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**Are we Breaking the *Glass Ceiling?* a Gendered
Analysis of a Chilean Company.**

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Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the International Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Acronyms

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion
ILO	International Labor Organization
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersexual
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineer, Math's
WEF	World Economic Forum

Abstract

This research aims to analyze difficulties that women face to access managerial positions taking the particular case of a Chilean company with an explicit commitment to gender equality to develop my analysis. Specifically, this research investigates the operationalization inside the organization of the glass ceiling's common causes: Gender biases, Queen Bee Phenomenon, Gendered-based language and Punishment to motherhood. Using interviews to managers as a main method and the principles of Grounded Theory to analyze the data, this research shows that even with Diversity and Inclusion Policies and a corporate structure that translates those policies into actions, micro-discriminations, gendered power relations, and male-dominated structures keep pushing women back from leadership positions in very subtle ways. Nevertheless, young female leaders, self-declared feminist, are more aware of the company's production and reproduction of gendered practices. In this regard, they developed some intra-gender solidarity strategies to challenge the status quo and promote more women in managerial positions.

Relevance to Development Studies

Usually, business and management researchers had co-opted studies related to women in managerial positions within the private sector. They tend to analyze the phenomenon under the efficiency and productivity perspective, seeing how productive a company would become if it accomplishes some women in managerial positions. However, literature had been scarce approaching the difficulties, facilitators, and strategies women develop to break through the glass ceiling.

According to ILO, a third of the world population is employed in the private sector. Of that, around 30% are women who spend 8 hours a day at work on average. Any change that we can make there could influence women's life. Therefore, companies are relevant actors to analyze from a feminist perspective and promote the transformations that development studies seek.

Keywords

Glass Ceiling, Diversity and Inclusion, Gender Biases, Queen Bee Phenomenon, Gender in private sector, Gatekeepers, Virtual Fieldwork.

Chapter 1: Setting the frame of the research

1.1 Introduction

This research analyzes the difficulties women face in accessing senior management positions within organizations, specifically in one private sector company with explicit gender equality declarations.

I am interested in using glass ceiling literature, which analyzes different causes that maintain women underrepresented in managerial positions. But also to observe which strategies they are developing to challenge it.

Also, I am considering these difficulties are produced and reproduced in the intersection with other social hierarchies. I will incorporate the intersectionality approach to observe how different categories such as socio-economic position age, motherhood, profession, and position within the company's pyramid determine access to managerial positions. I will pay special attention to which intersections operate as facilitators or obstacles, depending on the case.

1.2 Justification and relevance of this research

Studies of gender in organizations, institutional feminism, and institutional sociology have focused on analyzing the factors that allow/difficult private companies to change and adapt to gender equality agendas demanded by anti-discrimination laws and more critical consumers.

However, there is little literature (and I have not found any case study) that analyses the situation in companies that have already made this transition and have been implementing pro-gender equality actions. Have they managed to break the glass ceiling and allow more women to get into managerial positions? If so, how have they done it? If not, where do difficulties prevail? If we all agree on the diagnosis, why is the progress so slow?

In my five years working within the private sector developing Diversity and Inclusion (D&I onwards) programs, I could notice that some companies are investing a lot of resources (as time, professionals, and money) to advance gender equality. Companies developed some initiatives: Promote women in director roles (but often underrepresented), review the recruiting and hiring system to challenge the unconscious bias, or having compulsory D&I courses for all the employees. These initiatives seem to be successful, but they give the false sensation of moving forward when the data shows the contrary.

My motivation is to contribute with this research to move the fence towards a different level of reflection through gendered analysis lenses and improve women's experience within the organizational contexts.

1.3 Background to the proposed study

According to the latest Gender Gap report from the World Economic Forum (WEF), the Gender Gap in economic participation matters will take 257 years to close (WEF 2019)¹. Among the leading causes are the low female participation in the labor market and women's underrepresentation in managerial positions. According to data from Enterprise Surveys of the World Bank Group (2020), 55% of working-age women are effectively incorporated into the workplace. Only 36% of managerial positions are held by women.

This underrepresentation in managerial positions has tried to be explained in the business and management literature, coining concepts such as a *sticky floor* that refers to the difficulty women face in ascending the organizational pyramid, especially in the more female-dominated areas (Kee 2006: 409). Or *glass ceiling*, a metaphor used to analyze the slow access of women to decision-making positions. Some studies have concluded that this respond to the biases regarding women's inability to exercise effective leadership and surf the pressures of a managerial position (Kee 206: 409). However, some pro-gender equity companies indicate that they have affirmative measures to incorporate women into decision-making positions; still, they do not respond to calls to apply, or the headhunters do not find the applicants with the appropriate competencies. Literature has recently studied this phenomenon and baptized it as a *broken rung*, that is, "career ladder that disadvantages women starting with the first opportunity for promotion" (Watson 2020: 2).

There is no single answer to this phenomenon, and the explanation could change depending on many factors, such as industry, personnel composition, or country of operation.

1.3.1 The Chilean context

In the last Gender Gap report, Chile ranked 57 out of 144 countries. The best performance was in the educational dimension because primary and secondary school is compulsory. Over 90% of women access it. In terms of tertiary education, an average of 20,539 more women than men graduate each year. However, the paradox is that even when they are more educated, they enter the labor market less—only 47.3% versus 69.0% of male labor participation (INE, 2020).

¹ This is a measurement carried out yearly by the World Economic Forum since 2006 worldwide, it measures the performance of countries in relation to gender equality in 4 main dimensions: economic participation, health and well-being, political participation and access to education. With this, it provides an estimate of how many years would be left to close the gender gap.

Also, women earn 12.4% less than men, and this gap increases as the years of study increase, managing to earn 29.8% less than its male counterpart with bachelor's degrees (INE 2017). For this reason, the worst performance in the Gender Gap is in the 'Economic Participation' dimension, ranking Chile in 111th place.

The business sector has advanced slowly in these matters. Historically, they have considered that the only social role is to provide work and pay taxes. However, more critical consumers, anti-discrimination laws, and stricter international regulations have pushed gender equality as a business strategy.

1.3.2 The company context

To put the analysis in context, I will develop a company's characterization based on their website, sustainability report, D&I Policy, and interviewees' descriptions. I will paraphrase some details, or describe it in a very general way, to avoid tracking the company's name to protect the Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA).

This company is from Spain and works in the technology field; they have operations in over 18 countries with 24,500 professionals working globally. They have been in Chile since 1996, with more than 1,500 professionals working there. They offer business solutions, strategies, outsourcing, and technology consultancy to big companies in general. The structure is a typical organizational pyramid starting for the CEO, following for the Partners, Directors, Managers, Leaders, and Staff (consultants, juniors, and so on):

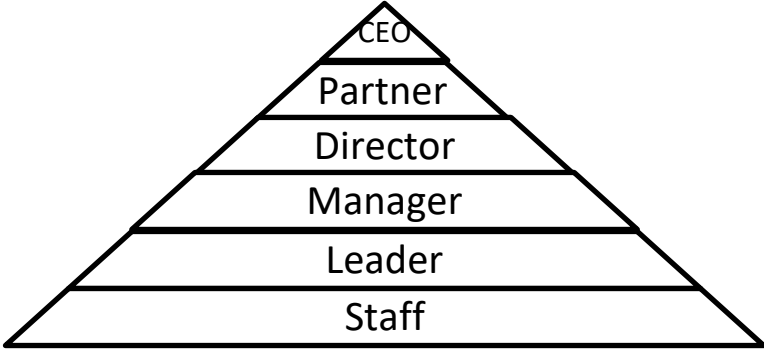


Figure 1: Organizational pyramid

They have 22% female representation, which is consistent with the percentage of women who graduated from STEM careers. Their distribution over the organizational chart is the next:

Table 1: Distribution of personnel by gender

Position	Men	%	Women	%
Partner	7	88%	1	12%
Director	23	82%	5	18%
Managers	30	68%	14	32%
Leaders	216	76%	68	24%
Staff	1014	79%	273	21%
TOTAL	1290	78%	361	22%

They have four different areas: Strategic Accounts (relation with the clients), Business Units (solutions development), Operations, and Business Support areas (Human Resources, Finances, and Communications).

Their career model has two possible paths: becoming a specialist (horizontal growing) or becoming an executive (vertical growing). According to them, there is no salary difference between one approach or another, and each professional is free to pick the path that fits better in their career plan. In any case, the organization will give them the tools and opportunities to achieve their goals. But how do they define their purpose for the year and their achievement? They have a very particular model based on the “growth mindset” theory². With that, they evaluate the person's evolution, its ability to learn, grow, and solve problems. Growth is more rewarded than the achievement of particular goals related to efficiency. Each professional set their own goals at the beginning of the year and review their working plan with its team. At the end of the year, they evaluate at 360° if they achieve their goals or not³. With that, they define who gets a promotion or a salary raise.

In 2016 they developed a D&I policy identifying five priority groups: Young professionals, Women, Migrants, Ethnic groups, and people with disabilities⁴. It is interesting to notice that there is no mention of race, sexual orientation, religions, or socioeconomic background in the definition of diversity and inclusion.

² This was developed by Dr. Carol Dweck and in summary, she studied that the mindset regarding to beliefs and intelligence could be changed at any age, so they develop some techniques to improve skills of people based in neuroplasticity. It has become a very popular concept related to career development in the Anglo-Saxon world.

³ 360° evaluation means that a professional is evaluated for its supervisor and supervised, but it also evaluated its supervisor and supervised, in that way everyone gets feedback from everyone.

⁴ They call in this way the “minority groups”, and they define its priority through a survey where they asked to the workers “which groups do you think should be priority for the company?”

1.4 Research objectives and question

This research aims to generate new knowledge regarding women's difficulties in accessing senior management positions in Chile. I will be taking a transnational private company related to the STEM industry as a field of study. In other words, I would like to contribute to the current body of knowledge concerning the problem embedded in a gendered social system.

To achieve this objective, the central research question will be:

How do gender notions and gendered practices within the company determine women's access to senior management positions?

Sub questions:

1. What gender biases are found to create specific meanings dominant over other meanings regarding women in leadership positions?
2. How are women in leadership positions assimilating/challenging dominant corporate male-structure?
3. How is motherhood being valued by the company?
4. Which are the characteristics of the women who are promoted?

1.5 Limitations of the research

One of the limitations that I see in my research is the realization of virtual interviews, in which it can be more complex to establish rapport. Therefore, the information obtained could be partial. It may also be a limitation in the current context of teleworking. There are more distractions for the interviewees (children, housework, stress), which could harm my results. To get around these difficulties, I think it is essential that the executives' participation be voluntary, even when the company is interested in this study and may intend to push some profiles over others.

Another possible limitation, or risk, is that the company continually wants to negotiate its interests, pressing for only certain people to be interviewed (who have a greater affinity with the official discourse) or for the results to be presented in a way that benefits them. To avoid this is essential to remind me who I am accountable, to whom this research seeks to help, and what this knowledge is for (a point that I will develop in the next section).

Another limitation is that my counterpart inside the company will give me access to interviews and documents that I will later analyze. Therefore, she could bias the selection of these sources with her ideology and positionality. In this regard, I must be aware that there are silenced voices and undisclosed documents. I hope to incorporate the reflection on this in my later analysis.

This study is also limited to a particular company, so the results cannot be considered general and must always be interpreted in this specific context.

1.6 Ethical and political choices

In this research, I seek to position myself from a feminist standpoint. That means I will understand the knowledge always located in a historical and temporal context; therefore, I could only interpret it in that specific context; and I will use women's stories as my primary source of knowledge (Harding 2005: 221-222).

I recognize that basing my research on professional upper-middle-class women's life stories embedded in a private formal workplace can be risky because they are not stereotypically marginalized women. However, from my experience working with them in the private sector, I can assure that, even with their privileges, they are marginalized within the organizations dominated by male leaders. Their stories must be told and analyzed from a feminist perspective to show how the corporate world is co-opted by a dominant (masculine) ideology, which mutually constitutes itself with the individuals who are making the decisions, leaving women (and "others") relegated to secondary spaces. It is a story of never-ending with concrete implications in women's lives.

I find it especially interesting to collect these stories within a pro-gender equality context since the contradictions between political correctness and gender biases can be seen more clearly. While equity is promoted discursively, different mechanisms, apparently objective, operate to hinder this practice goal. From the feminist standpoint, I seek to amplify women's voices and discover the knowledge they have cultivated by living these experiences from the margins (Brooks 2011: 19) to reveal these contradictions from there to contribute to subverting the power relations that keep them in secondary positions.

Regarding the ethical concerns, I might experience that my key informant within the organization does not share the internal instruments I need because it is sensitive to company information. To counter this, we will sign a confidentiality agreement, and I will suggest changing the company's name and the interviewee's one. In case the resistance persists, I will have to carry out the analysis using available tools such as the sustainability report and its integrated memory (which is less open in the information).

1.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the frame of my research. Establishing the justification and the context in which it was carried out. I presented how my research interest translates into theoretical questions and sub-questions, which guided my whole process. Also, I reflect on the limitations of this project and different strategies to counter those challenges. Finally, the ethical and political choices were discussed, showing how this could influence my analysis and reflections.

Chapter 2: Methods and data analysis strategies

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explain the methods used to collect and analyze the data and the different challenges encountered in my virtual field. In section 2.2, I introduce Grounded Theory as my primary method. Section 2.3 discusses my research questions' operationalization. Section 2.4 review how I collected and analyzed the data to answer them. Section 2.5 finishes this chapter with personal reflections of my encounters in the virtual field in COVID-19 times, which shaped my entire research.

2.2 Methods

My research has a qualitative approach and the primary method used was Grounded Theory. This method's main idea is to discover the problem from the actors' perspective and how they perceive it (Keddy et al. 1996:451). In this context, it is a sociological shift from theory verification to theory generation in an inductive way (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Nevertheless, the first generation of Grounded Theory, led by Glaser and Strauss, kept a nexus with positivist schools. They tried to make the qualitative data “objective” through the analysis process following several steps. First, the researcher has to code the qualitative data through an open coding process, interpret what participants wanted to say or mean with their words and phrases, and assign a code. After, the researcher needs to be aware of which codes are iterating more in different discourses, which are denser and could translate as analytical “categories” (Charmaz 2006; Strauss 1987). This procedure assumes the researchers are a neutral and passive observer; therefore, their positionality does not interfere with data analysis. Even pursuit universality of the emerging theories to understand social reality as a “singular” one (Macleaod 2020).

It was problematic for some scholars who started to develop a turning point in this method from a constructivist perspective. Charmaz (2006,2014) is one of the scholars who had theorized more about this turning point. For her, Constructivist Grounded Theory assumes that social reality is “multiple, processual and constructed” (Charmaz 2014:13). Hence, the reflection about the researcher's positionality is crucial. It challenges the idea of “objectivity” and shows that all data analysis is always “temporary, partial, provisional and perspectival-themselves situated historically and geographically”(Clarke 2012:395).

I found myself closer to this approach because dialogues better with my feminist ethical concerns and standpoints. Constant reflexivity about my role

of researcher embedded in social reality was part of my methods. I assumed that I was learning through the research process (Haraway 1997); I was open to different emerging concepts and categories that could change my research proposal. Therefore, a mutual constitution process between my participants and me happened. I had to be flexible to adapt my process to make it more coherent with my feminist standpoint and contribute with this research to emancipatory transformations of women's lives (Kushner & Morrow 2003:37). As Clarke (2012:393) pointed out, "this is a much more modest than an arrogant approach of production of knowledge," being conscious that I did not have all the answers beforehand.

2.3 Data analysis

With this method in mind, I constructed my interview questions to guide the conversations. This guideline was the operationalization of my research questions into everyday life aspects. In other words, the translation of my theoretical questions into mundane ones.

The first sub-question was: "What gender biases are found to create certain meanings dominant over other meanings regarding women in leadership positions?" Considering gender stereotypes as social constructions that describe and prescribe which attributes ought to have each gender (Shields 2005; Ritter & Yoder 2004), I asked the interviewees about differences and similarities in female and male leadership and which attributes are rewarded by the company. To complement those answers, I asked them about their professional careers and if they think some characteristics were more valuable than others in their promotions process. Here it was interesting to compare different perspectives from males in managerial positions with females.

To answer the second sub-question: "How are women in leadership positions assimilating/challenging dominant corporate male-structure?" I asked my female interviewees what strategies they adopted to be promoted and access to those male-dominant spaces. I think their stories are powerful and very clear about how they are breaking through the glass ceiling.

For question number 3: "How is motherhood being valued by the company?" I asked my interviewees if they think there was a particular obstacle for mothers to become leaders. I looked into differences in the discourses of males, females without children, and females with children.

Finally, to answer question number 4: "Which are the characteristics of the women who are promoted?" I asked the interviewees if they found some common characteristics in women promoted, like relational skills, leadership skills, or similar physical characteristics. All these discourses were transcribed and analyzed through the MAXQDA software using open codification

following Strauss's (1987) procedure. In the whole analysis process, I continually reflected on my positionality and how this could affect my interpretation of the results.

2.4 Data collection

The interviews were carried out virtually -given the limitations resulting from COVID-19 - between 28th July and 4th September in an online setting (Microsoft Teams), recorded, transcribed, and codified with MAXQDA.

To get access to the interviewees, I worked closely with a counterpart from a well-known organization (we were part of the same organization between years 2015-2017). She was responsible for the company's sustainability and gender issue, so she had a rich view of my research topic, facilitating my work.

She selected and scheduled the interviews using the criteria that I gave to her: people of different areas, positions, ages, civil status, and nationalities. Regarding women interviewees, I asked her if it was possible to count on mothers and childless women.

In the first round of interviewees (six in total), I noticed that she picked the “allies” ones, people who were much closer to her job and ideology, and also from “support areas⁵.” In that context, and to add other points of view, I asked her if it was possible to schedule more interviews with people not so ally on this topic and from “core” areas. With this, I got a second round of interviewees (five in total).

All the names were changed to protect their identities according to our Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA). The resume of participants is in the next table:

⁵ The organization distinguish between the “core” areas and the “support” ones. The first are more related to the business and its success (as sales and consultancy), the second ones are more related to support the “core business” (as HR or communications).

Table 2: Resume of interviewees

Name	Age	Nationality	Years in the company	Children	Role	Gender
Nick	51	Chilean	21	Yes	Partner	Male
Serena	33	Brazilian	2	No	Director	Female
Marta	38	Chilean	8.5	Yes	Manager	Female
June	35	Venezuelan	4	Yes	Leader	Female
Moira	32	Chilean	2	No	Processes Technician	Female
Fred	47	Chilean	5.5	No	Director	Male
Joseph	50	Spanish	10	Yes	Partner	Male
Rita	42	Chilean	1.5	Yes	Director	Female
Luke	45	Chilean	1.5	Yes	Director	Male
Elizabeth	39	Bolivian	10	Yes	Manager	Female
Lydia	33	Chilean	2	No	Leader	Female

All interviews were semi-structured, conducted in Spanish and lasted 51 minutes on average. I record all of them, so I had the opportunity to go back to them and watch some non-verbal expressions which could be interpreted and enrich my analysis.

An external researcher based in Chile transcribed the interviews⁶. I asked her if she could send me a brief note about what caught her attention, which concepts were overrepresented and missing while transcribing. That helped me to triangulate my theoretical framework and my analysis with her “fresh eyes” as an outsider of this research process. Some observations were consistent with mine, and others illuminated things that for my closeness with the subject I was not seeing.

2.5 Personal reflections from the virtual field in COVID-19 times

During my virtual fieldwork, I face many experiences, and I think it is essential to reflect on them. Starting from the controlled virtual setting through which I did my interviews, my relationship with my gatekeeper, and the pandemic context. The primary motivation for writing this section is my realization that several lessons should be laid out to benefit future researchers who could face

⁶ She was a classmate in my undergrad and she have 5 year of experience in research work.

the same conditions. To help the lecture, I divided these reflections into subsections.

2.5.1 The gatekeepers' role and their influence in social research

There are different and constant negotiations during the research processes. These could be helpful or harmful to the research outcome. One of these negotiations is about access to critical information and essential participants. In Social Sciences, particularly during fieldwork, whether it is virtual or presential, gatekeepers are important mediators in the process (Eide & Allen 2005 cited in McAreavery & Das 2013:114).

Gatekeepers are usually individuals or institutions that can either grant access to participants/information, or block it (De Laine 2000, cited in Crowhurst & Keneddy-macfoy 2013). They have a particular interest in opening the gate, and grant researchers access into organizations/communities. One of the common interest, is waiting for reciprocity, or in other words, how the research could benefit them (Broadhead & Rist 1976; Clark 2011). Also, they maintain their credibility with the community, ensuring that the researcher will not harm or threaten this relationship, but legitimize it with their findings (Clark 2011:491; McAreavery & Das 2013: 116). They could have some biases related to what would be a “good” research or a “bad” one in this context. That directly affects the researcher’s access to information.

The researcher’s relation with the gatekeeper is continuously negotiated; therefore, access should never be taken for granted. The researcher should analyze this negotiation as historically situated and aware of the different social and cultural processes representing power relations (Crowhurst & Keneddy-macfoy 2013:458; McAreavery & Das 2013:115). There are ways to standardize the negotiation process, for example, through confidentiality or non-disclosure agreements. Such instruments set some conditions in which information should be treated, like granting anonymity to the organization/community. That would help to gain the gatekeeper’s trust. However, as some scholars pointed out, researchers are relatively uncontrolled constituents setting themselves in highly structured environments (as companies, in my case) (Clark 2011: 488). Therefore, granting anonymity would neither stabilize the researchers’ position in the field nor solve their ethical dilemmas. The reasons are simply due to crucial issues concerning the dynamism of research vs. the fixity of standard agreements (McAvery & Das 2013:116).

In my case, the gatekeepers constituted a compelling part of my research process, and I was not so reflective about this when I started my planning. I considered them a pragmatic issue that could be solved by standard agreements, but not as a theoretical one (Campbell et al. 2006:117 cited in

Crowhurst & Kennedy-macfoy 2013:457) with power, control, interest, and personal goals. I was not prepared to go through lengthy and tiring negotiations that consumed most of my allocated time and eventually yielded enormous damage to my data. In the following, I will be describing and analyzing each of these negotiations, and I hope this could help future researchers not be as naïve as I was.

2.5.2 First negotiation with company 1:

The first part of my research plan was to have access to a company with D&I policies and practices. I had in my mind a Spanish one who works in renewable energy and had become a referent in D&I recently. This company has operations in Chile, and there I met the person in charge of Sustainability. I told her about my research plans. She was very excited to help me with my thesis because they wanted to analyze their own women's leadership program to increase women's promotion into managerial positions. So, my research and their needs seemed to be a perfect match.

She introduced me to the Global D&I Manager, a mid-age Spanish female engineer. She was working in the infrastructure area and recently shifted her career path into D&I. I told the engineer about my plans, and she agreed to work with me. I will analyze this leadership program from a feminist perspective and highlight the impacts, improvements, and gaps. This plan would have helped her enhance her legitimacy in the new role⁷.

The first negotiation with the engineer was about access to sensitive data, such as women's promotions and trajectories within the company. She told me that we needed to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement to protect the company's reputation. I agreed and immediately got the proper form from the Institute of Social Studies (herein ISS), signed it, and sent it to her. I waited for three weeks, hoping that she would send me her signature, but she did not. During a crucial time within the ISS, students had to submit their research design at a specific date. I sent her an email requesting her to clarify her position regarding the agreed-upon plan. She responded late, after submitting my design and after having my first seminar done. She made it clear that it would be impossible to continue working together because she discovered that women did not get any promotion after their graduation upon opening the program data. She anticipated a "bad" result of my research and a risk for her position within the company because I was an uncontrolled element (Clark 2011):

⁷ This was in January 2020

“Also, because you are coming from academia, we won’t have control over your results and publications. If you want to do this research as a consultant at some moment, we would be more than glad to work with you.”⁸

After four months of planning, negotiations, and preparations, I was shocked because everything disintegrated. I began analyzing her decision. I thought she perhaps perceived me as an outsider that may harm the company and, therefore, did not want to risk her position. I understood her critical situation. The next step was to find another company that could be closer to my background and knowledge. I went back to my Chilean contact base and found out that a friend of mine was in charge of Sustainability in one of the biggest technology firms which also had a D&I policies and practices. I thought it would be simpler to get access to sensitive information and critical participants with my friend.

2.5.3 Second negotiation with company 2: Bias of selection and internal contingencies

At the forefront of this section, I must introduce my relationship with my friend. I will use the pseudonym Lydia as a way to protect her identity. She is a 33-year single professional woman without children. She has worked in the Chilean company since 2018, being in charge of the Corporate Social Responsibility area. She was in charge of developing the D&I initiatives and everything related to establishing alliances and coordinating corporate volunteers and sustainability initiatives. We met in 2015 when we worked for the same organization.

She granted me access to high-level managers after signing the same Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) that I had developed with the earlier Spanish company. To Lydia’s credit, she helped with writing the agreement in such a way to avoid any interference in my research process. The company did not make any comments on the NDA. For Lydia and I, this meant that we could start planning the interviews.

The interviews were scheduled by Lydia very fast (between the last week of July and mid-August). I was impressed by her way of timetabling them because, in my experience, it takes a much longer time to get access to a high-level manager’s schedule. However, I later understood that she picked her closest internal allies for interviews. She was also transitioning out of the company at the end of August 2020. It was evident then that these two contingencies rushed the whole process.

After (online) meeting and recording the first five interviews, I realized that the interviewees’ selection was not random. They were carefully selected to present the image that the company wants to promote itself (I will come back

⁸ Off the record conversation handle on May 29th

to this in a minute). Being a close friend with Lydia allowed me to ask her whether and how I would access other leaders who were not “so much aligned” with my research topic. She agreed to schedule another round of interviews, but this took a little longer to plan. When the interviewees agreed to meet with me, she said:

“This is weird. They do not usually answer this fast. It could be because they think you are a significant researcher. I may have exaggerated your credentials a bit to give you more importance.”

At that moment, she and I laughed at her way, presenting me as “the expert.” But later, I realized that it might have affected the way interviewees answering my questions (I will reflect on that later).

On August 24th, when I was almost finishing my second round of interviews, Lydia told me she was leaving the company next week because she got a better offer. Since March, she was in the transitioning process, but her next role was frozen because of COVID-19 and was reactivated just now. This information was brand new to me. I immediately felt that now another door closed.

I had mixed feelings: I was glad because I was able to do and record 11 planned interviews, but was worried because with Lydia leaving the company, I would not be able to schedule any more interviews. However, Lydia reassured me that senior managers were aware of my research and would help me with whatever issue I need. That assurance did not materialize because when she left, she put my contact with a junior person, who has little influence on the company. For me, that was a clear signal of “we’re done.”

2.5.4 The outsider vs. the insider perspective

Another contextual issue that I think affected my data collection was the fact that I was introduced as a “master student specialized in gender in the Netherlands who already worked four years in Diversity and Inclusion with the private sector.” That put me both as an “outsider” and as an “expert.” I understood that Lydia did this to facilitate my research and present me as a legitimate researcher to the executives. How this presentation impacted my interaction with the research participants? It was evident that many of them assumed that I already knew what they were talking about. I received statements like: “well, but you should know this,” or “this could be repetitive for you.” I tried to play the role of “innocent student” by reminding them that I know nothing about their company or that I am not informed about their stories. But these attempts from my side just did the opposite; they increased some interviewees’ suspicions. So, instead of helping my case, they began

questioning my studies and experience. I also think that they may start strategizing not to let me go further into more sensitive information.

I believe that they eventually gave me their version of a “politically correct” discourse. That is because I am now comparing the data I am getting from these participants with my previous experience in the company when I was a D&I practitioner. In my previous experience, women were much bolder and had much more profound knowledge about their path towards managerial positions and the obstacles they must cross to get there. I am also comparing their “politically correct” discourse with my current experience as a D&I intern in a Dutch company. Here and now in the Netherlands, I get more factual information about the difficulties, processes, areas, and even managers they must face when planning to have women in managerial positions.

According to (Chung & Monroe 2003), we must call this “a desirability bias” from the studied company. They wanted to present themselves more as gender-aware and inclusivity than they are. Understandably, they wanted to show the bright side of their efforts in embracing gender equality within this perspective. But with my experience, I could notice all inconsistencies in their answers.

2.5.5 The virtual setting and its limitations

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I could not go back to Chile to collect the data. Instead, I did virtual interviews through Microsoft Teams. One facilitator was all the participants had access to the internet and used it because they were working with it since lockdowns started. But, as an outsider, I had some limitations.

First of all, Lydia took the lead in scheduling all the meetings. I was an invitee; thus, all recorded sessions with the interviewees remained in her Teams account (not mine). The participants knew that her was recording the sessions. If I were in their position, I would also be very vigilant in what I say or express. I requested Lydia to record the meeting from my own Teams, but she said that is not possible because of firewalls and security issues⁹. Hence, I had no options to avoid having this major obstacle to honest and perhaps revealing interviews.

Second of all, I could not record the meeting by myself with all the security and privacy issues. So, each time I had to ask the participant to do it for me. When we finished, the participant had to send the record to Lydia; she compressed it and sent it to me through WeTransfer¹⁰. This whole process of

⁹ I want to remember the company studied is one of the biggest Technology Consultant in the world, so they are very picky with cybersecurity and privacy because is part of their core business.

¹⁰ Is a webpage that allows you to send heavy files, which mail doesn't support.

total control by the administration over the participants' input made it apparent that none of them would speak their minds since everything would be seen, read, and watched by Lydia. For example, the red signal saying “recording” on the screen while I was interviewing was a constant reminder that they are being monitored and thus must watch out. I remember talking to some interviewees. And when they were about to say some out of the “desirable or the politically correct discourse,” they looked at the red signal and immediately stopped what they were about to say. One of the participants said it out loud: “oh, but this is being recorded [gap of silence]” and then shifted the topic. Another said the same but later tried to smooth it out.

And third, the virtual settings are extra tricky to make observations that we take for granted when we do actual fieldwork. Just think of the kind of rich data one would get by making sense of how the offices are distributed (on gender basis? On an age basis? Ranking basis? etc.). In actual fieldwork, one would be helped by listening to small talks between various employees while waiting for the interview; how they interact? What kind of symbols do they display? How hierarchy is assumed and configured? etc. In these new virtual interviews, I only had a screen to see the participant’s face. I cannot even make sense of the background because they blur it. These are only a few issues we lose when doing online research. But they constitute a significant loss of data that could enrich our research and analysis.

2.5.6 Context of the participants

Finally, I think it is essential to set the context of these interviews. In Chile, people were in total lockdown since March because of high numbers of COVID-19 cases. That meant people could go out once a day, only for essential needs (visit a pharmacy or hospital, walk pets, buy groceries). People were required to apply for a particular permit through the state police website. By April 2020, cases kept rising; hence, instead of getting daily permits, the government limited them to twice a week.

All my interviewees have been conducted from home since then. I could see some emotional wear in their difficulties to finish phrases or their lack of concentration due to noises in the house or because children were around. Most of the participants began the interview with an apology for the “look” (much more “house/sport” clothes than “office” ones) or even for their lack of energy, saying things like: “I’m much more energetic, but I’m just drained” or “working for home is nice, but also very demanding, you do not have the same time limits as in-office setting. It’s like you should always be available”. These specific conditions affected my data to the point that I felt a bit guilty for pushing exhausted people to show themselves on a camera and answering questions that could be of no concern to them at all.

I must close this section with an important observation. Almost all my interviewees made it pretty clear that the pandemic changed all company's priorities. Gender is looked at differently after the pandemic. It is now effectively in a frozen state.

2.5.7 Main lessons

I realize now that I was too naïve to think that signing a Non-Disclosure Agreement (including keeping the company's name in total anonymity) would help me get more in-depth data. Participants were very passionate when they told me about previous experiences outside the company, but when we were discussing the company's plans and strategies, everything became rosy or improvable. There was, understandably, no negative comments or complaints.

I kept questioning my data; what if the company is doing well compared to participants' previous work? The (off the record) answer came from Lydia. She told me that even though the company is advancing in this topic, there is still a lot of internal resistance.

I now realized the mistake I had when I thought that I would have –as a researcher—the same amount of privilege as an insider. I mistakenly thought that I could pick the people I could interview to unveil all those micro-discriminations and subtle barriers. But in reality, Lydia's criteria won and her selection of “correct people” to talk to.

As an insider, I thought people would treat me as an “advisor” to help them overcome their failures. But in fact, I was treated as a “researcher,” which entails their presentation of the company in an image full of beautiful color. When I talked with Lydia about this, she responded with a surprised face: “but Camila, you know that these people will always want to appear good in the pictures!” And yes, I knew it. In Chile, we used to say: “companies only want to show their best recipe.” For better or for worse, I previously had access to the messy kitchens, and I could now identify that what they were showing to me was not 100% authentic.

Finally, I think Chilean private sector companies are cautious with what they share and where they share. In my experience, most of the critical conversations didn't happen in formal settings but in cafes or over the dinner table. I must take as a life lesson that I was treated as an outsider in a totally restricted and entirely controlled virtual setting.

2.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I resumed the method I picked to collect my data and the strategies used for that collection. How I analyzed my data was also discussed.

The main takeaway from this chapter is how some decisions in the field can shape your research, restricting the information you could get for further analysis. Also, some particular difficulties that I did not expect because of the pandemic context were highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter developed a bibliographic discussion between the main currents, explaining the glass ceiling phenomenon. Starting by Diversity and Inclusion Management perspective. After, I reviewed four main theoretical perspectives to approach the glass ceiling persistence: Gender stereotypes and leadership bias, Gender-based language, Queen Bee Phenomenon, and Punishment to motherhood. I finished my theoretical framework introducing intersectionality to analyze how other categories based on power relations, such as professions, socio-economic position, and physical characteristics hindered or facilitated breaking through the glass ceiling.

3.2 Diversity and Inclusion management¹¹

Greater globalization, laws against discrimination, and more social scrutiny over corporations have increased the need to develop Diversity and Inclusion management programs in the private sector. The main focus of these programs had been to increase the representation of women and other marginalized communities (Herdman & Mcmillan, 2010; Sánchez 2011, Mor Barak 2015) and/or to enhance the sense of belonging of these groups (Mor Barak & Cherin 1998; Shore et al. 2018).

This is the distinction that scholars and practitioners had trying to make between Diversity and Inclusion. Usually, both concepts are blended into one, but the main difference is the scope, according to the literature. Diversity in workplaces is understood as the division of workers into categories that have some commonality and could affect (positive or negative) access to opportunities within the organization (Mor Barak 2014 cited in Shore et al. 2018:176). More diversity is not equal to positive outcomes all the time; if organizations do not have active management, it could increase conflicts, turnover, and worst performance and cohesion (Herring 2009; Herdman & Mcmillan 2010; Shore et al. 2018).

Here is where Inclusion enters, understood as different processes and actions that allow workers from the margins to feel valued in their uniqueness. For example, they have equal access to information, the ability to participate in

¹¹ To facilitate the lecture I will use onwards the acronym D&I to refers to Diversity and Inclusion.

and influence the decision-making process (Herdman&Mcmillan 2010; Mor Barak& Cherin 1998; Mor Barak 2015; Shore et al. 2018).

To sum up, Diversity is about increasing the representation of people, which is different from whatever organizations consider mainstream. The perception of what is mainstream could change depending on the industry, country, even the city where companies operate. For the other side, inclusion is about actions that companies implement to increase the sense of belonging, value, and uniqueness of the diverse workforce. Some examples are creating Diversity and Inclusion Policies, training in inclusive leadership, quotas in the promotion process, and measurement of perceived inclusion.

3.3 Break the *glass ceiling*: one of the trends in D&I management.

In 2015, Mckinsey&Company released a report called “Diversity Matters,” which measured between 2010-2013 the relation between the higher presence of women and ethnic diversity in decision-making and financial performance of 366 public companies from the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Latin America¹². The results showed a positive correlation, meaning companies with higher gender and ethnic diversity were 15% more likely to have financial returns above their national industry median (Hunt et al. 2015). It shows how D&I could be related to better productivity, setting organizational management trends: breaking the glass ceiling to achieve better financial performance.

Even though the glass ceiling is a concept coined since the early '80s by the literature, in the last five years, there has been an explosion of studies trying to explain how it occurs and what companies should do to break it. This metaphor is used to describe an invisible barrier for women and minority groups, which decreases their access into managerial positions (Weyer 2007:483). As it is subtle, scholars have been trying to explain where this phenomenon is rooted. I could identify two main currents: the individual perspective and the structural one.

The individual perspective assumes that the glass ceiling is not sustained in external barriers but psychological ones. For example, women tend to be shy, avoid risks, try to solve others' problems instead of thinking on their career path, and focus on too many topics (such as family and domestic work),

¹² Mckinsey&Company is the first organization working in management consulting, was founded in 1926 in USA and became a referent for public, private and social sector. They research over the world different trends related to sustainability, social responsibility, human resources, and recently, D&I.

making them lose promotion opportunities (Austin 2001 Shambaugh 2008). Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, has become a symbol of this trend. Installing the concept that women have to “lean in” to progress in their careers, negotiating better, asking for help, and conquering spaces that are typically male-dominated (Sandberg 2013).

The other perspective is the structural one, which argues that the glass ceiling is more related to systematic obstacles integrated into institutional structures and social environments (Wright&Baxter 2000:814). These obstacles could be visible as direct discrimination in promotion decisions or invisible as unconscious bias related to leadership, gender stereotypes, and power dynamics (Steffens et al. 2019; Rivers&Barnett 2013). I use this perspective because it helps me unveil the difficulties women face to get into managerial positions instead of spotlighting women as the only responsible for gender inequalities.

3.3.1 Gender Stereotypes and leadership bias

One of the explanations for the glass ceiling is the persistence of gender stereotypes within workplaces. In 1975, through quantitative research, Schein showed that successful managerial skills, attitudes, and characteristics are commonly related to males than to females. So, they are much more likely to receive a promotion (Schein 1975:344). It came from a very binary gender construction, where males seem to be associated with reason and females with emotion (Shield 2005:5).

If we go further with these gender stereotypes, many studies showed that females are more related to communal characteristics as nurturing, caring and sensitive, and male with being ambitious, aggressive, assertive, and direct (Brescoll & Uhlmann 2008; Elsesser & Lever 2011; Shields 2005). This perspective has two possible outcomes within companies: awareness actions, making explicit the differences, and embracing it. Or blindness actions, trying to downplay these differences, keep the idea of “everyone equal” (Martin&Phillips 2019). In any of both scenarios, there is a persistence in the stereotyping.

Stereotypes work in two ways: a) descriptive way, more associated with what people think about gender, but also in a b) prescriptive way related to what attributes each gender ought to have (Ritter & Yoder 2004:187; Shields 2005:10). It means each gender has some expectations to fulfill. In workplaces, we can find these two stereotypes translate into biases, having substantial impacts.

Descriptive bias occurs when women leaders are stereotyped as less able to exercise leadership as men because they have predominantly communal

characteristics incongruent with leadership (Shields 2005:12; Elsesser & Lever 2011:1571). And prescriptive bias occurs when female leaders adopt “male” characteristics and are evaluated less favorably than their male peers (Brescoll & Uhlmann 2008:268; Ritter & Yoder 2004:191).

In this context, women are facing a double-bind. If they have communal characteristics they are not seen as a potential leader. Still, if they adopt “male” characteristics to progress, they are evaluated less favorably because they are not congruent with prescriptive stereotypes (Brescoll & Uhlmann 2008; Elsesser & Lever, 2011).

3.3.2 Gender-based language

Another explanation for the glass ceiling is related to the gendered use of the word in public spaces. A full body of research showed that women have a different public speaking style than men, shaped by gender biases.

For example, according to Palomares's (2009) research, women tend to use more tentative language. He observed more use of hedges (i.e., maybe, probably, kind of), disclaimers (i.e., perhaps I'm wrong, I think this is correct), and tag questions (i.e., isn't it?, Right?, What do you think?), making women communication less direct than men. Individuals perceived this as a lack of power, competence, and intelligence (Palomares 2009:540).

Women who dedicated themselves to listen more than to speak are better evaluated, seen as competent as men who speak more (Brescoll 2011:637), because they fulfill the gender stereotype and align with their expected nurturing characteristics. Conversely, if they talk longer than males, they are seen as less suitable for leadership positions (Ibid:635).

That could lead to what Hancock and Rubin (2015) identified in their study: women are more interrupted than men when they speak (Hancock & Rubin 2015:56)—being equally interrupted by men and women. Again, I could relate this to the stereotypical idea of women-listeners/nurturers that reinforce just one type of public space behavior. The use of the word seems to be reserved for males because it is aligned with the idea of being less emotional, more direct, and assertive. Those characteristics seem to be valuable in an organizational context.

According to Tannen (1995), “people in powerful positions tend to reward linguistic styles similar to their own,” being more likely to hear the ideas in their “own words,” even if it is a woman who is giving them. The important thing for her is to adopt this direct, assertive, and non-emotional linguistic style, entering again in the double bind of adopting “male” characteristics. This particular strategy is what Mavin & Williams called “microaggressions,” or little actions that are embedded in organizations, maintaining specific order,

and being invisible for most of the people (Marvel & Williams 2014:443), making it very difficult to confront them.

3.3.3 Queen Bee Phenomenon

A third explanation for the glass ceiling is what scholars have called the Queen Bee Phenomenon. That is a strategy used by women who seek to access managerial positions dominated by men. Consist of assimilating the male culture and embodied in different ways, for example:

1. Adopting physical and psychological leadership's characteristics associated with men (Using suits, short hair, flat shoes, and acting more dominant and direct).
2. Adopting physical and psychological distance from less successful women within the organization.
3. Supporting and legitimating the existing gender hierarchy (Duguid 2011: 113; Derks et al. 2016: 457).

These usually occur when expressions of sexism are more implicit, discouraging women from engaging in collective actions that challenge the structure (Ellemers & Barreto 2009 cited in Derks et al. 2016: 459), thus making them opting for individual efforts to progress.

This phenomenon usually appears in organizations that have a majority of men in decision-making positions. It occurs because the minority group (in this case, women) observes that those who progress in the organization are linked with masculine traits. In contrast, stereotypical female attributes, like being kind, sympathetic, and understanding (Heilman & Okimoto 2007: 81), are less awarded promotions (Hoyt & Simon 2011: 144). Therefore, these women who seek to progress in the organization start to adopt stereotypical male leadership characteristics.

Heilman & Okimoto (2007) conclude that women have a double mandate when exercising leadership: managing the delicate balance between being competent and communal. Those who are mothers have a small advantage over those who are not since their caregiving characteristics are assumed (Heilman & Okimoto 2007: 92). In this context, some scholars have agreed that this assimilation process is more a consequence of gender discrimination than a cause to reproduce gender inequality (Derks et al., 2010, 2016).

Mavin and Williams (2008, 2013, 2014) had developed a counter-argument to Queen Bee Phenomenon. They claim that it is a harmful construction used by organizational individuals to blame individual women who just want to survive through the organization. But they forget about the structural incentives that force them to behave in that way (Mavin & Williams

2013:442) and erase the whole idea of intra-gender solidarity by focusing only on competition strategies (Mavin & Williams 2014:191).

According to their research, women can engage in sisterhood and solidarity but just with women of their same status (Mavin & Williams 2013). While with other women of less position, they could employ competition strategies. Some examples are: “competing for scarce resources (i.e., powerful men’s acceptance), engaging in exclusionary tactics indirectly or unconsciously which stigmatize, exclude or ostracize others (women), and/or altering her (own) appearance.”(Mavin & Williams 2014:442)

To sum up, I need to be aware of this label's use through my analysis (Queen Bee Phenomenon) because it could hide some intra-gender solidarity strategies that women are using to challenge the male-dominant structure.

3.3.4 Punishment to motherhood

A fourth argument to explain the glass ceiling is related to motherhood and the incompatibility with decision-making positions. Although there is a social discourse that gives motherhood an essential role for society's functioning, in the workplace, it is perceived as a harmful interference (Riquelme 2011: 79). Some studies have shown that maternity leaves negatively affect women's career development, delaying their promotions and increasing the wage gap (Cabeza et al 2011; Riquelme 2011; Morgenroth & Heilman 2017; Levitt, 2018;).

In Chile, 34.9% of the complaints made to the Labor Direction are related to maternity’s discrimination (Riquelme 2011: 12); these discriminations are manifested as harassment, attacks on dignity, isolation, rejection of communication, and even verbal, physical, and sexual violence against working mothers (ibid)

Maternity leave in Chile is mandatory for women and lasts 18 weeks (6 weeks before childbirth, 12 weeks after birth). Since 2011, couples can decide to share this benefit to promote women's return to work in less time. But between 2011 and 2018, only 0.23% of male parents used this benefit (Secretariat of Social Security 2018). It may be an indicator of the persistence of gender roles based on woman-caretaker/male-provider.

In the study by Morgenroth & Heilman (2017), they conclude that women live a constant limbo between their family life and their successful career, being penalized for any decision they make regarding maternity leave. If they take it, they are punished by not accessing salary improvements and/or promotions. If they do not take it, they are penalized in the family sphere and workplaces.

This social penalization by not taking maternity leave or taking it but returning earlier, is seen as a violation of gender stereotypes. It generates a

negative perception of women in leadership positions. They deny their “inherent” communal characteristics, as we have seen before (Heilma & Okimoto 2007: 91). That could explain why sharing the leave with the partner is not so common.

The burden of raising children is still on the female’s shoulders. And workplaces reproduce this stereotype. The study by Cabeza et al. (2011) identifies a common factor that assumes women always will pick family over work, contrasting with their male counterparts. Therefore, they will not commit efficiently to work (Cabeza et al. 2011: 85). So, most of the organization decides for women by not offering them promotions or even slowing down growth processes that they had started.

3.4 Intersectionality’s theoretical framework

The last framework that I want to use to explain the glass ceiling in the Chilean context is intersectionality. This concept was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989 when she realized that feminism did not consider the influence of race on discrimination suffered by women, just as the anti-racist movement did not consider the gender dimension:

“Because of their intersectional identity as both women and color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, women of color are marginalized within both” (Crenshaw 1991: 1244)

In this way, it seeks to understand how different oppressive categories influence each other, increasing or decreasing discrimination (Winkel & Degele 2011: 51). However, it is essential to emphasize that one category’s relative weight over another is not fixed ex-ante but depends on the historical-spatial context in which the analysis is located. Therefore, this will always be “context-specific, topic-orientated and inextricably linked to social praxis” (Winker & Degele 2011: 54). Thus in some cases, some intersections may be more relevant than others.

3.5 Analytical framework

For this research, I will use as a starting point D&I Management perspective to analyze in which stage is the company, either developing diversity actions or inclusion ones. Mor Barak studies (1998, 2014, 2015) will help me review if they want to increase women’s representation or if they are going one step further improving access to information, enhancing women’s participation and influence in decision-making.

Then, I will use the four perspectives that try to explain the glass ceiling phenomenon. Starting with Gender Stereotypes and Leadership Bias studies to

analyze through women's discourse if they found themselves in the double bind of leadership that Elsesser & Lever (2011) and Brescoll & Uhlmann (2008) identified in their studies. Then, I will use Brescoll's (2011) perspective to analyze the word's use in public spaces within the organization and any difference between male and female perception. To complement that perspective, I will use Duguid (2011) and Derks et al. (2016) conclusions about how women assimilate the male-dominated culture and observe if women identified any of these strategies in their professional careers. I will also use Mavin & Williams's (2008, 2013, 2014) perspective about intra-gender relations to analyze if they are using some solidarity's strategies to challenge male-dominant ideology. After, I will use Morgenroth & Heilman (2017) conclusions to see in women, mothers if they have felt that constant limbo between family and successful careers. And I will use Riquelme (2011) to analyze whether there are inconsistencies between discourses pro-maternity and negative effects on their professional paths.

Finally, I will use the intersectionality approach to analyze the characteristics of the women who manage to access decision-making positions and those who do not. I am particularly interested in observing which categories are facilitating their access while others are hindering it.

3.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, using the Diversity and Inclusion Management perspective as a theoretical umbrella, I reviewed the four different views that scholars have researched to explain the prevalence of glass ceiling for women within organizations. Also, I introduced the Intersectionality framework to help me analyze which other characteristics (apart of gender) help or hinder women from accessing managerial positions. I ended the chapter by introducing my analytical framework, which translates theoretical discussions into categories of analysis. The next chapter presents the data analysis and the main findings of my research.

Chapter 4: a gendered analysis of a Chilean company

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyzes my virtual fieldwork data around organizational actors' discourses and their explanation of the prevalence of glass ceiling in their company, using the analytical tools discussed in Chapter 3. In section 4.2, I analyze the understanding of Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) of the company and which facilitators and obstacles the participants see to achieve this agenda's goals. Section 4.3 reviews the different gender biases and how they contribute to keeping the glass ceiling by producing and reproducing gender binaries. Section 4.4 analyzes the Queen Bee Phenomenon (which I defined in chapter 3, section 3.3.3.) to survive a male-dominant organization and different intra-gender solidarity' tactics that women develop in this context. Section 4.5 reviews how motherhood is another burden to get into managerial positions and how subtle practices punish it. Section 4.6 analyzes how the organization maintains the male-dominant ideology through apparently objective processes and protocols. The last section presents a summary of the chapter.

4.2 D&I management in the company: facilitators and obstacles

The company has had a D&I policy since 2016, but in 2018 they hired a person to translate that declaration into actions. Over these years, they had focused on hiring more women and promoting them into managerial positions because they understand this could be a differential from their competitors, given the lack of female representation across the industry.

Some facilitators that interviewees recognize to develop D&I actions are the new CEO's commitment to this topic, who came with a much more "European view"¹³. Also, the processes that they have to develop career paths and measure performances to get promotions. They talk about them with a lot of pride because they are flexible and objectives. Another facilitator is the company's global character; as a transnational, they have many ex-patriots.

From the side of the obstacles identified is D&I scope limitation, leaving outside LGBTIQ+ community because there is still a persistent

¹³ By experience I can say that Chilean culture is very aspirational, so everything coming from Europe or the USA is highly desirable and respected. For the corporate sector, "European view" is related with more openness to D&I topics, while Chile is still a conservative society.

*Machista*¹⁴ culture, who bullied men adopting more feminine modes. Also, there is a legacy from the past CEO, who was a more conservative person and used to promote cronyism. That kind of practice is still happening but with less frequency, according to the interviewees.

Another perceived obstacle is who is accountable for D&I. In the company's case, the responsibility of D&I initiatives is over one person's shoulders, who was also responsible for sustainability. In her own words:

“If I look back, of course, I would like to do more things related to D&I, but my agenda was impossible” (Lydia, Leader of Sustainability. Formal interview via Microsoft Teams on August 17th, 2020.)

She also identified the lack of alignment between her proposed initiatives and the priorities set by her direct boss in the company as an obstacle to work on D&I . Sometimes, she looked at herself as fighting alone against this structure. There is a lack of affirmative actions and clear goals; it is still good intentions and some spare initiatives that do not change the organization's ideology. All the female directors identified that.

Regarding the organization's explanations to describe the glass ceiling, I found a mixture between the psychological (Austin 2001, Sandberg 2013, Shambaugh 2008) and structural one (Steffens et al. 2019; Rivers & Barnett 2013; Wright & Baxter 2000).

They have some processes and protocols that make me think they are aware of the structural discriminations that women could face. Some of them implement salary bands to avoid the pay gap, hiring quotas profile descriptions bias-free to increase representation, and clear succession career plans. This process helped the organization reduce some access barriers and direct discrimination (as the pay gap). Nevertheless, in some interviewees' discourses (mostly males), the persistence of women's low representation in managerial positions responds more to a lack of personal interest than a structure maintaining the glass ceiling. That makes me think they are very sensitive to direct discrimination (biased hiring process, pay gap, etc.) but less to indirect ones (gender stereotypes, power, punishment to motherhood, etc.).

¹⁴ Machista is a Spanish concept to define people who believe and defend the “natural” superiority of straight men over women and other minorities. So, they justified the male-dominated order.

4.3 Gender bias and the double bind for women in leadership positions

Even though the company had advanced in D&I management trying to promote both, diversity and inclusion, it still reproduces subtle discrimination against women in leadership based on gender bias (Brescoll&Uhlmann 2008; Elsesser & Lever 2011).

In Lydia's view, two classic gender biases happen a) Everyone assumes that cohesion activities are female responsibilities. Being the ones who celebrate birthdays, organize happy hours, or even send flowers if some colleague's relative dies. That is labor without any type of recognition for part of the organization, but is somehow a subtle mandate for women:

“In my focus group, some women told me, ‘I don't give a f*** about those things. I don't care about the birthday cake nor flowers, but somehow they are forced to do it’ (Lydia, Leader of Sustainability. Formal interview via Microsoft Teams on August 17th, 2020.)

That implies an extra charge to women without formal compensation. They fulfill a significant part of the organization's needs, helping maintain motivation, engagement, and productivity. Nevertheless, the same as domestic work is invisible and not paid. That could be the organizational translation of the classical gendered division of labour: man-producer/women-caregiver, where women's time is used in non-professional related activities (domestic/reproductive) while men do not have the same mandate. Women get distracted by all these invisible tasks, finding it more challenging to show their skills and get promotions; they need to push harder to get the things done in the same amount of time as their male peers, which do not have any distraction.

The second bias is related to a particular attitude: b) Men appropriating ideas that women gave (but nobody took into account) and taking the full credit for it. Appears as a new microaggression (Marvin & Williams 2013) and had been called recently *bropropriating*¹⁵:

“I had the experience of being in a meeting with partners, only men, and I said something, and nobody pays attention, as if I was invisible. After that, my male colleague said the same, and everyone was ‘oh yeah, of course.’ So, I remember I was just pissed off in one meeting, and I said: ‘well, I will go to my home because I'm wasting my time here. Better to be with my family or having dinner with my son. I'm saying something, and nobody cares, but this other colleague says the same, and everyone is ‘great idea, dude.’ So, better I

¹⁵ Is a very recent phrasal concept mixing the words “bro” (diminutive of brother or colleague) and appropriating.

leave, and you can speak between yourselves” (Rita, Director. Formal interview via Microsoft Teams on August 21st, 2020)

Rita, a recently appointed director, was feeling invisible in that meeting. Her ideas were taken into account only if a male-peer repeated out loud without giving her any credit. That happens because “masculinized speech norms dominated the public sphere” (Kidd 2017:8). Women tend to speak less in public because they fear to be interrupted, mocked, or not heard, keeping a submissive place. For Rita, the only way to appear for her male colleagues was to confront them by adopting a straightforward linguistic style associated typically with the male’s speaking style (Tannen 1995). This tiny action tends to maintain a specific order and gives the idea that women in managerial positions are not visible unless they adopt the dominant speaking style. Even when this is a prevalent practice identified by women within the organization, it is very normalized. According to Lydia, in her focus groups, she identified:

“We don’t have great direct discrimination like ‘women are less valuable, so we don’t promote them,’ no. Is more unconscious, the traditional practices as mansplaining or the difficulties that women face to intervene in meetings, but leaving that outside, nothing too wrong” (Lydia, Leader of Sustainability. Formal interview via Microsoft Teams on August 17th, 2020.)

These two biases are very subtle and affect women in leadership positions. They are expected to be nurturing, caring, and empathetic. But not to take an active role in the decision-making instances, there they are just omitted. In that context, as Rita did, they have to fight back and waste energy in showing to their male peers these discriminatory practices. In the discourse, I could appreciate that everyday practice is not an issue for the company; hence, they do not invest resources to confront it (as courses or guidelines). They expect women to face these micro-aggressions leaving it in an individual dimension. All women interviewed recognize a high emotional cost in continually proving that they deserve to be in decision-making positions and to gain their spaces as a “peer” there. For their male colleagues, this is a valuable characteristic:

“I think what female leaders have in common is their willingness to fight for their spaces. They are more fighters than my male colleagues. I don’t know if it is because it has always been more difficult for them and they feel they have to fight more, but that is the result” (Joseph, Partner. Formal interview via Microsoft Teams on September 4th)

Even in this company with D&I management, women in leadership positions recognized they still face the double bind. They can be “fighters” only if they behave aligned with their gender stereotypes’ expectations. If they fail in this, they are judged as less competent, annoying, and less suitable for leadership positions (Brescoll 2011).

These interviews showed a prevalence of gender biases producing and reproducing a gendered division of labor. The organization used very subtle ways to push women to commit to nurturing tasks, omitting them in decision-making instances, and only considering them if they assimilated speaking associated with males. These processes could be dragging, putting women in a double-bind with a high emotional cost.

4.4 Queen bee phenomenon and its emotional cost

In this section, I will discuss the Queen Bee Phenomenon. Before I begin, I will provide a brief outline of this phenomenon. As I pointed in section 3.3.3, Queen bee is a label that literature gave to women who assimilate male culture to access managerial positions. It is discussed by Duguid (2011) and Derks et al. (2016), pointing specifically to the female embodiment of physical and psychological characteristics associated with men. Mavin & Williams (2013) offer a counter-argument claiming that it is not only about physical and psychological assimilations but also intra-gender solidarity strategies.

In my virtual fieldwork, I was able to identify a number of characteristics related to Queen Bee in the female staff’s behavior. The most obvious way that they identified it was by adopting physical and psychological typical male characteristics (Duguid 2011; Derks 2016): being more dryer and directive, raise their voice when they wanted to make a point, be very exigent with their teams, and use subdued clothes and makeup to do not be read as “silly” or “vain.” However, in the different conversations that I have with them, something caught my eye. There is a difference in how males read the assimilation process, depending on whether they have specific characteristics.

For example, Serena, a 33-year-old Brazilian engineer, arrived in Chile five years ago and had a speedy progression in her career. For her, being “rude” to her male-partners was seen as something normal, even valuable. She feels that is the only way to be respected and so far seems to work:

“I remember having a conflict with one of the most *machista*¹⁶ executives. My first month in the company was horrible. One day he was vulgar by phone, talking to me in a very vulgar way. But I responded in no uncertain terms. I said to him, ‘you are not talking to me in that way; we are equal,’ and then I explain how this works for me in an arid way. After that day, he became my best friend.” (Serena, Director. Official interview via Microsoft Teams on July 30th, 2020)

I think this nice appreciation of her assimilation process is related to her two main characteristics: she is an engineer (a male-dominated profession); therefore, she is being valued as her profession before her gender. And she is childless; hence, her male colleagues seem not to expect nurturing or caring in her leadership. She is not betraying their roles but fulfilling them (regarding her profession and childless status).

Nonetheless, for Rita, a 42-year-old Chilean psychologist with four children, has been more challenging:

“I’m exhausted about that constant judgment of ‘she is a bad mother’ or ‘she is not focusing on the important’ [the children]. For me, it was a whole job to recognize that I love to work, I’m happy being a leader, and I need this in my life.” (Rita, Director. Official interview via Microsoft Teams on August 21st, 2020)

Here, motherhood seems to be a burden, precisely because the caregiving characteristics related to it are assumed (Heilman & Okimoto 2007:92). She is judged because she is not embracing those characteristics and prefers to work over a family-centered life. The same happened to Marta; she is 38 years old, with over eight years within the company and two children. Recently became manager of Human Resources. In her story, she also has been criticized for her style:

“I have even been criticized for being very dry, very tough. That is why I told you that women have to struggle a little with this masculinization to earn certain spaces and respect. Sometimes they would say [in a mocking tone] ‘thank goodness she is from [the] People’s area[Human Resources]’ and I would say like ‘What does it mean to be from People’s area? That I cannot have an opinion?’”(Marta, Manager. Official interview via Microsoft Teams on August 30th, 2020)

¹⁶ Machista is a Spanish concept to define people who believe and defend the “natural” superiority of men over women. So, they justified the male-dominated order.

In her experience, I can see again that intersectionality with the profession. She is not coming from a technical engineering background, as Serena does. She is coming from Social Sciences. Hence, for her to be rude is less desirable. It seems counterproductive, not only with her gender but with her profession. Rita referred to this as the “triple validation: as a woman, as a mother, and as a psychologist.” The organization allows physical and psychological male-assimilation if the woman possesses other characteristics aligned with it, such as male-dominated professions and childless status.

Another characteristic of the Queen Bee Phenomenon is the possibility of intra-gender solidarity (Marvin & Williams 2014). According to my analytical framework, women can engage in solidarity within organizations but only with their similar status. In my interviews, I could notice that women who engage in sisterhood are the ones who were helped by other women to enter into managerial positions. They have the idea to return the favor:

“I always have this idea of “I want to hire more women” because women raised me, they prepared me to be a leader. So, is something that I want to do also” (Serena, Director. Official interview via Microsoft Teams on July 30th, 2020)

Serena was participating as a mentor in a mentorship program within the organization, and her mentee was Lydia. I asked her how Serena was in this role to see if her practices were aligned with her discourse. For Lydia, Serena was a turning point in her professional career because she validated her work in front of influential people inside the organization. According to Lydia, she helps her enter some organizational circles reserved only for directors and some men. Also, to gain male allies for her D&I initiatives and to realize that her work was necessary. In resume, Serena wanted to make Lydia grow within the organization, even when they worked in totally different areas:

“She [Serena] is everything! When I announced that I was leaving, I received a lot of offers to work in other areas because I gained a bunch of visibility inside the organization thanks to her.” (Lydia, Leader. Informal conversation via Whatsapp on July 31st, 2020)

Rita, for her part, describes herself as an empathetic leader who try to promote work-life balance and prevent her co-workers from having the emotional cost that she had:

“When I see them [the women of her team] too wasted, I tell them: ‘take the day off, go get some fresh air.’ I work by goals; I don’t pressure them. I’m very empathetic with that, more with the ones that are mothers. My team is the one with more mothers in the organization” (Rita, Director. Official interview via Microsoft Teams on August 21st, 2020)

Off the record, she told me that she had been in therapy three times in her life because of the stress and burnout provoked by the apparent incompatibility between leadership and motherhood. I felt that she wanted to be the role model that she did not have and prevent others from passing through the same situations that she had to face.

Also was interesting to note that female solidarity inside this organization was explained by the age more than the status (Mavin & William 2013). Younger women leaders were more aware of gendered practices reproduced by males in managerial positions and wanted to get away from them. They distinguish themselves from other older female leaders who were close to the past CEO and wanted just to keep their privileges:

“I think a lot of women in the managerial positions don’t raise the voice regarding gender issues because there is this psychological game of ‘if you don’t like it, you can leave.’ So, they stay quiet. They become severe, like old witches because they feel that they need to protect something, and that is a prevalent characteristic of female’s leadership” (Rita, Director. Official interview via Microsoft Teams on August 21st, 2020)

Marta, Serena, Lydia, and Moira had the same feeling. For them, there were multiple leadership styles between females. Still, two were very explicit: one who wanted to keep things as usual and distance themselves from other females, embodied by older women (+50 years old), appointed by the past CEO, with over three years in managerial positions. Another wants to challenge the male-dominated structure and help other women climb the ladder, embodied by young females (between 30 and 45 years old), which were promoted recently by the new CEO.

To sum up, the Queen Bee Phenomenon inside this company seems a survival strategy to surf the male-dominated spaces and open room for other less-advantaged women. This intra-gender solidarity is mostly developed by young female leaders, who were helped by other women to enter into managerial positions, as a way to return the favor and prevent younger generations from confronting the emotional cost that they had to face.

4.5 Punishment to motherhood

My female interviewees with children identified different subtle ways to question or punish their motherhood. Both Marta and Rita experienced the

same questions about if they will be able to commit to the new role without neglecting their families. That makes them feel guilty for being ambitious and questioned themselves if they were making the right decision:

“In my interview, I was impressed because the interviewer dedicated almost 40% of the time to questioning my application for promotion and the supposed incompatibility with my motherhood. If a man goes into that interview, that does not happen” (Rita, Director. Official interview via Microsoft Teams on August 21st, 2020)

That could explain what Lydia told me about the lack of female applications to be promoted:

“I created a pilot program last year to accelerate the career of women into managerial positions, I only had 15 places, and it was a coincidence that only 15 women applied. I was expecting more actually.” (Lydia, Leader. Informal conversation via Whatsapp on July 31st, 2020)

These practices tell women that if they want to have a family, the executive career is not the right choice. For this reason, we see a low rate of female applications (Morgenroth & Heilman 2017).

Another way companies punish motherhood is to delay promotions to women who get pregnant without asking them if they prefer to freeze the process to dedicate themselves to the newborn. Marta seems how her career was delayed because of motherhood, getting her promotion to Manager after eight years, while Serena (without children) got her promotion into Director in only four years:

“The CEO of that time told me ‘F***, Marta, the logical thing is to promote you into the manager, but you just got pregnant. You will be on your maternity leave, and that makes everything complex. So, we won’t promote you,’ and he brought someone from outside to fill that position” (Marta, Manager. Official interview via Microsoft Teams on August 30th, 2020)

When I asked male interviewees about their perception regarding this issue, they were very blunt, saying that there was no discriminatory process that punished or questioned maternity; actually, they found it counterproductive because it is such a “beautiful condition.” Discourses and practices seem to be inconsistent (Riquelme 2011). Even when I went forward asking them what about the evaluation process which left women on maternity leave outside of promotions, some of them got very mad at me, questioning even my way of asking the question:

“If I could give you a recommendation, I would change the question. Because if you ask ‘how you evaluated a person in a period where she is not there?’ is like... I don’t know... incoherent. Because you cannot evaluate someone who is not there? Does this make sense to you? It is kind of an empty question.”¹⁷ (Luke, Director. Official interview via Microsoft Teams on August 28th, 2020)

They cannot think outside the evaluation process or have a critical view of it. How this process freezes women's careers, which became mothers, is invisible to them. I agree that it could be a great process with great results so far. But they never saw the consequences for pregnant women on maternity leave. That is why they were surprised, even mad, with the question. Motherhood within the company is valued positively in the discourse but negatively in practice. For males, it is a condition that does not impact women's careers, but when I observe where the delays in women's promotions are, mostly when they have children and go on maternity leave. For the organization, mothers' turnover is explained by a personal choice sustained in the gendered division of labor. Based in the generalization that they will prefer the family over the work because it is the inherent reproductive mandate. However, the processes are not considering mothers for promotions, delaying their careers. Suppose the women prefer their work over the family. In that case, the organization reads that as a betrayal to gender stereotypes and punishes them subtly, enhancing a sense of guilt that pushes women out of their career paths.

4.6 Maintaining male-dominant structures through “objective” processes

Some interviewees identified that the company is very exigent in an industry with a lot of work, which only increases if you are promoted. Also, it is highly male dominant. That could make women reticent to become leaders, as I pointed out before. For some male interviewees, this put a challenge into women who want to become a leader (not into the structure):

“In a context full of men, I think you [as a woman] have to have a strong character and a lot of character to impose and position yourself” (Fred, Director. Official interview via Microsoft Teams on July 29th, 2020)

¹⁷ Actually, my question was “what happens with the evaluation of women who are with maternity leave?”. He was clearly making fun of me to avoid the answer.

Fred's perspective assumes that leadership is related to a strong character, leaving outside equation women with more communal leadership. In this way, only some women are read as "functional" to the dominant male-dominant ideology. As I present before, most engineers, young, without children, and who had assimilated male physical and psychological characteristics could quickly climb the organization ladder. For me, this is hidden in the evaluation process, which seems to be very fair and flexible, but leaves out or delays other women's careers.

Most of the interviewees described this process as meritocratic and gender-neutral. All the male partners talk about it with great pride:

"Anyone here can make a career; we are a company that only sees talent ... merit. It does not matter to us - and excuse the expression - what genitals they have between their legs or with whom they practice love, if they are good professionals, they will ascend, so I would always remain our career model." (Nick, Partner. Official interview via Microsoft Teams on July 31st, 2020)

Nonetheless, according to Serena and Rita (remember, they were promoted to directors just this year), this is a process that works good on paper, but in practice is highly gender-biased:

"I realized there are some lines of *cronyism* in the organization. Males promote other males who don't have good performances. They got promotions over women who were way more qualified" (Serena, Director. Official interview via Microsoft Teams on July 30th, 2020)

When they started to ask about those promotions, they told me that males in charge got mad because they felt under suspicion and played the "angry men" role. Under this supposed neutrality and equanimity, historical inequalities based on gender are not evident, making male norms prevail in workplaces (Saari 2013: 38).

Fortunately, this new generation of women in power positions is more aware of the gendered practices that keep happening in everyday life. And because the current CEO promoted them, they have a kind of "blessing" to challenge these masculine pacts sustained in apparently gender-neutral institutional tools as the performance evaluation process. I found it interesting that they declared themselves feminists. That is something very new for me because usually, women within companies want to play the "neutral non-political" game

Hopefully, more feminist women into managerial positions, who suspect this gender-neutrality, could break the glass ceiling.

4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the different explanations that participants recognized the glass ceiling prevalence within their company. Even when they had advanced in defining a D&I policy and some structural processes to avoid direct discrimination, there are still challenges remaining in everyday life's subtle discriminatory practices. Gender stereotypes are remaining, putting women in leadership positions in a double bind. Motherhood seems to be a burden because of the lack of work-life balance guilts women because of the impossibility of fulfilling both roles. That is reinforced for some objective processes (like the promotion one), which left outside women on maternity leave. Finally, I can find some intra-gender solidarity practices that could help challenge the male-dominated structure and accelerate the pace of breaking through the glass ceiling.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

This research aimed to analyze which were the difficulties that women faced to access managerial positions within companies. For that, I used the glass ceiling perspective and its most common explanations, with gender and intersectionality as analytical concepts. I was particularly interested in analyzing how this analytical framework was operationalized in a Chilean company with explicit commitments to gender equality. To answer my main question, I asked sub-questions related to gender biases, assimilation processes, motherhood, and women's characteristics that could facilitate or hinder their progression within the company. I used mainly virtual interviews to understand the principal explanations for the glass ceiling's prevalence from the participants' perspectives. That gave me some insights into the organizational reading of the absence of women in managerial positions.

In the first chapter, I set this research framework, justification, background, research questions, limitations, and ethical positionality. The second chapter presented the methods and data analysis strategies. I finished it with a deep reflection about my virtual fieldwork encounters, the controlled virtual setting's challenges, my relation with my gatekeeper, and the pandemic. These issues shaped my entire research process, affecting the amount and quality of data from my interviews. I hope this experience could prevent other researchers who could face the same challenges in this new virtual setting. In the third chapter, I developed a theoretical review of the main currents explaining the glass ceiling's prevalence: gender stereotypes and leadership bias, a gender-based language, the Queen Bee phenomenon, and punishment to motherhood. I also discussed the intersectionality approach to cross-gender with other categories that could facilitate or hinder women's progression through managerial positions, such as professions, socio-economic position, age, and physical characteristics.

In the fourth chapter, I developed my analysis using the theoretical tools discussed in chapter three. I started reviewing the notions of Diversity and Inclusion of the company. Here I realized two things: they understand D&I equal as gender, and gender is limited to women. Even though they have a declared statement pro-gender equality and some actions to reduce access barriers and direct discrimination, they still produce and reproduce very subtle discriminatory practices that maintain the glass ceiling. I analyzed them by section, starting in section 4.3, where I reviewed which gender biases were produced by the organization related to women in managerial positions. In that regard, I highlighted that women in leadership faced a double bind; they need to assimilate some male characteristics to be read as a peer (direct linguistic

styles), but without losing their classic female characteristics (as nurturing, caring, and communal). If they fail in this double task, they are read as less suitable for leadership positions. Section 4.4 analyzed the Queen Bee Phenomenon and how women were assimilating or challenging the male-dominant structure.

I realized that assimilation is a survival strategy to surf the male-dominated spaces and open room for other less-advantaged women. Young female leaders self-declared feminists were the ones who developed intra-gender solidarity most. In section 4.5, I reviewed the understanding of the company regarding motherhood. I highlighted how the company punished it through an apparent objective evaluation process that delayed women's promotions in maternity leaves. I ended up with section 4.6 reviewing how these young female leaders are more aware of gendered practices in everyday life within the organizations, even in organizations with specific gender equality best practices. They challenge the male-dominated structure that sustains them from their spaces of influence. It was potent to realize that women leaders who climbed the organizational ladder thanks to other women's help developed intra-gender solidarity practices. That to prevent the new generations from facing the same emotional cost they had in their career path. I think this is the main contribution of this research. Stop thinking about the women's career paths and their difficulties getting into higher-level positions to start analyzing the structure that keeps them away from these very leadership positions. Over the years, organizations had read the lack of women's representation in decision-making as an individual problem (lack of skills or interest). Therefore, they tried to tackle it with actions focused on developing individual skills as leadership programs. That seemed to be ineffective because of the under-representation persists. In this research, I argued that organizational efforts should review promotion systems and protocols, challenging the structural order.

I hope this opens further research within companies to keep analyzing strategies that women are developing to get into managerial positions and improve the everyday lives of less-advantaged women within the organizational context.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guides for male partners and women directors

III.I Questions to partners:

Introductory questions:

1. Tell me more about your professional trajectory, where did you work before here?
2. How do you became a partner?
3. Which is your purpose in this company?
4. What would you change of this company? Why?
5. What would you maintain? Why?
6. What do you think will be the most important agendas for the company in the next years?

Gender related questions:

7. Since when the company started to work in gender issues?
8. Why started to focus on it?
9. What have been the main milestones you have had regarding gender?
10. Who is/are responsible for the gender issues?
11. Do you have any internal program to promote women in managerial positions?
12. If yes, how it works?
13. why do you think there are no more women in decision-making positions in the company?
14. Which processes do you think hinder women's access to decision-making positions?

III.II Questions to women director:

Introductory questions:

1. Tell me more about your professional trajectory, where did you work before here?
2. How do you became a director?
3. Which is your purpose in this company?
4. What would you change of this company? Why?
5. What would you maintain? Why?
6. What do you think will be the most important agendas for the company in the next years?

Gender related questions:

7. Since when the company started to work in gender issues?

8. Why started to focus on it?
9. What have been the main milestones you have had regarding gender?
10. Who is/are responsible for the gender issues?
11. Do you have any internal program to promote women in managerial positions?
12. If yes, how it works?
13. why do you think there are no more women in decision-making positions in the company?
14. Which processes do you think hinder women's access to decision-making positions?

Gendered experience questions:

Here I want to explore the particular experience of her being women this company, her trajectory to get into that position.

15. Which do you think where the main obstacles to became a director?
16. Which do you think where the main facilitators?
17. Who was/were your ally within the company?
18. If you had to give advice to a woman who wants to be a director within this company, what would it be?
19. Do you think the process to became director is meritocratic? Or there are other factors that influence besides merit?

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