force women had to leave work especially in the civil service, they were forced to leave work once they had children. This shaped society back then. It's getting better but I would say that it has still a knock-on effect of where we are today.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about a time when they did limit your choices.

Interviewee: I remember in the school system men did not go to home economics back then. That was for females only while the guys did the sciences and biology.

Interviewer: What impact did this choice have on you personally or professionally?

Interviewee: It influenced your role as the housewife. I myself stayed at home for five years rearing my children without being in the work force. So, it absolutely shaped my career choices.

Interviewer: In your view, has culture constrained your choice of study?

Interviewee: My choice of study was driven by my interest in the field. I studied psychotherapy. I suppose in part because it wasn't male dominated, or female dominated.

Interviewer: In your view, has culture limited your choice of career?

Interviewee: It was limited from very early on. Maths was not taken seriously in the school that I went to for women. Yes, it limited me in that sense.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt prevented from applying for a leadership position?

Interviewee: I never felt prevented from applying for a leadership position.

Interviewer: Have you ever doubted your ability as a leader?

Interviewee: No. I always felt quite confident.

Interviewer: Would you describe your leadership style as masculine or feminine?

Interviewee: Masculine

Interviewer: What leadership characteristics do you most use and why?

Interviewee: Results driven, very strategic. I've changed HR to be the centre of the business rather than something that was on the periphery. So, any decision made around staff I am very drive in that respect. I would use my influencing skills most having said that I would always back it up with facts and figures. The organisation is very black and white so this would be the main reason for using influencing skills.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style (being more masculine or feminine)?

Interviewee: No. A couple of females on the team at times would become quite emotional. Not that I wouldn't have empathy for them but at the end of day we must get the job done

Interviewer: Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style due to cultural conformity?

Interviewee: The organisation would be political as in it is a hierarchical type structure. At times you would adapt your leadership style to the strategy. The strategy moved to being cost competitive. The strategy moved to being commercially focused and therefore more results driven. All of leadership is driven by that.

Interviewer: Do you find it difficult to balance work and family commitments?

Interviewee: Yes, I do. The demands of the job that I am in make it difficult to balance work and home life.

Interviewer: Does your organisation have work life balance policies and are they effective?

Interviewee: Yes, they have shorter hours, working from home. Working from home is not a policy and is ad hoc. Dependent of where you are in the business and your manager. They have good maternity policies around leave. But having said that they could do better. There is lack of consistency and management discretion as to how they're implemented and how they work.

Working from home, works best for me but from a work life balance perspective no. No, I can't say that they were effective for me given the workload.

Interviewer: Do you find it difficult to request the family friendly practices offered by your organisation?

Interviewee: I do. It's down to workload and setting precedent among the team. I do know one member of the team looked to work from home on Fridays and they were flatly refused, and it was down to setting precedent.

Barrier - Leadership Perceptions

Interviewer: What characteristics do you associate with leadership?

Interviewee: Strong, driven, capable, stakeholder management, relationship with the rest of the people within the organisation, influencing and charismatic.

Interviewer: What leadership characteristics do you perceive as being most effective to your current role?

Interviewee: Being strong, driven hard working, stakeholder management and building relationships with people

Interviewer: What characteristics are most well received by your employees?

Interviewee: Honesty, trust and fairness

Interviewer: What characteristics are most well received by your manager?

Interviewee: The same

Interviewer: Have you ever adopted characteristics that were outside of your natural leadership style (as in as in using more masculine or female characteristics)?

Interviewee: Yes once. A person was not pulling their weight. My normal style would be to have a difficult conversation with them, but I realised that there was a lot going on for them home wise. I changed my style to be more empathetic and understanding of that person whilst still getting the same results. It was more to do with the situation.

Interviewer: Have you received any negativity or bias towards your style of leadership?

Interviewee: No

Interviewer: How do you perceive yourself as a leader?

Interviewee: I am seen as strong and trusted. I am a hard worker and I expect that from my staff.

Interviewer: How do your employees and manager perceive you as a leader? (Have you had any feedback on their perception of you as a leader?)

Interviewee: I have done a 360 feedback and it was positive. People said that they liked working for me because they felt that they had developed under my leadership

Interviewer: How have you been evaluated as a leader?

Interviewee: I have been evaluated at year end and 360.

Barrier - Gender Stereotypes

Interviewer: Have you ever encountered any gender stereotypes as a leader? If so, can you tell me about this experience?

Interviewee: Just going back to being excluded from some social outings.

Interviewer: Have you ever encountered gender stereotypes on a personal or professional level?

Interviewee: I still think in Ireland we have a bit to go around females in leadership roles and females in politics. It seems to do with the boys' club, the glass ceiling. If young females have a family, the hours they are expected to work does not lend itself to progressing. Most of the leadership team are male in this organisation.

Interviewer: Did you feel pressured into your choice of study and why?

Interviewee: No, it was my choice. However, I didn't go to third level until my early thirties. It was never encouraged in my family of origin. Where my brother went to third level. I wasn't encouraged to go.

Interviewer: What was your choice of career and why?

Interviewee: HR. I always believed that I was a people person. HR has evolved and changed, and I love the fact that you are sitting at the top table and that you are part of the decision making in the organisation.

Interviewer: Did you feel pressured into your choice of career and why?

Interviewee: Probably from the point of view that it is perceived as a female profession. Your choices are limited by the fact that it is a male dominated organisation.

Interviewer: Would you have liked to study something else?

Interviewee: I always wanted to be a teacher however third level was never encouraged in my family of origin.

Barrier - Inadequacies in Legislation

Interviewer: In your opinion could more be done from a legislative perspective to enable women to obtain or succeed as leader?

Interviewee: I think legislation has come on in a huge way and I think the introduction of the gender pay gap reporting will help. I do think more could be done and there should be more encouragement for women to take up political positions in our government. Having more choice in the educational system, for women to seek third level education and more encouragement for women to take up those roles perceived as male maths, engineering, science. It is changing and that is good.

Interviewer: In your view, will gender pay gap reporting help females in leadership positions?

Interviewee: I think that is the intention of the act. I hope that it's more than a tick box exercise. I don't think it goes far enough as you don't have to report on the positions that those people are in.

Interviewer: In your opinion, would legislation around gender quotas at corporate boards help females in leadership positions?

Interviewee: Yes, I think there should be a quota. I feel it would bring better equity and balance into the corporate world.

Future Career Goals

Interviewer: What are your future career goals?

Interviewee: I have reached them

Supports

Interviewer: Was there anything along the way that buffered or mitigated the barriers or challenges you experienced or are currently experiencing?

Interviewee: Having go to people in the organisation

Interviewer: Where/are there any supports or connections which have helped you succeed as a leader?

Interviewee: Having a good network of women leader around me. It is not a formal thing but having something more formal would be productive for females and give them a stronger voice

Interviewer: Is there anything that I didn't think to ask, which you think would be helpful to add for the purpose of this study?

Interviewee: Career paths for women could be more clearly defined.

END

Interview 2: Senior Finance Manager, with Accounting Firm

Leadership Barriers:

Interviewer: Have you experienced barriers or obstacles in the past as you rose to your current position?

Interviewee: Personally no. You must work very hard to get the role.

Interviewer: Are you presently dealing with any barriers or obstacles in your leadership?

Interviewee: No

Macro-level Gender Based Barriers

Interviewer: What does the term gender-based leadership barriers mean to you?

Interviewee: For me it would be the role society perceive women have to play. This would put obstacles whether they are real or not real. It starts very early from interviewing. If you are interviewing someone who is maybe 24 or 25 you may be thinking, how long before they will be going on maternity leave maybe. Then it progresses up to mid-30's if they have one child, will they be having a second child. I would say it is predominantly women's availability due to their commitment to child rearing. That would be the most overt. Now there are lots of other things as well, but that's probably the main one in terms of progression in large companies. If you are absent for large periods of time it is detrimental. It is a race and if you opt out of the race it is a marathon. If you are gone for five or six years of those laps you are going to be behind. That's the main one.

Also, there's a perception that women are more emotional and all that other stuff. That does come into it as well.

I went on a business trip recently to India. There was easily 20 people in the room, and I was the only woman. That's not surprising. I have sat in meetings here; were I am the only one. There might be 12 of us and I am the only woman. People like the same as them. Whether it's male, female, race or ethnicity.

Interviewer: What would you perceive to be the main barriers or challenges that operate at a societal level (macro barriers) for women?

Interviewee: At a macro level availability, in that women have children not men. The time you decide to have children is probably at the most pivotal time in your career. To take that break out, come back and then you might want to go to a four-day week. In my opinion and in my experience, that is probably the biggest macro one.

I think it is exceptionally true that women look at a list of 1 to 10 things in a job add. They can do all nine, but they can't do the 10th, and they don't apply. Men look at the list of ten, they can't do nine of them but can do the 10th and say sure that's no problem. It is a stereotype and we need to be careful of stereotypes, but I think there is a reasonable level of truth in that.

Interviewer: Tell me about a time in your life when you've experienced any of these barriers/challenges, either personal or professional. How did you get (or how are you getting) through this experience?

Interviewee: I would say when I was in the job ten years. I applied for my first senior manager position and didn't get it. I applied to early and that's fine. When I applied for my second senior manager job, I was heavily pregnant and I was due to go on maternity leave. I went into the interview and the person interviewing me was like are you okay, and if you need to leave the interview at any stage please do. I didn't get the job and that's fine. I understand that I'm about to go on 6 months maternity leave, but I interviewed because I wanted the experience. I wanted to make a statement that I am interested in becoming a senior manager. A few people said why are you doing that are you mad, but it signalled intent on my part. It was fine but I didn't get the job. Then the second time, I got the senior manager job. When I got it, I would have come back from maternity leave after 6 months; not the year that they do now. I used my parental leave to take two half days on a Monday and Friday to collect the kids. But you go on an 80 % contract and you work 110%. Now I have never begrudged that, but the organisation thinks they are doing people a favour but is getting free labour. You leave to collect the kids at 2pm; the kids be gone to bed at 8pm and you worked from 9pm to 11pm. If you think about that in a man's world, he is working 9am to 6pm and then finished for the day. Now that is very stereotypical, but you are combining a full day's work, going to collect the children and do all of that, and then make up the hours that you are not in the office after office hours. But that is the price if you want it. That is the price.

Interviewer: What effect does/did this experience have on your personal life?

Interviewee: You have to have the children. Someone else can't have them for you. You just need to be organized, work extra hard and be more committed. That is probably the bit that was difficult for me personally. If you had additional stresses, like a sick parent, you have even more hurdles to jump. The more hurdles you have, eventually you fall. That is why boardrooms are full of men not women because of the hurdles. There is only so many hurdles you can get past.

Interviewer: How, if at all, has this experience changed you?

Interviewee: I think it makes you realise you do have to work hard. In terms of the young accountants coming up. I would be very pro women. I would try to be very encouraging to the younger women accountants coming up. If I am being honest, I am probably gender biased against the men. In that, if the women come to me saying they can't do something, I would be very encouraging towards them. Currently it is all women that work for me. I would say to them that they are doing a really good job, and tell them that they are good, because you would see that lack of confidence. In terms of progressing women, there are natural barriers in terms of having kids. Then there is the psychological barrier; I do not believe they have the same confidence.

Interviewer: How, if at all, has this experience related to or impacted your leadership?

Interviewee: I would be more understanding of those that have lots of commitments. In your 20's you are very go getting. In your 30's and 40's, you begin to realise that you don't have to be here all the time. That you can work smarter. It's not about the long hours. It's what you get from people, their thoughts and brain power. It doesn't have to be about sitting at a desk till 6pm every evening. It's that flexibility that can bring more women into the workplace. It's about being more open to what that can bring you. For me, that is a big thing, you don't have to be here till 6pm.

Interviewer: Overall, what did this experience mean to you?

Interviewee: During that period being 33-35, trying to get into senior management, and having to do the extra bits. It just means that you can achieve it if you want it. It's not about long hours but being smart.

Barrier - Culture Constraints on Women's Own Choices

Interviewer: In your opinion has Ireland's culture placed any constraints on your choices?

Interviewee: I clearly remember Mary Robinson becoming the first female president. That had an impact on me. I would say yes to that question. I went to a mixed school which was unusual. It stood to me because I would have seen boys regularly and would have seen that I was as good as them. I did physics and chemistry for my leaving cert. I remember when I arrived with my friend into the physics class, we were the only two girls in a class of 25. The teacher put us sitting up the front because he didn't know what to do with us. We were poor at some of the experiments, and the teacher said girls if you had brains you would be dangerous. We both did well in our leaving cert in both physics and chemistry. People have this perception that boys do physics and girls don't. Being in a school with both girls and boys was very important. Culturally I say this is something that should change. There was a group of us that academically competed with the boys and we did well. In Ireland, culturally how we separate boys and girls into different schools is a bad thing. I don't think that single sex schools are a good thing.

Interviewer: In your view, has culture limited the choices you have made in life either personally or professionally?

Interviewee: No. I have always done what I would have liked.

Interviewer: In your view, has culture constrained your choice of study?

No. I would say economics constrained it. It was a case of become an accountant and you will always get a job and get paid. We had gone beyond the point of where women were doing nursing and secretarial and boys were doing engineering.

Interviewer: In your view, has culture limited your choice of career?

Interviewee: No, it doesn't limit your entry to a career. There are a lot of females in accounting. It limits your progression in that career. I would say in accounting practices it's 50/50. However, walk into the senior management of these practices and it's predominantly men.

During the height of the 2010 crisis we were all called to a meeting and it was a big room of all senior managers. I arrived a few minutes late and the room was full. It was a sea of black suits. It was very notably male dominated.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt prevented from applying for a leadership position?

Interviewee: No

Interviewer: Have you ever doubted your ability as a leader? If so in what way?

Interviewee: Absolutely. I am quite a confident person but sometimes I feel like an imposter. I have often thought am I good enough, have I covered everything. I think a lot of women think it needs to be ten out of ten, as opposed to guys think 6 out of ten if fine, it's done. Again, very stereotypical, and not very fair as every person is individual. Trying to go to the nth degree of being right so that you're not wrong.

Interviewer: Would you describe your leadership style as masculine or feminine?

Interviewee: More masculine in terms of being very straight speaking and direct.

Interviewer: What leadership characteristics do you most use and why?

Interviewee: It's an age thing rather than a gender thing, if I am being honest. In your 20's and 30's you are very ambitious and when you are in your 40's you realise that you have to cut people a lot of slack. Probably for me now, the biggest thing is that my team are happy. I never want a day where someone walks out of the place because of what I have asked them to do, or

that they do not want to come back, or that they feel bad. Nobody should go home feeling bad. It is very important that we are inclusive, collaborative, understanding and that we are really working together. My style is more about the people and what we are achieving rather than the achievement.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style (being more masculine or feminine)? If so, can you tell me about a time when you did change your style and why you felt the need to change your style?

Interviewee: I was dealing with a difficult very demanding manager and I had to think about protecting the people below me. I worked very hard to try and mind them and make sure they didn't leave. Acknowledging how they were feeling and empathising with them. We collaborated more as a team.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style due to cultural conformity?

Interviewee: It is a consensus organisation. So, I have adapted to the style of the organisation. I can be a very direct person and I have had to be more collaborative.

Interviewer: Do you find it difficult to balance work and family commitments?

Interviewee: No but you must be consciously very aware of it. My kids are older now. I think it was most difficult for me, when my children were younger and were in primary school. It is much easier for me now. I think there is a period for working women from when they are born up to when they are going into secondary school, when it is very difficult. I was very lucky my husband was an accountant, but he went back and did primary school teaching eight years ago. He took a lot of the burden of me. We both could not have worked as full time accountants. It was too difficult. He is off when the kids are off with school holidays. I am lucky from that perspective, but I would say for other women the work life balance when the kids are young is very difficult.

Interviewer: Does your organisation have work life balance policies?

Interviewee: Yes. You can take unpaid leave of up to three months and you can apply for career breaks. You can apply for part working hours. In fairness there is a lot of work life balance options.

Interviewer: What policies have worked for you?

Interviewee: The maternity leave and the parental leave which enabled me to do school pick-ups. Now you make up for the time after.

Interviewer: In your opinion are they effective or could more be done?

Interviewee: The policies are good. What I would say is, that if you want a senior position it can be hard. There is this idea of get your senior position then use the policies. If you use them and are trying to get into a senior position, that can be difficult in terms of your career.

Interviewer: Do you find it difficult to request the family friendly practices offered by your organisation?

Interviewee: No.

Barrier - Leadership Perceptions

Interviewer: What characteristics do you associate with leadership?

Interviewee: Giving good direction, strategic, and understanding what's important and what's not and focusing in on that.

Interviewer: What leadership characteristics do you perceive as being most effective to your current role?

Interviewee: Strategic direction, focusing in on what's important and results.

Interviewer: What characteristics are most well received by your employees?

Interviewee: Collaboration, listening, informing people, letting people feel valued,

Interviewer: What characteristics are most well received by your manager?

Interviewee: They are mirrored. Getting things done. Being good with people but also getting results.

Interviewer: Have you ever adopted characteristics that were outside of your natural leadership style (as in using more masculine or female characteristics)?

Interviewee: Listening, collaboration, patient rather than trying to get something done.

Interviewer: Have you received any negativity or bias towards your style of leadership?

Interviewee: My leadership style would be very direct and I was told to tone that down and to bring people in more. If you are very robust doesn't mean everyone around you is. That's good to get that feedback.

Interviewer: How do you perceive yourself as a leader?

Interviewee: I'm perceived as very direct; I get things done and quite strong. I have learned to be more inclusive. My style is to be very open and tell people what is going on. I can be a little task orientated like let's get that done. I do have to try to listen.

Interviewer: How do your employees perceive you as a leader? (Have you had any feedback on their perception of you as a leader?)

Interviewee: I can be harder on myself than they are on me. Which is probably a female thing. I would say that people who have worked with me would work with me again.

Interviewer: How does your manager perceive you as a leader? (Have you had any feedback on their perception of you as a leader?)

Interviewee: My manager has said that I can be a little hard on the staff.

Interviewer: How have you been evaluated as a leader?

Interviewee: We don't look at styles but are evaluated on tasks. But it would be good to evaluate that. Yes, you got the task done but is everyone dead around you.

Interviewer: Have you ever been harshly evaluated as a leader? If so, can you tell me about your experience.

Interviewee: No, we don't get evaluated as a leader but are based on outputs to be achieved rather than how you achieved them.

Barrier - Gender Stereotypes

Interviewer: Have you ever encountered any gender stereotypes as a leader?

Interviewee: You do. It is more down to individuals. That is going to happen, and we would probably to the same thing towards men.

Interviewer: What was your choice of study and why?

Interviewee: Accountancy and it was for economic reasons.

Interviewer: Did you feel pressured into your choice of study and why?

Interviewee: No

Interviewer: What was your choice of career and why?

Interviewee: Accounting

Interviewer: Did you feel pressured into your choice of career and why?

Interviewee: No

Interviewer: If so, why did you not pursue this?

Interviewee: Yes, and for economic reasons

Barrier - Inadequacies in Legislation

Interviewer: In your opinion could more be done from a legislative perspective to enable women to obtain or succeed as leader?

Interviewee: I am not familiar with legislation. You see in the news articles about gender quotas. One side of the house says that you achieve on your own merits, and on the other side there are so many barriers that sometimes you can't. So, I probably would be in favour of enforcing gender balance but enforce is probably the wrong word.

Interviewer: In your view, will gender pay gap reporting help females in leadership positions?

Interviewee: Yes. I think anything that becomes more transparent is a positive thing. I think it will be shocking but there will be excuses for it.

Interviewer: In your opinion, would legislation around gender quotas at corporate boards help females in leadership positions?

Interviewee: I don't think it will be liked as it is a load of men that it is affecting. It will help break a barrier. I believe most people can do a job; some people will do it better than others. So put the women on the boards and let women see positive role models.

Future Career Goals

Interviewer: What are your future career goals?

Interviewee: Leading a bigger team.

Interviewer: Do you anticipate any obstacles in the pursuit of your goals?

Interviewee: I can't think of any.

Supports

Interviewer: Was there anything along the way that buffered or mitigated the barriers or challenges you experienced or are currently experiencing?

Interviewee: Not for me as I would be a go getter. For young women coming in, more females as mentors. Particularly with successful women in the company. We do it but half-heartedly, but we should be more proactive in this area.

Interviewer: Where/are there any supports or connections which have helped you succeed as a leader?

Interviewee: There is a group of female peers that meet up informally. It is our own informal network that helped us. I made a conscious effort to keep in contact with female peers. Probably more than with my male peers. That is an issue because the balance isn't right.

END

Interview 3: Senior Engineering Manager, with Engineering Firm

Leadership Barriers

Interviewer: Have you experienced barriers or obstacles in the past as you rose to your current position? If so, what are they?

Interviewee: At the start of my career it was easy to progress to a certain level. To get to this level, I found having kids was a barrier. I had kids before I became a manager. I was not directly but indirectly asked before I applied for this role if I intended to have more kids. I can't say that was in any way related to the decision of me becoming a manager from the company's side, but I don't know. It is hard not to think about it.

Interviewer: How did you handle these?

Interviewee: I had to make my own decision on certain things. I have two children and if I had a third child, I would have found it impossible to do the job because it is very stressful. It was stressful as it was with two kids and work, so a third kid was out of the question. I regret this decision.

Regarding progressing further to the next level. I applied for a further senior level position, but I find it difficult for a woman to get to that level, just in the way it is done. You have to be extremely flexible in this company; you have to agree to being re-located. You are not applying for a particular position, you are applying for a senior leadership position. This more senior leadership position meant that they can send you anywhere they want. As a woman having kids, I can't move my family around or have the kids moved to different schools. I find the process a little more geared towards the men. I am not saying it is impossible, but it would be very difficult.

Interviewer: Are you presently dealing with any barriers or obstacles in your leadership role currently?

Interviewee: I did apply for a promotion to the next senior manager level last year. I was seriously thinking if I should apply for it or not, because of this specific reason of being moved. You are not applying for a particular role, you are applying for something, then someone else decides which senior management position they are going to give you. I just don't like that. When I am applying for a job, I like to know what job I am going to be doing, and what I am applying for. That is not obviously the way it's done here. So, going through that process took a lot out of me and I wasn't successful at the end. I didn't regret that I wasn't successful. There were one or two positions that would not have involved re-locating and that I would have liked, but with the number of positions I probably wouldn't have gotten those two. Having to go and move around the country it's not something that would suit me, so I do find it as a barrier. I don't think I will apply for a position in the future unless it is very specifically advertised for a specific role, but that's not the way it's done.

Interviewer: What do these experiences mean to you?

Interviewee: I find this process for progression a little more geared towards the men. I find myself stuck where I am. I am at the point where I still believe I have a lot to give but I feel that I can't move anywhere.

Macro-level Gender Based Barriers

Interviewer: What does the term gender-based leadership barriers mean to you?

Interviewee: It just means that as a woman you can't apply for certain positions, and in most cases and most companies it is kind of hidden. There are loads of women that would be in leadership positions, but I do believe they have to sacrifice a lot more than men do in similar positions. If they want to have a family, if they have kids. I think it is very, very difficult. Women have to make a lot of sacrifices. I also believe in a way, even if you make those sacrifices sometimes it is very hard to get those positions; because the people deciding on those positions are usually male. They think differently about the whole management thing and about how people should be managed, how people are managed. I know there is a gender balance in the interviews, the HR person would be a male, there would be another male and the senior person in the interview would be a female who is already of a certain mindset. I find it difficult if you have a slightly different approach or you do not follow the very rigid management structures. I find it very difficult to progress and pass any of the interviews.

Interviewer: What would you perceive to be the main barriers or challenges that operate at a societal level (macro barriers) for women? Tell me what these mean for you?

Interviewee: I've had many barriers, but I am quite strong, and I am not easily pushed. Because of my knowledge people do respect me and let me do my own thing, because they trust that I'm not going to do it wrong.

I did not feel any barriers throughout my studies. Back then there were much less women in electrical engineering than men which is still the case. There is less interest from women in engineering than men. I never felt any difference when studying. I felt a difference immediately when I started working. I was the only women on my team. I felt barriers to progression in work. It was easier to pursue things because I was a woman. I found people more accepting of me suggesting doing things in a different way. I never had very strong opposition. It is just dependent on the approach you take. As a woman I took a slightly different approach to men in terms of having to convince somebody something is good for them.

I probably have a slightly different management style to everyone else here and everybody knows that. They just don't try to argue with me. They just let me have my own way of doing things now. I have had 6 or 7 different managers and they have all let me do my own thing. They never tried to stop me. I managed to persuade them into my way of doing things. However, if I try to show this approach in interviews and show that it worked well; there is a strong opposition because it is probably different to the way the company sees the way people should manage people. They just don't like it.

Interviewer: How have these experiences impacted on your leadership style?

Interviewee: I learned that every situation, every encounter I come across, every problem when you work with people can be different. You can't be very fixed or rigid you must be flexible. You must understand and listen a lot. I do try to adapt my management style as often as I can. Quiet often I attend management programs and you find yourself in every sort of style. You just must use the one that's appropriate to the situation. Whilst most of my colleagues prefer to stick to one style and don't try to change in any way. Now is that right or worn I do not know.

Barrier - Culture Constraints on Women's Own Choices

Interviewer: In your opinion has culture placed any constraints or limitations on your choices?

Interviewee: I don't think so. Probably in terms of how many kids you have.

Interviewer: In your view, has culture constrained your choice of study

Interviewee: No

Interviewer: In your view, has culture limited your choice of career?

Interviewee: No

Interviewer: Have you ever felt prevented from applying for a leadership position?

Interviewee: Not in the past but I feel prevented from applying for future roles.

Interviewer: Have you ever doubted your ability as a leader?

Interviewee: Yes, after the feedback that I got from an interview, but I doubted my ability as a leader before this. I believe the people in the interview's perception was wrong. They were negative towards my style of leadership (The interviewee appeared upset about this)

Interviewer: Would you describe your leadership style as masculine or feminine?

Interviewee: I would be in the middle of the two. My own staff would describe me as more masculine others would describe me a more feminine.

Interviewer: What leadership characteristics do you most use and why?

Interviewee: I listen. I think before I sit with anyone about all the ways the conversation could go, and I try to think how I would feel if it goes one way or the other. Over the year although I listen to the staff all the time, I do not accommodate all their requests. I find that sometimes difficult and they sometimes think that I made my decision before I sit down with them. But I do try to explain my decisions and why they are in a certain way. I do try to explain that as well as looking after them I must try to look after everyone in the group as well. I must ensure that all the work that is assigned gets done. I do try to consult with everyone, but I don't base my decision on these. I just try to get all the views to see if I missed something. I do express what my decision is and give them a chance to argue it. Apart from that I do have certain opinions on work life balance that most men don't. This is something that my staff like. I do believe in work life balance. I try to accommodate my staffs request and I do probably manage most of the request, whilst most other managers do not try to accommodate. They might say they will ask and try, but they don't even go as far as asking or pursuing with their managers. Maybe, because I am a woman, I have a different view on this than men. Even woman who don't have children have a much stronger rejection, when their staff are asking for leave to accommodate work life family practices.

Because I am a woman my staff come and talk to me about personal issues than they would come and talk to a male manager. That is something I found hard at the early stages of my career, because I had to deal with a lot of personal issues that I didn't feel I was equipped to deal with, such as mental health issues. I found it very hard at the time to disconnect myself from this at the time. With experience I learned how to deal with this. To protect my own family and life from problems others have. I find this the biggest impact between my style and my male colleagues.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style (being more masculine or feminine)?

Interviewee: Not on suggestion of others but I did feel in certain situations I had to be more masculine and feminine. When I explained why I was doing something one way over another it was fine. However, I do believe that if I want to get to the next level, I will have to change my leadership style, and that is something that I am not willing to sacrifice. That is why I will not ever apply for another position.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style due to cultural conformity?

Interviewee: No, I will not change my style and it has had an impact on my career. If I do not believe in something, I am not willing to change for it.

Interviewer: Do you find it difficult to balance work and family commitments?

Interviewee: Yes, I find it very difficult because my children are still quite young. It is very difficult when they are going through school. It is very restricting with the amount of annual leave you are given when you can't take parental leave. You need your holidays to recover for the whole year.

Interviewer: Does your organisation have work life balance policies?

Interviewee: They do. There is a work life balance leave that is up to 20 weeks leave but I seem to be the only one that gets them approved for my staff. I heard from my manager recently, that HR is not likely to approve it for those staff who are traveling in the future. I think that is ridiculous.

Interviewer: What more could be done by your organisation?

Interviewee: There are policies there that say they allow it but then there are unwritten rules. In certain parts of the organisation it is difficult to get them approved. I don't think those unwritten rules should be there and the manager should try to accommodate. It is sometimes hard as you are dealing with less staff available to do the work, but I do believe it is up to the manager to figure it out if they are given enough notice.

Interviewer: Do you find it difficult to request the family friendly practices offered by your organisation?

Interviewee: No

Barrier - Leadership Perceptions

Interviewer: What characteristics do you associate with leadership?

Interviewee: A leader is someone who has a vision and can pass that vision onto their staff. Enthusiastic about work, positive and strong minded.

Interviewer: What leadership characteristics do you perceive as being most effective to your current role?

Interviewee: Giving direction, flexible, communication.

Interviewer: What characteristics are most well received by your employees?

Interviewee: Openness and honesty.

Interviewer: What characteristics are most well received by your manager?

Interviewee: Being able to do the job. Knowing the staff well enough to assign them to the right job. Persuading staff.

Interviewer: Have you ever adopted characteristics that were outside of your natural leadership style?

Interviewee: No

Interviewer: Have you received any negativity or bias towards your style of leadership? If so, can you tell me about this experience

Interviewee: I receive a lot of negativity about a difficult situation in the group. I discussed the correct approach with my manager and HR before acting on this situation. Later I was told that I did not know how to let go and move on. I was told that I was too emotional about the whole thing. Which I did not agree with. I learned how to deal with the situation and moved on.

Interviewer: How do you perceive yourself as a leader?

Interviewee: I am a good leader. I am direct. I can be quite stubborn and it's not easy to change my mind.

Interviewer: How do your employees perceive you as a leader? (Have you had any feedback on their perception of you as a leader?)

Interviewee: They all feel comfortable to talk to me about issues that they have. In most cases they trust my decision.

Interviewer: How does your manager perceive you as a leader? (Have you had any feedback on their perception of you as a leader?)

Interviewee: I have never gotten proper feedback. I give feedback to all my employees and I believe I should receive feedback. I would appreciate this.

Interviewer: How have you been evaluated as a leader?

Interviewee: Yes through 360's.

Interviewer: Have you ever been harshly evaluated as a leader? If so, can you tell me about your experience

Interviewee: In an interview last year I was told that I would not be good for the level of senior management. I received feedback that I was too emotional.

Barrier - Gender Stereotypes

Interviewer: Have you ever encountered any gender stereotypes as a leader?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Have you ever encountered gender stereotypes on a personal or professional level?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: What was your choice of study and why?

Interviewee: Engineering because I loved maths.

Interviewer: Did you feel pressured into your choice of study and why?

Interviewee: Never.

Interviewer: What was your choice of career and why?

Interviewee: Engineering.

Interviewer: Did you feel pressured into your choice of career and why?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Would you have liked to study something else?

Interviewee: Teaching.

Interviewer: Would you have liked to have chosen a different career?

Interviewee: Yes, I would have loved teaching.

Interviewer: If so, why did you not pursue this?

Interviewee: Because I am technically very strong and very good. I thought for a time that I must use those skills and with the teaching I wouldn't have used them anymore or in the right way. As I got older, I changed my mind. I love working with kids. I think I made the wrong choice and I would possibly have been happier as a teacher.

Barrier - Inadequacies in Legislation

Interviewer: In your opinion could more be done from a legislative perspective to enable women to obtain or succeed as leader?

Interviewee: Women need a lot more flexibility in work. There is still the perception that unless you put in the extra hours you are not good enough, but from my own personal opinion if I can do a job in 5 hours that takes someone else 8 why shouldn't I be able to do it. I should be judged on the work I do and be able to do whatever I want in the other time. This would enable me to have more balance between work and family.

Interviewer: What helped you?

Interviewee: I had managers that let me take parental leave when I needed to rather than set days. If I needed a half day, I would take it. I just managed my own leave when I needed it. I believe that is the only way it would work for a woman in leadership. I struggled when I didn't have that anymore. So, stopping when the kids are 8 doesn't work. It should run at least to when the kids are 16. I don't think there should be time limitations on parental leave. I don't think people would abuse it. They would use it because they need it. More flexibility with how you take it. I do find that men never take parental leave. Even my husband wouldn't take it. I made him take it.

Interviewer: In your view, will gender pay gap reporting help females in leadership positions?

Interviewee: No, it will not help. I think it is hard to get any conclusions out of those stats. I never thought that I was paid less than a man with similar skills in the same role.

Interviewer: In your opinion, would legislation around gender quotas at corporate boards help females in leadership positions?

Interviewee: No, I do not like those quotas. I am not in favour of them. It is my opinion and the women on my team's opinion, that it creates the perception that a woman gets a job not because she deserves it but because it is to fill a certain quota.

Future Career Goals

Interviewer: What are your future career goals?

Interviewee: That is a difficult one. I don't have any right now. I have had a lot of thoughts it the last year. I have been in the same role for too long. It is an interesting role, but I like a challenge, and I am not being challenged in my role anymore. I find it very difficult to move up.

Interviewer: Do you anticipate any obstacles in the pursuit of your goals?

Interviewee: Because I have been in this role for so long, which is a very specialized, that would be an obstacle. One thing is people don't like me to go elsewhere because they need my knowledge where I am. The other thing is that I have a specific way of thinking, because I have been in that role for too long and don't have experience in other roles.

Supports

Interviewer: Was there anything along the way that buffered or mitigated the barriers or challenges you experienced or are currently experiencing?

Interviewee: I have sat on different working groups and I do get to see how other people work. There would be a lot of benefit from moving senior managers to different groups to see different ways of doing things.

Interviewer: Where/are there any supports or connections which have helped you succeed as a leader?

Interviewee: There are a lot of leadership courses provided by the company that have helped me.

END

Interview 4: Senior Brand Manager, with Marketing Company

Leadership Barriers

Interviewer: Have you experienced barriers or obstacles in the past as you rose to your current position?

Interviewee: No

Interviewer: Are you presently dealing with any barriers or obstacles in your leadership? If so, what are they?

Interviewee: Yes. The current barriers are that I have different stakeholders in different locations. Having face to face interactions with them is a challenge and it makes the job harder to do. I have two young children and it is very difficult to travel to have face to face meetings. I work in a male dominated organisation, whilst I don't think it is overtly apparent, it feels like they are not putting the right plans in place to get a more equal gender basis in leadership.

Interviewer: How do you handle these barriers?

Interviewee: I stay true to myself and what I believe is right for my role and to get the job done. Sometimes that is dealt with in a positive way and sometimes a negative way. Sometimes they are open to my challenges and sometimes they are not.

Interviewer: What does this experience mean to you?

Interviewee: I have a lot of frustration with it. I think the lack of support is frustrating. My manager will not support a lot of the proposals that I make.

Macro-level Gender Based Barriers

Interviewer: What does the term gender-based leadership barriers mean to you?

Interviewee: That would mean that you have challenges getting new roles based on you gender.

Interviewer: What would you perceive to be the main barriers or challenges that operate at a societal level (macro barriers) for women?

Interviewee: Equality, ability to progress based on belief in themselves, the ability that they can do the job in the same way as a man. In the past you would have seen a lot more men succeed. I would say that this is something that is becoming less.

Interviewer: Tell me about a time in your life when you've experienced any of these barriers/challenges, either personal or professional. How did you get (or how are you getting) through this experience?

Interviewee: I have chosen companies quit carefully in the past. I have purposely chosen business's that have a good amount of male and female leadership. My current role would be contradictory to that. I felt that I have always had fair interviews. I have never felt unjust and have been given the same opportunities as men.

Barrier - Culture Constraints on Women's Own Choices

Interviewer: In your opinion has Irelands culture placed any constraints on your choices?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: In your view, has culture limited the choices you have made in life either personally or professionally?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: In your view, has culture constrained your choice of study?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: In your view, has culture limited your choice of career?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt prevented from applying for a leadership position?

Interviewee: Yes. There was a role that came up in my previous company and I spoke to the recruiter. I was told that I needed to do another two years in my current role before I would get it. I felt that I wasn't given a fair chance to even apply for it. I started to doubt my capabilities a bit. I then went to applied for a job in a higher position with a different company and got it.

Interviewer: Have you ever doubted your ability as a leader?

Interviewee: Yes. In every single way. Feeling like an imposter. Feeling like I am not good enough. Belief that I might make a mistake. Belief that my choices and my decisions are not strong enough. I have a lot of self-doubt.

Interviewer: Would you describe your leadership style as masculine or feminine?

Interviewee: Feminine.

Interviewer: What leadership characteristics do you most use and why?

Interviewee: Supportive and visionary. I like to bring people on the journey with me. I am very collaborative.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style (being more masculine or feminine)?

Interviewee: Yes. I have had to use a more masculine style. Having dealt with certain teams in the US that were predominantly male, I realised that my soft collaborative approach was not working. Decisions needed to be made by me. I became more authoritative in this case, as in saying that it is to be done this way.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style due to cultural conformity?

Interviewee: No

Interviewer: Do you find it difficult to balance work and family commitments?

Interviewee: Yes. Being able to put focus and effort into your career and your job, whilst also wanting to do the same at home with your family. It is difficult to split yourself and give the right amount of time between both of those elements.

Interviewer: Does your organisation have work life balance policies?

Interviewee: No not this company.

Interviewer: In your opinion could more be done?

Interviewee: Yes, more could be done. They were affective in my previous company. They had a policy whereby you weren't allowed to send e-mails before 8am and after 8pm. If you did you

got reprimanded, not in a massive way but it was really frowned upon. It meant that you weren't impacting others by sending emails out of hours. That was all the way down from the top. I think if you are going to implement those things it must come from the top. I do think it made a difference as it made people think that they did not have to be in the office late at night.

Barrier - Leadership Perceptions

Interviewer: What characteristics do you associate with leadership?

Interviewee: Having good vision, clarity, belief, nurturing your team and building strong people. I think leadership is about developing people.

Interviewer: What leadership characteristics do you perceive as being most effective to your current role?

Interviewee: Collaboration, listening, hearing the challenges of the different stakeholders.

Interviewer: What characteristics are most well received by your employees?

Interviewee: Teamwork, collaboration, being decisive and providing clarity to all the key stakeholders

Interviewer: What characteristics are most well received by your manager?

Interviewee: Getting the job done with little challenges. I like to challenge but it's not seen as favourable.

Interviewer: Have you ever adopted characteristics that were outside of your natural leadership style?

Interviewee: Yes. I have had to bring out more of the red in me, as in be more dominant and stronger. I have had to dial that up, because if I don't, I might be seen as weak. I run several workshops with different teams. Some of the managers question your ability. So, I have had to play up what I can do and my expertise, that they don't have.

Interviewer: Have you ever changed your style of leadership within your role and why?

Interviewee: I believe I have a good leadership style. There are times that I have had to flex depending on who I deal with. I have been more direct when dealing with my male colleagues in the US to get things done.

Interviewer: Have you received any negativity or bias towards your style of leadership?

Interviewee: Yes. When you are dealing with a different market. You are leading projects that are not in your area. I have had some derogatory comments from the VP in the US, they have said you don't know anything about this market. Even though I have loads of experience working with the US market in previous roles. They have made comments on the way I am doing things, even though I should be leading them.

Interviewer: How do you perceive yourself as a leader?

Interviewee: Fair, honest, collaborative. I always aspire to being someone that I would want people to follow.

Interviewer: How do your employees perceive you as a leader? (Have you had any feedback on their perception of you as a leader?)

Interviewee: I think the business that I am in now. I would say they would want me to dial up my more decisive and dominant traits. That's how I imagine they would

Interviewer: How does your manager perceive you as a leader? (Have you had any feedback on their perception of you as a leader?)

Interviewee: They would agree that I am fair, honest and collaborative. They appreciate and respect that in many ways. They like the fact that I am collaborative as the relationship component is important. To come in and dictate to people it would not have worked well. So, my more collaborative approach has worked well from my managers perspective.

Interviewer: How have you been evaluated as a leader?

Interviewee: The company I am in does not have the right tools to do that. Previous companies and done better jobs. I've done 360's, appraisal review and gone on talent and development programs. The company I am in now doesn't have those things in situ.

Interviewer: Have you ever been harshly evaluated as a leader? If so, can you tell me about your experience

Interviewee: Not harshly. They've been fair in the previous company where I had them.

Barrier - Gender Stereotypes

Interviewer: Have you ever encountered any gender stereotypes as a leader?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Have you ever encountered gender stereotypes on a personal or professional level?

Interviewee: No. The companies I have worked for haven't had them.

Interviewer: What was your choice of study and why?

Interviewee: Marketing because it appealed to me.

Interviewer: Did you feel pressured into your choice of study and why?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: What was your choice of career and why?

Interviewee: I followed on into marketing because it was directly related to my studies

Interviewer: Did you feel pressured into your choice of career and why?

Interviewee: I just naturally went into marketing. Maybe if I had better guidance my choices would have been different

Interviewer: Would you have liked to study something else? If so, why did you not pursue this?

Interviewee: Yes, I probably would have liked to do law but would not have gotten through the study. I would not have been able for it.

Interviewer: Would you have liked to have chosen a different career?

Interviewee: No.

Barrier - Inadequacies in Legislation

Interviewer: In your opinion could more be done from a legislative perspective to enable women to obtain or succeed as leader?

Interviewee: I think things are being done. It is becoming fairer. You are seeing women among different professions that maybe you wouldn't have previous. I still think that certain professions that are dominated by males. There is much more equality now.

Interviewer: In your view, will gender pay gap reporting help females in leadership positions?

Interviewee: Yes. I do believe that there are women in leadership roles that are not being paid equally. To be able to have a document that supports the belief that men and women should be paid the same can only be beneficial.

Interviewer: In your opinion, would legislation around gender quotas at corporate boards help females in leadership positions?

Interviewee: Yes, I think it would set a good example for women aspiring to be leaders.

Future Career Goals

Interviewer: What are your future career goals?

Interviewee: I want a career change. I'm finding it too difficult to juggle work and family commitments. Particularly with the company wanting me to travel more

Interviewer: Do you anticipate any obstacles in the pursuit of your goals?

Interviewee: Education and experience are the two big obstacles for me to overcome in changing careers. I don't think children are an obstacle, but I am conscious that it may come across like I have more baggage when going for jobs as opposed to someone who doesn't.

Supports

Interviewer: Was there anything along the way that buffered or mitigated the barriers or challenges you experienced or are currently experiencing?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Where/are there any supports or connections which have helped you succeed as a leader?

Interviewee: I think social media has helped. The more you see women in leadership roles, the more you think that you can do it. I do think that companies are playing it a little when they advertise that they have promoted a senior female leader, as you don't see them advertising about the men. This may just be that you take note when a female has been promoted more, because in the past it has been predominantly men.

Interviewer: Is there anything that I didn't think to ask, which you think would be helpful to add for the purpose of this study?

Interviewee: I think that family commitments, in terms of having children are barriers that aren't going to go away. This is something that that needs to be considered for future female leaders.

END

Interview 5: Senior Manager of AML Investor Services and TA Operations Asset Management, with Financial Services Multi-National

Leadership Barriers

Interviewer: Have you experienced barriers or obstacles in the past as you rose to your current position?

Interviewee: I experienced barriers in terms of career progression in my previous companies. Even though I won an award for global employee of the year I couldn't progress. I wanted to progress in a specialist area of AML and they never guided me on what I needed to do. So, I went into the market and found out myself. I did my compliance exams in the AML space which is internationally recognised.

I applied for a role to become the Outsourcing Manager. Unfortunately, I didn't get it. The person who did get it came externally but he clearly didn't have the skills. I was working for him and he saw my talent. He told me that there comes a time when you must understand your own net worth in the market. In this industry you must move around and get a lot of experience in order to progress. Which I decided to do. It wasn't the case that I didn't have the skills as I demonstrated that having been successful elsewhere.

Interviewer: Are you presently dealing with any barriers or obstacles in your leadership?

Interviewee: In my new role. It will be getting the buy in from staff to get the job done. I will have to earn the respect from others whilst understanding their cultural differences. You need to be able to read the landscape. The change management will be an obstacle I suspect.

Interviewer: How will you handle these barriers?

Interviewee: Because the announcement of my role is coming from the top down. They are setting the seed, in terms of setting the scope and objective in terms of what they want us as a team to achieve. I will be sitting back in the first couple of meetings and let the more senior people outline what they want achieved. Through my experience you get respect through being organised and getting the job done. You need to show the staff that you are there to support them rather than criticise. That's important to getting their buy in.

Macro-level Gender Based Barriers

Interviewer: What does the term gender-based leadership barriers mean to you?

Interviewee: I think, overall corporate wide the company I worked for had been pulled up for having just males in some high-level meeting, in one sector of the organisation. This was reported in the newspaper. Certainly, the ratio of men to women is higher as in there are a lot of lower ranking females to men. I think as well that the world is changing to being open to a diverse mix, as in removing gender from being a discriminatory factor. Corporate wide they need be seen to be promoting women, so they have diverse group of people at a high level.

Interviewer: What would you perceive to be the main barriers or challenges that operate at a societal level (macro barriers) for women?

Interviewee: Society has moved on from women staying at home and rearing children. It is progressing an awful lot between having your career and having your family for sure. I don't think that forms a barrier for women anymore. I think men are more diplomatic than women. I would sooner work with 50 men than ten women. I think that women can have a shorter fuse. I think sometimes power is viewed differently by women than men.

Barrier - Culture Constraints on Women's Own Choices

Interviewer: In your opinion has Ireland's culture placed any constraints on your choices?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: In your view, has culture limited the choices you have made in life either personally or professionally?

Interviewee: No, I don't think so. Our culture is very open

Interviewer: In your view, has culture constrained your choice of study?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: In your view, has culture limited your choice of career?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt prevented from applying for a leadership position?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Have you ever doubted your ability as a leader? If so, in what way?

Interviewee: Not really. I suppose when you get knock backs from a role you start to doubt yourself, and question why I am not suited for the role. You may go for a role because you have a certain amount of the skill sets, but you may not have all of them. This doesn't mean that you're not able for it as you still need to develop or else there is nothing to be gained from a promotion.

Interviewer: Would you describe your leadership style as masculine or feminine?

Interviewee: Feminine absolutely.

Interviewer: What leadership characteristics do you most use and why?

Interviewee: You must be strong, confident, organised; a good communicator and you need to get good collaboration. If you don't have collaboration and good structure you might as well forget about it.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style (being more masculine or feminine)?

Interviewee: Yes. There would be certain situations where you would need to change your style. I had someone at a senior level, and they were new into the role. You would give them tasks to do and they would say no problem. Then you identify they never came back with the updates on the task. I had to shift my leadership style from the feminine to the masculine side. There comes a point in time when you need to be more direct. You must get the work done and you can't have someone's laid back attitude pulling you down as well.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt the need to change your leadership style due to cultural conformity?

Interviewee: No, not really.

Interviewer: Do you find it difficult to balance work and family commitments?

Interviewee: I find it difficult to find work life balance. There is a pressure to achieve in work and to put in a lot of extra hours. There are pressures to achieve and been seen to make progress in a short space of time. Resolutions only come with putting in the time and effort.

Interviewer: Does your organisation have work life balance policies?

Interviewee: They are only introducing better work life balance policies. For example, they are trying to introduce a work from home policy. This is not a pre-requisite for all staff. It will

depend on your job and role. They are also trying to introduce flexible working hours, for example 8am to 4pm and a four-day week. The policies are not as fluid as you might like, and it is not across all levels. So, for instance a senior manager could not go to a four-day week. I couldn't go a four-day week. It's not going to happen.

Interviewer: Do you find it difficult to request the work life balance policies offered by your organisation?

Interviewee: Yes, I would find it difficult to request a lot of the work life benefits. It's at a corporate level they wouldn't want you to work from home

Barrier - Leadership Perceptions

Interviewer: What characteristics do you associate with leadership?

Interviewee: Excel in confidence, organised, have structure, be a good communicator, be able to manage a debate, driven, ambitious and collaboration.

Interviewer: What leadership characteristics do you perceive as being most effective to your current role?

Interviewee: Collaborations, organization and communication skills

Interviewer: What characteristics are most well received by your employees?

Interviewee: Collaboration, communication and good governance.

Interviewer: What characteristics are most well received by your manager?

Interviewee: Methodical in the way I get things done.

Interviewer: Have you ever adopted characteristics that were outside of your natural leadership style?

Interviewee: Yes collaboration. When you go higher up the chain you must rely on collaboration.

Interviewer: Have you received any negativity or bias towards your style of leadership?

Interviewee: You always get a certain amount of negativity. You are not going to win everyone over. The minute you start to do that you can forget about it.

Interviewer: How do you perceive yourself as a leader?

Interviewee: I like to be organized, well prepared, get everyone onboard. I certainly have the support of my direct reports. I'm well valued by peers and colleagues. They know that I will change things for the better.

Interviewer: How do your employees perceive you as a leader? (Have you had any feedback on their perception of you as a leader?)

Interviewee: Fair, balanced and diplomatic.

Interviewer: How does your manager perceive you as a leader? (Have you had any feedback on their perception of you as a leader?)

Interviewee: I'm seen as an effective leader. Very methodical, I get things done, reliable, dependant and organised.

Interviewer: Have you ever been harshly evaluated as a leader?

Interviewee: No.

Barrier - Gender Stereotypes

Interviewer: Have you ever encountered any gender stereotypes as a leader?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Have you ever encountered gender stereotypes on a personal or professional level?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: What was your choice of study and why?

Interviewee: Business as financial services because it was up and coming when I left school.

Interviewer: Did you feel pressured into your choice of study and why?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: What was your choice of career and why?

Interviewee: Financial services.

Interviewer: Did you feel pressured into your choice of career and why?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Would you have liked to study something else?

Interviewee: Well I would have loved to have been a doctor, but I wouldn't have had the brains.

Barrier - Inadequacies in Legislation

Interviewer: In your opinion could more be done from a legislative perspective to enable women to obtain or succeed as leader?

Interviewee: I think gender quotas would help gender balance at board level.

Interviewer: In your view, will gender pay gap reporting help females in leadership positions?

Interviewee: No, it's lip service.

Interviewer: In your opinion, would legislation around gender quotas at corporate boards help females in leadership positions?

Interviewee: Yes, for sure. I think if they had a minimum number of females sitting on boards, it would help it to become a level playing field.

Future Career Goals

Interviewer: What are your future career goals?

Interviewee: I've none at present. I will look to achieve the goals in current role.

Supports

Interviewer: Was there anything along the way that buffered or mitigated the barriers or challenges you experienced or are currently experiencing?

Interviewee: My direct report has been a great support and mentor.

Interviewer: Where/are there any supports or connections which have helped you succeed as a leader?

Interviewee: My manager has helped me to network and has helped me to build my profile. He's a great mentor

END

Appendix I: Ethics Review Form

National College of Ireland

Human Participants Ethical Review Application Form

All parts of the below form must be completed. However in certain cases where sections are not relevant to the proposed study, clearly mark NA in the box provided.

Part A: Title of Project and Contact Information

Name

Sinead Mangan

Student Number (if applicable)

16111214

Email

X16111214@student.ncirl.ie

Status:

- Undergraduate
Postgraduate
Staff

Title of Research Project

Exploratory study of female leadership styles: A case study examining female managers styles, challenges and supports in an Irish semi-private organisation

Have you read the NCI Ethical Guidelines for Research with Human Participants?

- Yes
No

Please indicate any other ethical guidelines or codes of conduct you have consulted

NA

Has this research been submitted to any other research ethics committee?

- Yes
No

If yes please provide details, and the outcomes of this process, if applicable:

NA

Is this research supported by any form of research funding?

- Yes
No

If yes please provide details, and indicate whether any restrictions exist on the freedom of the researcher to publish the results:

NA

Briefly outline the following information (not more than 200 words in any section).

Proposed starting date and duration of project

Starting date March

Duration 6 months

The research aims and objectives

The aim of this research is to explore the leadership style of female leaders in a semiprivate organisation in Ireland. Specifically, the research has three objectives:

- 1) To critically evaluate female leadership styles and characteristics**
- 2) To explore the challenges for female leaders**
- 3) To assess the supports that enable females to become leaders**

The rationale for the project

There is a gap in the literature in identifying one predominant leadership style and trait. The research will explore the hypothesis ‘does a dominant prevailing leadership style exist amongst female leaders in a semi-private organisation in Ireland’. The literature reviewed by the researcher identified multiple challenges and influencers. This research will analyse if there are a set of challenges and factors that have influenced female leaders. The study has the originality of combining three main elements they are leadership styles, the challenges and enablers for female leaders and exploring their relationship into gaining a wider insight into these topics thus contributing to the current knowledge and perhaps identifying gaps in the literature to date.

The research design

Case study

The methods of data collection

The data will be collected through semi-structured interviews which last approximately one hour each and will be recorded.

The research sample and sample size

The sampling techniques for this study will be purposive sampling. The participants will be restricted to those working at the semi-private organisation and who are in senior management roles. Participants will include ten senior managers, seven females and three males. The managers will be selected from the following functional areas – legal, marketing, finance, HR, IT, business process, property and facilities, regulatory affairs, engineering and general management.

The nature of any proposed pilot study

The aim of a pilot study will be to verify the appropriateness of the questions. Thus, the unclear or ambiguous questions can be avoided or reformulated in a better way. This step will allow the researcher to deal with a small amount of data and to analyse it before

undertaking the entire process. The pilot test will take place with five senior managers who are previous work colleagues of the researcher.

The methods of data analysis

The collected data will be transcribed and categorized in terms of the research questions and emergent themes. Specific interview questions will be organized and sequenced in order to answer the research questions. A coding method will be used to organize interview data into a limited number of themes and issues around these questions. Quotations will be selected from the interviews that highlight the themes and concepts.

Part C: Ethical Risk

Please identify any ethical issues which will arise and how you will address them.

None identified

Please indicate any risk of harm or distress to participants.

None identified

Please indicate how you will address this risk (e.g. debriefing procedures, etc.).

NA

Do the participants belong to any of the following vulnerable groups?

(Please tick all those involved).

- Children;
- The very elderly;
- People with an intellectual or learning disability
- Individuals or groups receiving help through the voluntary sector
- Those in a subordinate position to the researchers such as employees
- Other groups who might not understand the research and consent process
- Other vulnerable groups

How will the research participants in this study be selected, approached and recruited?

The research participants will be selected by their functional role, grade level and by their willingness to participate. They will be asked to participate via email.

What inclusion or exclusion criteria will be used?

Participants will be included based on their position within a team. Participants must be senior managers and from one of the functional areas - legal, marketing, finance, HR, IT, business process, property and facilities, regulatory affairs, engineering and general management.

How will participants be informed of the nature of the study and participation?

Participants will be informed via email and consent form.

What procedures will be used to document the participants' consent to participate?

Each participant will be asked to provide consent via a consent form.

If vulnerable groups are participating, what special arrangements will be made to deal with issues of informed consent/assent?

NA

Please include copies of any information letters and consent forms with the application.

Please indicate the form in which the data will be collected.

Identified Potentially Identifiable De-Identified

What arrangements are in place to ensure that the identity of participants is protected?

Participants will not be asked to provide any identifiable data such as name, age or security numbers. The researcher will keep these data strictly private and confidential and use them only regarding the actual research dissertation.

Please indicate any recording devices being used to collect data (e.g. audio/video).

Audio tape recording

Please describe the procedures for securing specific permission for the use of these recording devices in advance.

Written consent will be obtained from both the organisation and participants. Each participant will be required to complete a consent form for the use of the audio tape recordings prior to each interview.

Please indicate the form in which the data will be stored.

Identified Potentially Identifiable De-Identified

Who will have responsibility for the data generated by the research?

The researcher will have responsibility for the data generated.

Please describe the procedures of the storage and destruction of data.

The data will be stored on the researcher's personal drive which is password protected. When the dissertation will be assessed, the data will be destroyed.

Dissemination and Reporting

Please describe how the participants will be informed of dissemination and reporting (e.g. submission for examination, reporting, publications, presentations)?

Participants will be informed that the dissemination and reporting of data will be for the researcher's dissertation submission.

If any dissemination entails the use of audio, video and/or photographic records (including direct quotes), please describe how participants will be informed of this in advance.

Participants will be informed of the use of audio recording via a consent form and before the interview process commences.

Part E: Signed Declaration

I confirm that I have read the NCI Ethical Guidelines for Research with Human Participants, and agree to abide by them in conducting this research. I also confirm that the information provided on this form is correct.

Signature of Applicant __Sinead
Mangan_____

Date _____12th February 2018_____

Signature of Supervisor (where appropriate)

Date _____