



DEGREE PROJECT IN INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT,  
SECOND CYCLE, 30 CREDITS  
*STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN 2018*

# **PERCEPTIONS OF COMPETENCE IN EVALUATION AND PROMOTION PROCESSES**

ON THE REPRODUCTION AND CHANGE OF  
MALE DOMINANCE IN MANAGEMENT IN  
INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

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**PERCEPTIONS OF COMPETENCE IN EVALUATION AND  
PROMOTION PROCESSES – ON THE REPRODUCTION AND CHANGE  
OF MALE DOMINANCE IN MANAGEMENT IN INDUSTRIAL  
ORGANIZATIONS**

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Master of Science Thesis INDEK 2018:114

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**FÖRESTÄLLNINGAR OM KOMPETENS I UTVÄRDERINGS- OCH  
BEFORDRANSPROCESSER – OM ÅTERSKAPANDE OCH FÖRÄNDRING  
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# PERCEPTIONS OF COMPETENCE IN EVALUATION AND PROMOTION PROCESSES – ON THE REPRODUCTION AND CHANGE OF MALE DOMINANCE IN MANAGEMENT IN INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

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## Abstract

Today's industrial markets are experiencing changes with the realization of new radical technologies, which are disrupting how organizations work. This new wave of technology and focus towards sustainability is shifting the competencies needed within organizations to maintain their competitive advantage. The adoption of such technological innovations without causing any delays requires a wide spectrum of competencies among employees to be present in industrial organizations. One way to achieve this is to have a diverse top management team that reflects a wide spectrum of competencies and skills. However, achieving this is a challenge due to the culture of gendering found in organizations, especially with regard to evaluation and promotion processes. The purpose of this report is to investigate the way in which evaluation and promotion practices in industrial organizations can contribute to the reproduction and change of male dominance in management.

Through exploring the different perceptions of competencies, evaluation and promotion processes, and ways to how to drive gender balance within an industrial organization, the purpose of this report is achieved. The main approaches taken include using available theory on organizational change, gendered work ideals, homosociality, perceptions of competence, and ways to evaluate employees to analyze data gathered. This is then tied with a field study done on one of the Swedish companies operating in a male dominated industrial environment. The analysis addresses the common ways in which evaluation and promotion processes can contribute to the reproduction of male dominance and ways to prevent that from happening. The proposed recommendations address the opportunities for change at company A, based on theory work for gender balance.

## Key-words

gender; management; homosociality; industrial organizations; evaluation and promotion processes; competence; gendered norms



KTH Industriell teknik  
och management

# FÖRESTÄLLNINGAR OM KOMPETENS I UTVÄRDERINGS- OCH BEFORDRANSPROCESSER – OM ÅTERSKAPANDE OCH FÖRÄNDRING AV MANLIG DOMINANS I LEDNING I INDUSTRIELLA ORGANISATIONER

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## Sammanfattning

Dagens industriella marknader är i förändring med nya teknologier som omstörtar hur organisationer fungerar. Denna nya våg av teknik och fokusering mot hållbarhet medför ett skifte i kompetenser som behövs inom organisationer för att behålla sin konkurrensfördel. Antagandet av sådana tekniska innovationer utan att orsaka förseningar kräver ett brett spektrum av kompetenser bland anställda inom industriella organisationer. Ett sätt att uppnå detta är att ha mångfald inom ledningsgrupper som speglar ett brett spektrum av kompetenser och färdigheter. Emellertid uppstår många utmaningar för att uppnå detta på grund av könsmärkta kulturer som finns i organisationer som påverkar utvärderings- och befordringsprocesser. Syftet med denna rapport är därför att undersöka hur utvärderings- och befordringsprocesser i industriella organisationer kan bidra till återskapande och förändring av manlig dominans i organisationer, särskilt på ledningsnivåer.

Syftet med denna rapport är att utforska olika föreställningar om kompetens och utvärderings- och befordringsprocesser för att diskutera hur könsbalans inom organisationer kan uppnås. Rapporten utgår från forskning om organisationsförändring, könsmärkta ideal, homosocialitet, föreställningar om kompetens och metoder för utvärdera medarbetare och bygger på en fältstudie i ett mansdominerat svenskt industriföretag. Analysen fokuserar hur utvärderings- och befordringsprocesser kan bidra till att mansdominans återskapas och möjliga sätt att förhindra att det händer. De föreslagna rekommendationerna utgår från forskning om jämställdhetsarbete.

## Nyckelord

gender; management; homosociality; industrial organizations; evaluation and promotion processes; competence; gendered norms

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## **Foreword**

I'd like to begin by thanking Charlotte Holgersson my supervisor for all the support, efforts and continuous support from day one. Your keenness and willingness to provide honest direct feedback and suggestions has definitely been greatly valued and is a big part of paving the way for me to finish my degree.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Company A's contact person and employees for taking part in the interviews and for their continuous efforts to provide feedback and remain engaged until the end. Your guidance and support have made this work what it is now.

Finally, to my family who supported and believed in me, you made this journey less difficult by encouraging me when it was challenging so thank you for everything. These past two years at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) and Sweden have been life changing, I got to grow outside my comfort zone and learn a lot from the people I've met. This was a true enriching experience that has helped me mature and understand what diversity truly means.

Stockholm, Sweden 2018

*Amina Shahin*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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This chapter first introduces the background and the problematization of the study. Then presents the purpose and the research questions. And finally discusses the delimitations and expected contribution.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

In today's world of globalized and shared economy, hiring and retaining diverse talents has become a crucial requirement for organizations to survive and stand a chance to compete (Festing et al, 2014). This shift towards gender balance and leveraging a wider spectrum of talents and skills has been linked to improved profitability and return on investment through finding unconventional and innovative solutions to problems (Lorenzo et al, 2018). Gender in this report refers to the social characteristics related to being male and female as well as the relationship between them (UN OSAGI, 2001). Gender is seen as part of the determining factors on what is expected from a woman or a man in a certain context (UN OSAGI, 2001). Additionally, gender equality in this report implies the equal rights to have similar opportunities. It doesn't imply that men and women become the same, it focuses on having equal consideration regardless of gender (UN OSAGI, 2001). Before looking at ways on how to make gender equality more possible, it is important to understand the history and the work done so far.

### Historical Trends in Women Representation

Looking at the current statistics on women representation across the workforce, a clear gender imbalance can be noticed. Even though women represent 52% of the workforce population there are only 27 female CEOs in the top 1000 Forbes companies (ISACA, 2017). Female representation is mainly concentrated in the lower management levels, however when it comes to executive levels women hold only 36% of the positions (ISACA, 2017). Additionally, if we look at the tech industry these statistics are even lower; with women filling only 21% of the executive roles (Payscale, 2017). Furthermore, unlike the non-tech industries numbers at the lower management levels such as director and manager position are quite low at 32% and 28% respectively (cf. figure 1). One of the main arguments used to explain these statistics is the decreasing trend in women enrolling within the STEM field of studies. However, research has shown that women in technical oriented organizations face many challenges that hinders their progression. In fact, four main factors were linked to creating these challenges for women in the tech industry; (1) lack of female role models, (2) lack of mentors, (3) gender bias in the workplace, and (4) unequal growth opportunities compared to men (Jankowska and Klingmark, 2018).

Taking Sweden for instance, a country that has had gender equality as part of its political agenda for decades now and even has 45% of women representation in its parliament and around 50% in government (Statistics Sweden 2014). These statistics are considered to be very positive and reflect a gender balance across the public sphere however when it comes to the private sector

the picture is very different. Women only fill 28% of top executive positions within the business and industry world (Wahl, 2014). Granted if compared to past statistics, this can be considered a positive change; up almost 21% from 1993. Nevertheless, on higher levels such as board of directors and CEO positions, male dominance is still present until this day with almost 96% of them filled by men (Wahl, 2014). This brings up the question of why these positions have not seen any change over the past decades especially with the changing governments and increased awareness. Wahl (2014) states that researchers such as Höök (2001), Holgersson (2003), Fogelberg et al (2005), and Linghag (2009) argue that the male norm in management is still alive and well within organizations. Which facilitated men to remain dominating the top management roles and keep women at bay. As a result, researchers focused their research on understanding gender equality perceptions and how positive change can occur in organizations.

**Tech Industry: Male-Dominated at All Levels**

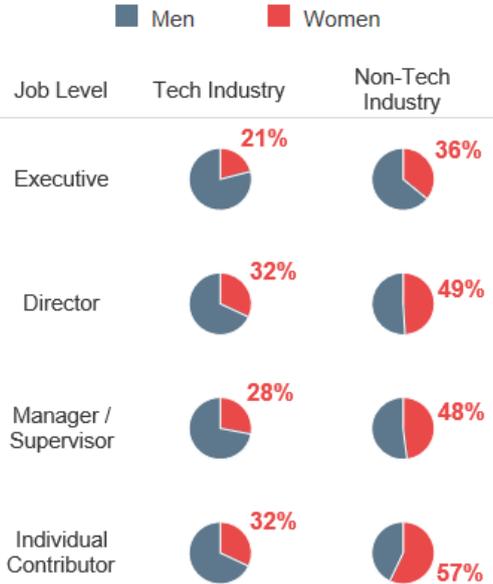


Figure 1: Gender split across all level (source: Payscale, 2017)

**Gender Equality Work**

The interest towards gender equality is increasing amongst companies (Gadiesh & Coffman, 2010). Over the course of five years, almost all top 500 Forbes companies have developed or deployed a diversity program within their organization (Garcia-Alonso et al, 2017). However, the numbers did not improve that much during that time. In a recent survey conducted by Boston Consulting group, 91% of their survey respondents confirmed that their company has a gender diversity program in place, yet only 27% said they have personally benefited from it (Garcia-Alonso et al, 2017). This shows that deploying compulsory gender programs won't suffice. Granted few improvements were made in terms of awareness and putting the topic on all top management agendas (Garcia-Alonso et al, 2017). However, it's time to go under the surface and work on the real issues (Roche & DasGupta, 2017). It is now time for the next step, which involves addressing the barriers mentioned earlier. Acker (2006) mentions that most of the social and economic inequality present in industrial countries such as the US and other western countries are created in organizations. The day-to-day activities and work done within

organizations mimics the gendered norm outside its walls and reinforces it. One can argue it cultivates the gendered ideals and roles into a smaller scale while reinforcing it with good performance and results. The more organizations succeed using this model of recreating gender stereotypes, the more difficult it becomes to fight it. As a result, many researchers started looking into organizational practices and gendering of work to better understand how inequalities are still present in today's world (Burawoy 1979; Acker, 2006). While other researchers focused on how these inequalities are reproduced generation after generation and the kind of roles involved. The theory on the possible reasons for inequality regimes and their continuous presence throughout the decades is abundant however work on applying these findings practically on organizations and testing their limitations is scarce.

### **Perception of Competence and Core Competence**

Competence is a socially embedded intangible concept referring to the ability to perform a certain task, role, or job to the expected standard (Eraut, 1998). The importance of determining a person's competence goes down to assessing it against an organization's own core competence thus determining how this person's 'resource' can be exploited to gain the company a competitive advantage in the market (Nadler & Tushman, 1999). Hamel and Prahalad (1994) argue that core competence in technical organization is a collective learning process that involves diverse production skills interlocked with several streams of technologies' (Delamare & Winterton, 2005). Using the resource-based way of thinking mentioned earlier, an organization's ability to compete in the market depends on its internal resource's ability to add value, be unique, and difficult to be imitated (Delamare & Winterton, 2005). As a result, human capital becomes the most important and crucial resource an organization can have. This stresses the importance of recognizing that a combination of employees, skills, characteristics and technology is what drive performance in organizations (Scarborough, 1998).

An organization's approach in defining competency and communicating it across is important since it puts the foundation of how employees develop their careers and are assessed against each other. Due to the imbedded social aspect to competency, its exact meaning is usually left to one's own personal understanding. Not only does this cause irregularity in identifying competence but it also opens the door for being influenced by political context (Eraut, 1998). Many people confuse capability which is more about a person's set of skills, with competence which is based more on actions taken to enable a certain task (Mansfield, 1999). Failure to develop a holistic typology that integrates the organization's core values, leadership principles, and importance of performance to explain competency increases the chances of having a unified understanding (Eraut, 1998).

Looking into competence deeper, defining the core competences and their relevance in a changing market has been recognized as a very important process for technical organizations (Story et al, 2011). Traditional competencies are becoming less and less effective in driving the needed change rapidly enough (Story et al, 2011). They remain to be an important base to stand on and develop incremental innovation, however companies need to be able to deal with uncertainty and thrive in such an environment (Tushman & Anderson, 1990). Incremental innovation is defined as keeping the status quo and building on top of current technologies; it's more of a linear development (Story et al, 2011). Radical innovation on the other hand is defined

as doing things and incorporating new technology within existing processes (Garcia & Calantone, 2002). Organizations that are heavily reliant on technology and staying ahead of the curve are expected to be ready for any kind of change (Utterback & Abernathy, 1975). Rapid advances in technology, high customer engagement and presence of international competition creates a sense of urgency to acquire competencies that match radical innovation thinking (Story et al, 2011). In fact, these organizations should be able to handle a high degree of informality, intense communication, and cooperation according to Gatignon et al (2002). Song and Swink (2002) claim that organizations that thrive in an environment that lacks rules and focuses on creativity and risk taking are more likely to do well during radical innovations. However, some researchers argue that a degree of structure and standardization is required to maintain any positive outcome that occurs due to this radical innovation (Delamare & Winterton, 2005). Which makes us to look at companies that are already well established, operating successfully within formal and standard environments but experience a shift to stay ahead of the competition.

There are differences between the competencies needed for both phases and some could be counterproductive as well (Story et al, 2011). However, maintaining a balance between them increases the chances for companies to thrive during radical change as well as be able to maintain a steady growth (Story et al, 2011). Möller (2010) argues that when it comes to processes, having phases that enable exploration such as design, application and dissemination are important for developing radical innovation. Kelly et al (2009) argue that having access to a diverse source of knowledge that tackle both familiar and non-familiar areas for a company is what is needed. This brings us back to the importance to having access to a wide pool of skills to be able to sustain organizations going through radical market change.

### **Performance Criteria and Gender**

Performance criteria act as a tool used by management to evaluate, control, motivate, celebrate, and promote employees (Behn, 2003). Criteria used is usually derived from the organization's own values and leadership principles (Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995). The majority of research within the performance topic have focused on the concerns pertaining to gender's effect on the performance process itself (Bauer & Baltes, 2002). Many researchers such as Sidanius & Crane, (1989) have focused on the effects of gender on ratings. Additionally, Duehr & Bono (2006) attributed gender stereotyping as one of the main barriers for women's entry into management positions. Collinson and Hearn (2001) took it a step further by looking at the work ideals that define the preferred qualities organizations look for. These work ideals are argued by many researchers to be written and communicated using hegemonic masculinity terms which acts as the barrier for women to be able to relate to them and be able to market themselves accordingly (Peterson, 2007).

Researchers have even attributed the concept of 'the right man in the right place' as a way to confirm and strengthen the hegemonic masculinity terms and perceptions about work ideals (Peterson, 2007). Research has even confirmed the existence of "think manager – think male" stereo type in many organizations (Cuadrado, 2015). Peterson (2007) argued that this thought process is extended into the selection, assessment, and promotion processes, which hinders

women's chances of being considered as the ideal person for the job. This prejudice results in low appraisal scores for women's leadership readiness in comparison to that of men (Cuadrado, 2015). This mismatch of language used to describe criteria puts women at a disadvantage since men need to only showcase these masculine behaviors while women should show both masculine and feminine traits (Caleo & Heilman, 2013). Managers who rate their employees that hold these traditional gender stereotypes will automatically attribute ineffectiveness to women more than to men, this shows that personal bias plays a huge role in the current performance systems (Maurer & Taylor, 1994).

Subsequently, working on neutralizing the ideal worker's capabilities is crucial to cultivate a more inclusive performance process (Landy, 2008). It can be argued that the most straight forward approach is to provide more information and descriptions about the required work ideals (Bauer & Baltes, 2002). However, this still leaves room for perception which can still be influenced by personal bias (Bauer & Baltes, 2002). A more holistic approach would be reducing personal judgment within the performance process and increase the number of people doing the assessment (Landy, 2008). Challenges to this approach exist in multiple dimensions: people (e.g. competence definition and cultural resistance), processes (e.g. assessment and promotion procedures) and technologies (e.g. role and system integration) are some of the most challenging areas (Jacobs, 1989).

## **1.2 PROBLEMATIZATION**

Effective work organizations strive on the important notion of having the right people in the right positions (Peterson, 2007). As an attempt to remain relevant and maintain a competitive advantage, companies focus internally on their most precious resource; human capital (Javidan, 1998). Assessment and promotion processes are usually mapped out and already in place with certain criteria that are derived from organization's value. These criteria should reflect the core competences needed (Story et al, 2011). However, the translation of these criteria and assessment points are usually left to the manager's own perception (Acker, 1992). A manager's own rational and ideas about gender differences and important core competence become interwoven with the assessments process (Rees and Garnsey, 2003). Qualities, technical skills, and knowledge that are seen as necessary for managers in technical organization are somehow gendered (Peterson, 2010). The required competencies are automatically associated with hegemonic masculinity and male qualities, which are used as arguments to exclude women from managerial positions (Peterson, 2007). In today's world of rapid change and importance of having a vast pool of competencies to cope with innovation, organizations that are driven with old-fashioned competency perceptions risk falling behind. In a 2016 Peterson Institute for International Economics working paper, having women in leadership positions was linked with having an average increase of 15% in profitability (ISACA, 2017).

This however is not reflected in today's industrial companies where the current gender split across the different executive levels remains to be male dominant. Women make up 24% of the key executive roles today and many of them are in supporting roles not having full authority levels (Cermak et al, 2018). Research argues that this is not driven by the lack of women in the pipeline as commonly mentioned by organizations but more driven by the current perception of competence and its gender marking (Jankowska and Klingmark, 2018). Gender diversity

plays an important role in improving an organization's ability to successfully compete in the market (Toseland et al, 2005). With the current shifts seen in the industrial market, many organization's strategies have shifted towards sustainability and innovation. This resulted in putting more pressure to widen the skills available through improving the gender imbalance among top executive roles. According to research, a company's ability to reach its goals depends on its ability to innovate and come up with new ways to remain competitive in this time of change. Reducing the effect of manager's own perception on skills and competencies needed for managerial positions in the performance and promotion process will allow industrial organizations to begin improving the gender representation. Thus, setting them to succeed in reaching their new strategy targets and sustain their competitive positions in the market (Desvaux & Devillard, 2008).

To fully realize the benefits of gender balance, the problem formulation indicates a strong in-house focus of the investigation and defined as:

*“With the emerging focus on core competence and innovation, companies face a challenge in benefiting from a diverse pool of talents within their management team to reaching their goals.”*

### **1.3 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study is to investigate in what way evaluation and promotion processes in industrial organizations can contribute to the reproduction and change of male dominance in management.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

To fulfill the purpose of this work, the following research questions (RQ) will be addressed using Company A as the focus subject:

**Main RQ:** In what way can evaluation and promotion processes contribute to the reproduction and change of male dominance on management levels in industrial companies?

- RQ1: What perceptions of management competence can be found?
- RQ2: How are these competences gendered?
- RQ3: What does the evaluation and promotion processes look like?
- RQ4: What perceptions about change can be found?

### **Study Focus: Company A**

As part of attempting to find answers to the research questions of this work, Company A is chosen to be the focus of a study to better understand the researched field. As a company that operates in the manufacturing industry (commonly referred to as verkstadsindustri in Swedish) it provides the context of a male gendered industrial organization with male dominance across its employees as well as its management levels. This makes Company A an optimal study ground in order to further understand how industrial organizations work. It will also help in the research's purpose and will aim to answer the research questions introduced in the coming sections.

## **1.5 DELIMITATIONS**

The center of investigation in this study lies on the Research and Development department 'R&D'. In particular, the performance and promotion processes currently established are examined. Performance assessment links the employee's competence and the rating to be promoted within the organization (Peterson, 2007).

Considering the placement in the systems perspective, this investigation focuses mainly on the functional level (Blomkvist & Uppvall, 2012). On the functional level, the areas of framework development and new processes development are among the main areas of investigation. For this, competencies impacting the success of managers on the industrial level are taken into account. The derivation of competencies needed and development of recommendations according to theory and findings involves both the functional and the individual level.

This study is conducted with Company A's office in Sweden and its employees. Thus, the focus of this report, the findings and conclusions lie on the situation in the Swedish market within this specific industry. The situations in other countries and industries might differ.

## **1.6 EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION**

It is expected that this study will contribute to providing context to applying the theory available on gender equality as well as empirical data of how gender work is approached in industrial organizations. Through the definition of the different types of competencies needed to become a successful manager at Company A, a deeper understanding of the extent of gendered norms play a role within companies is developed. This work is expected to also contribute to research about performance assessment and promotion processes by providing empirical data from the field. This is achieved through focusing on Company A to understand how gendered perceptions of technology, competence and leadership contribute to unintended gender bias reproduction and alienation of women from leadership positions. Additionally, even though the recommendations provided are based on the finding at Company A, they are related to theory, so they can still be applied in other industrial organizations.

Additionally, in terms of sustainability, the expected contribution and recommendation provide a way for industrial organizations to remain competitive in the market, which is considered economic sustainability. In terms of social sustainability, the work done advocates for equal opportunities and rights to both genders, which enables all employees to be evaluated fairly. As for environmental sustainability, it can be argued that in order to be innovative to meet new sustainability goals, companies require to have many perspectives and competencies inhouse, which is what this report attempts to reach. Working on finding ways to develop a more gender balanced management team that encompasses a diverse set of skills help organizations compete within technological market changes. This improves the chances of organizations to remain relevance within the market and relate to a wider spectrum of customer needs. Furthermore, it can be argued that providing company specific recommendations that are based on both the field study and theory adds to its own development to remain sustainable amongst the competition and market needs.

## 2. THEORY

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In this chapter, theoretical concepts drawn from different research fields are presented. Theories from management and gender within organization studies along with constructs of recruitment and the different psychological studies done related to the different approaches and processes. These different theories are used to understand how organizations operate as well as have an insight on how to further analyze the data gathered from the interpretive methodology used. They include gender bias practices within working environments more specifically within the technical fields. Additionally, work ideals, gender stereotypes, perception of competencies, and the effect of ambiguity in evaluation and promotion criteria are addressed. Furthermore, these concepts provide support towards the choice of research area and methods for this work.

### 2.1 GENDER BIAS IN THE WORKPLACE

Bias is defined as the process of evaluating people based on predetermined perception according to their social group (Thomas, 2014). Bias comes in different types; one bias in particular is implicit bias, which is “is a term of art referring to evaluations of social groups that are largely outside of conscious awareness or control” (Brownstein & Saul, 2016). Evaluations are generally done through associations between social groups and roles argues Brownstein and Saul (2016). Associations such as: “assertive,” “aggressive,” “technical,” “expert.” and so forth are widely displayed in the work place and even expressed openly in relation to employees (Acker, 2006). Furthermore, stereotyping is considered to play an important role in these associations since they are based on assumptions made on a group (Brownstein & Saul, 2016). Research done on stereotype threat proposes that different group identities are exposed to this threat; gender is clearly one of these group identities (Brownstein & Saul, 2016; Shih et al, 1999).

Looking deeper into gender biases with a more focus on work environment, it is discovered that women are considered a scarce and rare resource in the leadership front (Acker, 2006). In spite of the multiple calls for working on gender balance within the work force, the number of women who make it to leadership positions are very low (Acker, 2006). Over the past years, numbers of women entering the technology field has slightly increased however the numbers on the top management positions remain stagnant (Wahl & Höök, 2007). Researchers such as Acker (2006), Wahl and Höök (2007), and Tienari et al (2013) all credited what is known as the glass ceiling to be the reason behind this stagnation. As a result, they established that the glass ceiling concept should be addressed more to better understand this persistence of having few women reach the top (Wahl & Höök, 2007; Acker, 2006). Acker (2009) described the glass ceiling phenomenon as the situation where women do move up within the organizational ladder but very few actually hold powerful positions. She distinguishes between the act of moving upwards within organizations and having real power within the organization, she argues that the glass ceiling is this invisible barrier to power. Other researchers, Bendl & Schmidt (2010) consider the glass ceiling as the barrier that hinders women and other minority groups from progressing to top executive positions. Whether the glass ceiling is seen as only a barrier to

move to top positions or is specific to powerful positions, it certainly is a barrier that effects minority groups and women in general to progress in terms of their career. For the past 40 years, the US and other countries such as Sweden have seen a growth in the number of women in the pipe line to make it to higher leadership positions yet the numbers of women who actualize this move are still very slow (Acker, 2006). This makes the glass ceiling argument a plausible one that exposes the discriminatory and biased practices set in place. Consequently, one can argue that breaking the glass ceiling can improve women's chances to reaching powerful positions (Cohen & Huffman, 2007). As Acker (2006) argued, that indeed the process of passing the barrier between women and management or high-status positions is regarded as breaking the glass ceiling. Being able to change the current status quo of bias and discrimination and allowing more women to lead and hold powerful positions within organizations is the process of breaking the glass ceiling. In fact, according to a study conducted by Cohen and Huffman (2007) this can positively contribute to the gender equality efforts.

To break the glass ceiling as suggested and drive for change in the status quo, it is important to unveil the common cited reasons in today's gender equality in the woke place conversation. Researchers claim that reasons for low women representation in top management positions are mainly structural and ideological in nature (Festing et al, 2014). This included gender stereotyping as previously mentioned, maneuvering through a male dominant definition of management and networking and the need to balance between different expectations (Acker, 2006; Festing et al, 2014; Britton, 2000).

## **2.2 WORK IDEALS**

The study of organizations, more specifically gendered organizations, opens up several questions that attempt to deduce how gender plays a role when it comes to work. Questions such as how women are looked at versus men in the working environment, What kind of perceptions are present when it comes to assessing work and whether they differ based on gender or not? One of the first researchers that introduced this idea of an ideal worker was Acker (1990). She shed light on the perceptions of the ideal worker and the needed qualities that such a worker should have (Peterson, 2010; Acker,1990). When gender scholars discuss work ideals they include skills, education, behavior, and capabilities a person acquired throughout the years and present them clearly (Kelly et al, 2010; Fournier, 1999; Acker, 1990). It is common to find that these work ideals are embedded within an organization's culture that is vivid within a social context (Peterson, 2010). Stories being told, the way skills are discussed and critiqued and even the people's perceived crucial skills to develop all paint a picture of the work ideals an organization desires (Peterson, 2010; Fournier, 1999).

Expectations on work related capabilities and quality have been deemed gendered by many researchers in the field (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). The outlook on work ideals are defined in masculine terms, social beliefs on how different women should behave at work versus men have been cited several times in research (Ridgeway, 1997). Furthermore, gendered work ideals become intertwined with the feminine and masculine norms (Peterson, 2010; Acker, 2006; Cuadrado et al, 2015). These expectations and gendered work ideals have spread via gender role stereotypes and gave way to the concept of 'appropriate' work for women and men

(Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). This concept uses gender bias as the driving force to the process of matching employees to jobs (Kmec et al, 2010). Subsequently, women find themselves being judged based on a preconception about what women's workplace and men's workplace should be. Additionally, jobs no longer become gender neutral but rather coded as either suitable for men or women (Peterson, 2010). In fact, a good fit to a job is predetermined through these gendered stereotypes which keeps women out of the discussion (Kmec et al, 2010).

Another common way of alienating women from leadership decisions and excluding them is the constant engagement in homosocial activities by men in powerful positions (Tienari et al, 2013). Holgersson (2013), argues that such activities of evaluating candidates by men in top management ends in favoring a certain type of man that resembles them. This form of gender marking, during candidate's evaluation and differentiating between men and women has produced a cycle of routinely excluding women and preferring men who are similar (Kanter, 1977). These acts of homosociality are clearly spotted by women affected by it even though to other men it is brushed off as leveraging social encounters and 'playing' politics (Tienari et al, 2013). This phenomenon shows how the current evaluation of candidates is subjective and open to many personal perceptions which ends up having a male dominated leadership team. This continuous cycle will favor those with similar characteristics and organizations will end up with what Khurana (2002) describes as a theatrical hiring "in the image of the corporate chieftains whom search firms seek to serve". In order for this to change, research in how gendered work ideals are being used and how to include more women in the decision process of top leadership positions (Tienari et al, 2013).

Moving back to the notion of gendered work ideals, it is clear that expectations are built in accordance to the typical 'white man' (Acker, 2006). A man whose responsibility towards his family is making a who can work for eight hours straight and is even flexible to stay after hours if needed, is the textbook picture of the perfect worker (Acker, 2006). Thus, it comes with no surprise that women who have responsibilities outside work are seen as inferior and less than ideal. It is also taken as an indication to their availability and expected low prioritizing of work which makes them bad candidates for top management (Acker, 2006). In addition, engineering fields or high tech related fields that tend to be heavily dominated by men lead to presumed assumption that masculine traits are critical to success (Pinto et al, 2015). These assumptions and gendered ideals have left women in female-dominant job types such as administrative, clerical or if lucky in a management level within a supporting function and rarely in core related functions (Acker, 2006). These 'pigeon-hole' occupations Kmec et al (2010) argues, end up putting women at a disadvantage where they never get considered for gender atypical jobs. They even suggest that in the rare case of hiring women in a male dominant job, it is usually not the best fit for them (Kmec et al, 2010). The act of having women representation within the male job world in itself becomes enough motivation to hire instead of evaluating the fit to guarantee success (Britton, 2003; Kmec et al, 2010). As a result, women struggle to prove their aptitude within this male dominant field which then back fires and provides more proof that women should not be in these fields (Heilman & Chen, 2005; Ridgeway, 1982). Kmec et al (2010) also take it a step further by highlighting that women who begin to assimilate and show male gendered characteristics are negatively perceived since they are not following the expected norms of a female. Cuadrado et al (2015) also highlights this behavior in their research.

Additionally, research have discovered that these women are usually referred to as aggressive, unapproachable and difficult by their coworkers and sometimes managers (Heilman & Chen, 2005; Ridgeway, 1982; Kmec et al, 2010). This vicious cycle of ‘condemned if they do and condemned if they don’t’ puts women at a continuous inferior position.

Taking these observations as a point of departure, it is crucial to address competence interpretations. Having a clear dominance in the leadership positions by men who are responsible to decide who gets prompted or hired within the top executive levels urges the importance of understanding their personal understanding of management and competence (Wahl, 2011). Furthermore, men’s tendency of reproducing affirmative sexual identity through hiring and promoting only men causes women to be evaluated uncritically and without any clear criteria (Wahl et al, 1995; Holgersson, 2012)

### **2.3 GENDER STEREOTYPING**

Gender stereotyping involve both females and males. It is about how assumptions about either gender become generalized and somehow made to represents the entire gender (Agars et al, 2017). Their assumptions are social constructs imbedded into our lives over the years, driven from the human nature of categorizing and needing to explain things (Lee et al, 2013). Humans have the innate tendency to always try to explain anything that is considered different, this feeling of categorizing helps humans understand and live with things that are different (Lee et al, 2013; Heilman et al, 2015). Assumptions and categorizations then give birth to biases, more specifically gender biases (Lee et al, 2013). It is also worth mentioning that research has found that experiencing gender stereotyping is different for both females and males. The act of stereotyping itself could be a single act but its consequences and effects may be too much to handle by the group or people being generalized in said stereotype (Heilman et al, 2015). To be more specific, terms related to care, sensitive, help, nurture, and compromise are usually associated to women while terms such as assertive, expert, capable, self-dependent and strong are associated to men (Heilman et al, 2015). Not only are these terms now gendered in our subconscious mind but those who fail to abide by these said to be “natural order of things”, are deemed unwomanly or unmanly thus perceived negatively (Vaes & Paladino, 2009).

Some may argue that these behaviors are outdated and in today’s modern world, women are seen in what were deemed as male jobs and there are many examples of assertive women out there and more men choose care-type fields (Vaes & Paladino, 2009). This unfortunately is only half true, granted more women are seen in powerful positions, however they are more likely to be seen in a negative light. Their assertiveness is perceived as aggression and their power is seen as unnatural (Heilman et al, 2015; Lee et al, 2013). In fact, in a recent survey done by a researcher sampling around 500 men and women across all ages, it was found that men are still rated higher than women when it comes to assertiveness and capability while women are rated higher in care related traits (Heilman et al, 2015). Research has also identified that these gendered traits are common across all cultures and are not specific to certain cultures (Hentschel et al., 2013).

Gender stereotyping is a complex and multilayered phenomenon (Vaes & Paladino, 2009). To understand gender stereotyping and begin to drive awareness to it, one must first stop and examine the different types of stereotypes out there (Lee et al, 2013). The ability to understand a phenomenon in depth, provides insight as to how it can be challenged and systematically changed (Lee et al, 2013). Therefore, the EPA model of stereotype developed in the fields social and personality psychology is examined. The EPA model looks into three dimensions of a stereotype; Evaluation ‘E’, Accuracy ‘A’ and Potency ‘P’ (Lee, 2011; Lee & McCauley, 1995; Lee & Malloy, 2001; Lee & Luo, 2007; Lee & Ma, 2007). ‘E’ represents the range in which this stereotype is evaluated as positive or negative, ‘A’ represents the accuracy of this evaluation, and ‘P’ represents the status this stereotype was triggered, whether it is an active or inactive trigger that retrieved this judgment in a person’s mind. For a better visualization, stereotypes can be evaluated using the below figure 2.

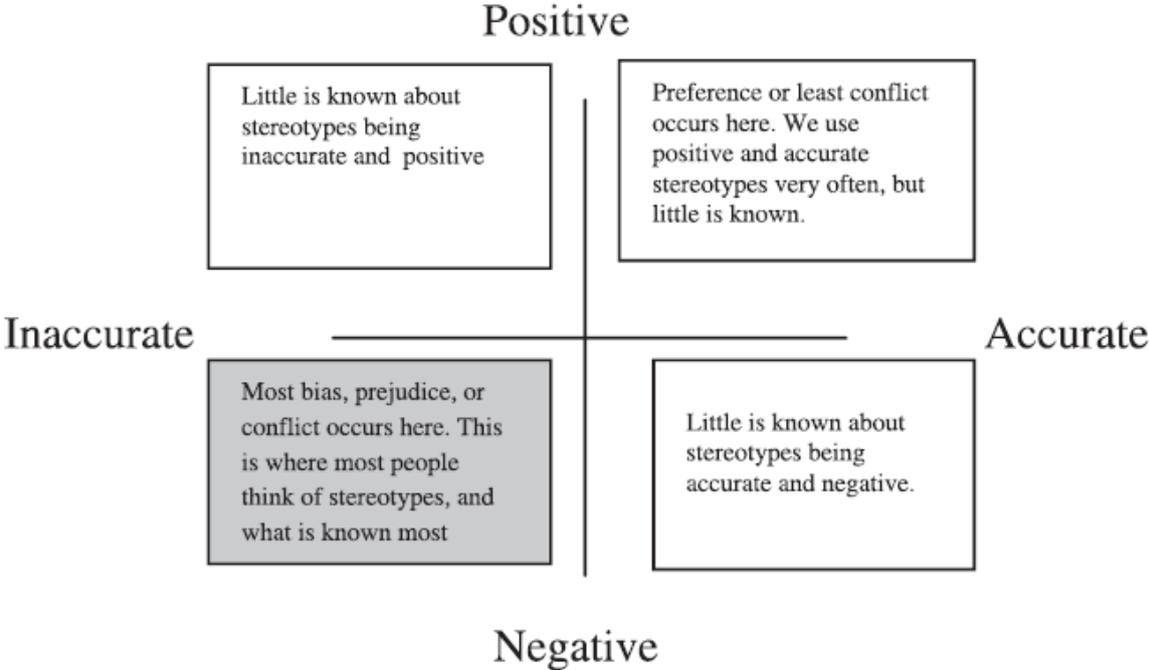


Figure 2: Evaluation and accuracy of stereotypes (source: Lee et al, 2013)

The stereotype quadrant on the bottom left is what is of interest in this research. This is a stereotype that is considered both negative due to the negative effects they have on gender and are inaccurate which makes it a more pressing issue. This quadrant is where gender bias lies and continues to grow. The ability to distinguish which type of gender stereotype it is, helps in spreading awareness and providing a solid ground to validate the negative effects it has on both genders. It also helps in choosing an approach to communicate and unveil acts of gender bias arched from stereotyping (Heilman et al, 2015).

**2.4 COMPETENCE**

Competence is commonly treated in research as a socially embedded concept to perform a certain job (Eraut, 1998). Thus, leaving the exact definition of it to be negotiated and determined

by managers, coworkers, and top leadership executives (Kmec et al, 2010). This air of ambiguity concerning competence and what it really is, allows for perception and personal opinions to play a big role. As a result, processes such as evaluation and promotion become more about the evaluator's own perceptions and feelings and less about adhering to clear prerequisite criteria and capabilities written down to be met (Eraut, 1998). Another common way to look at competence, is to relate it to the core of the organization in terms of the kind of skills that put the organization at a competitive advantage position versus others (Delamare & Winterton, 2005). It is also important to mention that some research takes the definition of core competence a step further and emphasize on the concept of collective learning within an organization (Delamare & Winterton, 2005). Prahalad and Hamel (1990) claim that the way employees coordinate their diverse skills and integrate different components of technology, management, and even soft skills reflect on an organization's core competence. It becomes clear how competence plays a role within the organization despite the generic approach taken when defining and evaluating it (Delamare & Winterton, 2005). Subsequently, the issue of organizations lacking common understanding causes a small probability of effectively integrating competence evaluation and organization principles (Eraut, 1998; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). Boon and van der Klink (2002) describe this phenomenon as having 'a fuzzy cloud around competence', which opens up the debate of how to define it and effectively evaluate employees against it. This strengthens the argument for the urgent need to streamline a common understanding to an organization's definition of competency and how it is translated to required employee skills and capabilities (Boon & van der Klink, 2002).

### **Core competence in organizations**

The concept of core competence has been an increasingly discussed topic within organizations (Javidan, 1998). The emphasis on focusing on company resources and what they are good at, has led to organizations looking into their competences. The need to identify one or more competences within the organization and labeling them as core help in guiding managers (Delamare & Winterton, 2005). It acts as a guide for what managers need to focus on and which skill needs to move forward and flourish in the company (Javidan, 1998). Using this concept, it becomes crucial for organizations to carefully define and identify which competence they will communicate as core across their organization (Eraut, 1998). According to Prahalad and Hamel (1990), companies that fully understand their competencies and exploit them to match their vision and targets are more likely to be successful. However, companies must first identify their goals and factor in market changes to be able to understand if their current strong competencies still match and provide them with a competitive advantage (Porter, 2008). The main argument here is not only identifying core competencies available in the company but also identifying their relevance to the wider picture and direction of the organization (Porter, 2008). This is considered a difficult task for companies witnessing change. Radical market changes make the relevance phase of the decision more challenging (Tushman & Anderson, 1986). Since radical changes usually come with high uncertainty of what is needed exactly, identifying relevant core competencies becomes a challenge (Utterback & Abernathy, 1975).

As previously mentioned, common competencies are identified by companies; as a combination of production skills and technologies (Javidan, 1998). This is considered to be too narrow and

fails to identify other possibilities across the full value chain of the organization (Javidan, 1998). Theories on core competence are unfortunately very limited on what exactly the process to identify them is and they only focus on the importance of understanding a company's competencies according to Javidan (1998). Subsequently, theory available on the most common types of competencies available is examined. More specifically the competencies connected to outstanding performance in the 21st century. According to Boyatzis's (2008) research, peak performance seems to occur when one person's competencies are consistent to the job needs and company's culture. Three main clusters of competencies were identified by Boyatzis (2008); expertise, knowledge, and cognitive. A similar finding was also made by Harzallah and Vernadat (2002). They divided competencies into theoretical knowledge, know-how, and behavior. It can be argued that based on both theories, expertise is the same as theoretical knowledge, knowledge is the same as know-how and cognitive is the same as behavior. Boyatzis's (2008) claim is that the intersection of the three clusters seen below in figure 3 laid the 'best fit'. This 'best fit' can also be identified as the core competence since this is where the competitive advantage lies and accordingly becomes a core competence for an organization (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). Harzallah and Vernadat (2002), identify expertise as everything related to knowledge whether theoretical or processes. While know-how refers to applying these processes and theoretical knowledge to perform a specific action to provide the outcome desired. As for behavior, it encompasses how to act in a certain situation through using their cognitive and social abilities. This narrows down competencies types into three main clusters that group the more specific competencies. Each cluster represents different sets of competencies. For example, know-how, as previously mentioned focuses on the application of certain processes thus the ability to go through processes effectively and independently can be considered as a type of know-how competence. Expertise for instance includes all theoretical knowledge and education gathered as well as the technical base of how things work. Behavior on the other hand covers the soft skills that enables people to behave in certain situations. This can include political savviness and communication skills. These examples are developed based on several theories found in the field such as Delamare and Winterton (2005), Suhairom et al (2014), Harzallah and Vernadat (2002) and Walsh and Linton (2001).

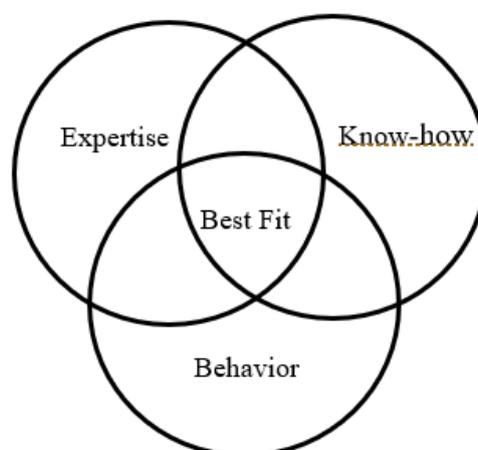


Figure 3 Different Competence Clusters (source: Harzallah & Vernadat, 2002)

## **The Challenge of Unifying Competency**

The presence of different ways of defining competency within research sheds some light on the challenge of unifying the intended meaning behind the word (Delamare & Winterton, 2005). Unlike Boon and van der Klink (2002), Synder and Ebeling (1992) describe competence as a functional judgment process that looks into the exact practices needed for a certain occupation. Hartle (1995) on the other hand, describes competency as characteristics that enable employees to perform well. These characteristics can be visible ones in terms of knowledge and skills or subtle such as traits and motives (Delamare & Winterton, 2005). Elkin (1990), narrows down the description to micro-level performance in relation to managerial attributes such as presentation skills and self-confidence levels. All these different descriptions found in the theory acts as proof that competency is closely related to a person's own perception and take on what is important to identify (Delamare & Winterton, 2005). Subsequently, it becomes a challenge to a) unify the meaning intended when referring to competence and b) align different parties on it. This strengthens the argument made to develop an appropriate typology that adapts to education, learning ability and the needed skills to advance in a career (Delamare & Winterton, 2005; Eraut, 1998; Kmec et al, 2010).

The challenge of unifying competence does not end with identifying a clear understanding; in fact, gender adds another dimension to the complexity. As previously mentioned, gender stereotyping at the work environment is listed as one of the top five barriers for women to enter leadership positions. This is extended but not limited to competency identification process (Acker, 2006). Researchers such as Holgersson (2013) and van den Brink (2016) argue that when it comes to competency in relation to gender, a continuous redefining process occurs to make it more fitting to male candidates. Essed (2004) even refers to this process as cloning and constructing sameness at the top management levels. She builds on Kanter's (1977) research and highlights how male managers look for other similar male coworkers to promote and add to their exclusive group (Essed, 2004). Additionally, women find themselves excluded from the discussions due to the perception of them being deficient when it comes to competence (Kmec et al, 2010; Acker, 2006). In fact, several researchers observed the competence is usually redefined as a way to keep gender order (Peterson, 2007; van den Brink, 2009). This is done through attributing masculine traits to competence which is performed during homosocial activities within the evaluation processes (Holgersson, 2012). In a recent study done on the hiring criteria given by Scandinavian companies to external headhunters to find the best candidates, it was discovered that even though communication about gender exclusions is present, there are still some gender assumptions made in the criteria (Tienari et al, 2013; Holgersson, 2012). In fact, assumptions about private life and managerial experience appear in the significant questions asked during the profiling process (Tienari et al, 2013). This homogenous categorization of women is argued to be a way of doing gender bias not only towards women but towards men as well since this assimilates that men do not have responsibility towards their families (Tienari et al, 2013). The ideal candidate profile becomes a tool to work against women and makes it more difficult to find possible women candidates that fit (Tienari et al, 2013). Another way is the age criteria set which is usually an age group where it is more common to find men candidates at a managerial level than women candidates since both genders don't progress at the same pace (Tienari et al, 2013). Headhunters in fact

mentioned in the study that they usually try to convince their clients to be more flexible with their criteria pertaining age and certain gendered assumptions, so they can be able to find women as well as men as potential fits (Tienari et al, 2013).

## **2.5 EVALUATION PROCESSES**

Employee evaluations also known as appraisals started to develop during the late 70s in the manufacturing industry (Mcconnel, 1986). Before then, evaluating processes were not present and employees were just expected to either deliver a certain outcome or just complete a certain task (Mcconnel, 1986). How these tasks or outcomes were delivered were not a main concern. The process of evaluation back then was primarily viewed as a ‘report card or a graded form’ by which employees are being judged and dismissed accordingly (Mcconnel, 1986). Managers would use it as an excuse to identify the non-performing employees and terminate their employment contract as a result (Mcconnel, 1986). This outlook on evaluations has changed over the years and is now being used for other goals. They are now looked at as a tool to interpret and understand certain job expectations versus reality which can then facilitate the decision-making process (Stanghellini et al, 2017). Today, performance appraisal process has become an integral part of human resource management function, in which several key developments and tasks are built on (Millmore et al, 2007; Baruch, 1996). Employee career development, promotion potential, and skill identification are only a few of the typical areas discussed according to evaluation results (Stanghellini et al, 2017; Baruch, 1996). Evaluation purposes can differ from one organization to another however there are two very common purposes found in theory, firstly the source of information for managers to take decisions about salary increases, promotions, training and potential development areas and secondly, as a feedback tool to facilitate common dialogue on performance and improvement areas (Millmore et al, 2007). Given the multiple areas affected and arguably depend on such a process put the objectivity of the evaluation under a lot of stress (Baruch, 1996). In case of any foul play in terms of discrimination or even unintentional bias and perception out in the performance evaluation the repercussions on the employees are massive. This puts the employees at a very vulnerable situation with very little control regarding the outcome.

### **The Role of Perceptions in Evaluations**

The lack of structure and clear criteria in the evaluation process allows for personal perceptions and unconscious biases to take control of the process. One of the main trends found as a result of increased informality within the evaluation process is gender bias (Acker, 2006). Holgersson (2013) argues that reproducing homogeneity becomes more likely since it is human nature to look for relatable candidates. It doesn’t automatically reflect that men’s outlook at women are negative. However, the complexity of homosocial activities causes men to narrow their focus to what they think they know which puts women at a disadvantage (Fawcett & Pringle, 2000; Harris, 2002). This unconscious bias of automatic preference to men deliberately turns the evaluation processes into an active tool working against women. Despite the common goal of wanting to have more women at top management, the current evaluation process act as barriers to said target due to the unstructured procedures involved in the system (Holgersson, 2013; van den Brink, 2009). Organizational cultures currently enable men to look for assimilators without

questioning and reflecting on their own preferences and biasness thus allowing the cycle of homosociality to continue to have men remain dominate in top management positions (Holgersson, 2012). Light must be shed on how identifying as pro-equality and talking about wanting to see more women at top positions is not enough, in fact it can be argued to be pointless if no change is taking place. Researchers have identified the importance of active work done by management in removing biases, reflecting on homosocial activities and attempting to change how they look at their candidates accordingly (Lemons & Jones, 2001). Arguably, proactive change in behavior and perceptions could lead to more women being given a real chance to reach top management levels (Lemons & Jones, 2001). Another argument for the presence of gender bias in evaluations is attributing performance to characteristics rather than ability. As previously mentioned some work ideals are gendered typically to male attributes, this allows evaluators to perceive men's good work to skill but a woman's to luck (Nieva & Gutek, 1980; Haefner, 1977; Millmore et al, 2007). The idea behind this judgment is the fact that if a woman shows ability in what is considered a male gendered skill then it must be temporary while if a man shows the same skill it is because he is skilled in this 'typical' male gendered sphere (Millmore et al, 2007).

Many researchers have examined the process of describing men and women experiences and the evaluation of their potential future development and career progression (Acker, 2006; Holgersson, 2012; Wahl & Höök, 2004). In a study done on a Swedish bank it was found that strengths and weaknesses are usually constructed in real time during the evaluation process itself (van den Brink et al, 2016). The main difference that shows how gender is being practiced is the differences in portraying these strengths and weaknesses. In the case of men, it was found that strengths were inflated, and weaknesses downplayed while the opposite was found in the case of women (van den Brink et al, 2016). Theory within the field of gender in organization has also highlighted the impact of going gender in evaluation processes, due to the subjectivity of the process's concepts such as competencies, quality, leadership are full of gendered connotations (Acker, 2006; Wahl, 1995). This shows how gender is deeply embedded in organizations and evaluation and promotion processes are only one part of the issue (Tienari et al., 2002). It all goes down to male constructs of what a leader should be, what high competence is and the social interactions that keep women alienated, which leads to having stereotyping and bias against women and their performance (Holgersson, 2012). The constant reiteration of homosocial activities and playing politics create a male dominant playing field with masculine attributed rules that women are excluded from by default (Acker, 2006; Wahl & Höök, 2007; Tienari et al., 2002; van den Brink et al, 2016).

### **Gender bias and its effects on evaluation processes**

Previous research has focused on how competencies are gendered through interpretations (Acker, 2006; Holgersson, 2012; Wahl & Höök, 2004). However, during the study conducted by van den Brink et al (2016), a more complex issue was exposed which is the subtlety of gender practices during the evaluation processes. The way an ideal candidate profile is described to only fit a certain male construct is what provides the freedom to managers to shift between skill requirements easily. Using vague descriptions that fit managers in a very general

way such as assertive, career oriented, and ambitious all seem from distance as clear candidate requirements. However, after taking a closer look, it becomes obvious that the phrasing has masculine undertones, which provide leeway for personal perceptions about ambition and assertiveness (van den Brink et al, 2016). For instance, many cases prove that women who are assertive are perceived negatively and even called aggressive while men who show assertiveness are seen as assertive (Acker, 2006).

Using this same logic, women candidates who show assertion can still not be considered for the management position since it is negatively perceived in their case (Acker, 2006; Wahl & Höök, 2007). More and more it becomes clear how double standard practices are being followed and as a result, women don't stand a fighting chance with all these perceptions and personal opinions left in the process. van den Brink et al's (2016) study exhibited how both men and women face gendered evaluation process however in the case of men, they tend to have a more positive outcome than in women's case. Furthermore, research in gender and performance appraisal field confirms that men are occasionally seen as high performers even if compared to women of equal performance levels (Bauer & Baltes 2002). Other arguments made to as why women experience bias during rating sessions are that there is a same-sex bias factor where men favor men and due to the minority position of women in management positions, women will most likely be assessed by men, which puts them at a disadvantage according to this claim (Festing et al, 2014). Subsequently, the focus of this work is to dig deep into the internal evaluation processes and attempt to unveil the gender practices and work on providing guidance and awareness on how to reduce gender bias.

Researchers have argued that organizations that lack having a structured process tend to fall in the pitfall of perception. Processes that offer criteria and detailed examples of a certain type of quality act as guidance through the decision-making process by assisting and encouraging a wider approach at assessing and reflecting (Heilman et al, 2015). It is clear how gender stereotype feeds into biases that can either be conscious or unconscious, which are then reflected during the execution of any process. More specifically evaluation, assessment centric situations, which lead to employee promotion are deeply impacted (Blair & Banaji, 1996). Blair and Banaji (1996) argue that unconscious bias is common in many organizations and that many organizations put in place a process that addresses this limitation. They argue that one way to do so is to spread awareness, stress on having clear criteria and fit models within processes (Blair & Banaji, 1996). This brings us to what can be seen as the huge contributor to unfair and heavy biased evaluations; the lack of fit model (Lee et al, 2013). Research argues that having a mismatch between what women are expected to be like versus what the job requires causes this problem with perception (Schein, 2001). Research has shown that common gender stereotype attributes things that are highly technical or require leading a big group of people to men, which then becomes a problem when the candidate being evaluated is a woman (Schein,2001). Many researchers have attributed that the current perception about women and their interest in technology and tendency to be nice to others, causes evaluators to get stuck and not sure how to make a decision (Heilman et al., 1989; Schein, 2001). This according to Lee et al (2013) is when the lack of having a fit model plays a huge role. He argues that instead of having a clear guidance on how to shift this unconscious bias and perception based on gender into a more

focused judgment based on the individual in front of, the evaluator who unconsciously sees them based on gender, which limits them to go beyond that fact (Lee et al, 2013).

Another contributor to the negative effects of gender stereotyping is ambiguity, which is usually the result of the lack of clear evaluation criteria or a common understanding of them (Heilman & Haynes, 2008). Some organizations leave what can be argued as too much room for the manager's own interpretation of the criteria presented. This ambiguity causes more damage when coupled with the lack of a fit model to clearly describe the needed attributes for a certain position (Lee et al, 2013). As a consequence, researchers found that the greatest act of gender bias is usually committed in these situations (Hodson et al., 2002). Biased expectations on performance have a stronger effect on decision making when managers are not given enough information. Another factor is the consistency or lack thereof the information that is given. Information provided needs to be enough and needs to encompass the full spectrum of decision points as well as be consistent (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994). If the criteria provided is not matching, assessing both strengths and weaknesses of a candidate becomes extremely difficult for the assessor which then backfires to having his/hers full discretion part of the process not the criteria itself (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005). The weight of the decision then shifts more towards the assessor's own perception of what is needed for the position and their opinion on the candidate (Lee et al, 2013). This unfortunately, puts more women than men at a disadvantage and the decisions tend to go against them (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005).

## **2.6 TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY EFFECTS ON GENDER EQUALITY**

Researchers within the gender research field have been calling for more transparent processes and more accountable decision-making protocols (Ledwith & Manfredi 2000; Rees 2004; Academy of Finland 1998; Allen 1988; Husu 2000; Ziegler 2001). This appeal comes from the deduction that if processes are more open for scrutiny and auditing from the outside world, it will pressure decision makers to be more objective and thus less gender biased (van den Brink et al, 2010). It puts the entire process of evaluation under the spotlight, which drives decision makers to ask for or even develop less obscure criteria (van den Brink et al, 2010). Granted the terms 'transparency' and 'accountability' can be argued to be ambiguous and allows for perception to play a huge role in defining them and even the context in which they are used (Florini, 1999). However, literature within political sciences and government offers a clear definition of the words which can be used (Neyland 2007; Siklos 2003). Government institutions define transparency as the presence of external visibility of internal practices within and organization, which is linked to the openness of such organizations to be audited (van den Brink et al, 2010). This decreases the likelihood of corruption henceforth the speculations that some decisions were miss-handled or biased (van den Brink et al, 2010). In fact, gender mechanisms researchers have discovered that transparency improves women's odds of getting promoted and reduced gender biases made within the decision process (Ledwith & Manfredi 2000; Rees 2004; Academy of Finland 1998). It seems that transparency and accountability play a significant role in the gender equality journey, especially when it comes to evaluation and promotion decisions (van den Brink et al, 2010).

It is worth mentioning that like most things, there is always a limitation. Implementing more transparent policies and processes is not going to fix the gender balance issue; it's not a quick fix and requires many other actions to support it. Having said that, moving more towards a more transparent process is one of the many steps towards gender balance that still needs to be taken. However, the expectation of its impact must be realistic, and its limitations must be known (Neyland 2007). Things such as personal agendas are factors that can limit the effect of these processes no matter how transparent they become (van den Brink et al, 2010). Another limitation is the fact that there could occur a backlash of actually legitimizing gender practices and making it more difficult to change (De Vries & van den Brink, 2016). Having things put on paper can aid the gendered practices even more can act as a barrier for future change (van den Brink et al, 2010).

## **2.7 DRIVING CHANGE**

Change is not easy, whatever the drive behind it is, it is only achieved through perseverance, in depth understanding of the show stoppers in place and a clear plan that encompasses solutions to as many expected problems as possible (De Vries & van den Brink, 2016). Since this issue is deeply rooted into the social psychology and behavior of people, it is crucial to handle this change very carefully (De Vries & van den Brink, 2016). It can even be argued that the main reason men in specific resist this kind of change is due to their current position (Kanter, 1977). Looking from a power perspective, men are currently belonging to the group that is mostly gaining from the current status quo (Wahl, 2014; Kvande & Rasmussen, 1994). Subsequently, giving birth to two different kinds of behaviors; the first one is a clear denial and push back to any change initiative and pointing out good performances and the risk to rock the boat (Devillard et al, 2016). The second behavior is a subtler one with a hint of political diplomacy behavior where men agree with the cause, but change is barely seen after some time (De Vries & van den Brink, 2016). Equality professionals point out this behavior as the discrepancy between talk and action (Wahl & Höök, 2007). The gender balance has become a very public initiative which pressured many top executives to make their stands very public and clear (Devillard et al, 2016). Since the public opinion on a company plays a part in most company's brand image, top executives are required to make public statements on how they stand in regard to that change (Green et al, 2017). However, if you dig deeper and assess what these companies have actually accomplished in terms of change, the result is found to be very minimal or close to zero change (De Vries & van den Brink, 2016). The claims of wanting to increase women in senior positions is usually followed by excuses on why the change is not happening fast enough (De Vries & van den Brink, 2016). This discrepancy between the promises made and the reality, exposes the dual messages sent out and the practices put in place in organizations (Wahl & Höök, 2007). In a way this mix of talk and lack of action becomes a new way of resistance (Wahl & Höök, 2007). The stakes are high due to the fact that if done incorrectly this wave of change can backfire and negatively affect women more. Thus, the understanding of the token position of minority groups like women in management positions and the current pressures available need to be taken into consideration (Ely & Meyerson, 2000).

## **Gender Transformative Tactics**

Researchers Ely and Meyerson (2000) developed a new framework to approach gender related change within organizations. They examined three common practices organizations have been using for the past 25 years and identified the main disadvantages of them, which act as show stoppers to progress. Accordingly, they developed a new approach that they believe will help drive the change more effectively (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). This approach has taken into consideration the complexity of the gender issue and the negative impacts that usually occur, as well as the backlash received as a result (Kolb et al, 1998). The first common approach taken by organizations ‘fix the women’ is built on the solid foundation that this is a women’s only issue and that the women are the only ones that have the key to fit this gender issue (Wahl, 2011). This approach usually focuses on coaching women to becoming more assertive when expressing their views and help in building their self-confidence (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). This approach treats women as the cause of the problem and they place the full burden of change on them (Wahl, 2011). This unfortunately sends the message that women are indeed defective, and lack management skills by nature thus need more attention to develop them (Marshall 1984; Wahl 1998).

Subsequently, confirming men’s dominance in the management position as the natural order of things (Kanter, 1977). Other than putting the full blame on women, this approach also does not change men’s behaviors and gender biases (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). In a way it ignores the root cause of the problem. The second common approach is the exact opposite, ‘values the women and their unique capabilities’ (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). This approach stems from the differences between females and males and shines a huge spot light on women in management positions (Kanter, 1977). This may seem to be a good approach at first, but researchers argue that this only strengthen stereotypes and also ignores the process in place that give birth to these stereotype (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). One can argue this approach unwillingly gives more ammunition to men to highlight women’s stereotyped differences (Wahl, 2011). The third and final approach used by organization which can be argued to be the most commonly used one today is ‘create equal opportunities’ which focuses on reducing structural barriers and leveling the playing grounds (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). This is done through putting new compensation policies such as work flexibility and benefits, as much as this helps a lot with retaining women and helping women advance more it still keeps the problem at the women’s end (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). This approach is sometimes perceived in a way as women receiving special treatment since the masculine career route is a vertical one while horizontal movements and discontinuities, are more reflective of many women’s lives (Festing et al, 2014).

## **Reaction to Change**

Change management leverages several basic frameworks and tactics to manage efforts towards organizational change with a main purpose of maximizing benefits and improving its competitive advantage while containing any negative impacts on the workforce and environment (Kotter & Heskett, 2011). However, there are several challenges for driving change that include the current culture, pressures, and reasons for the change itself and since

these differ from one organization to another there is no ‘one size fits all’ method (Kotter, 1995). Ordinarily, with the introduction of any type of change comes strong consequences (Kazmi & Naarananoja, 2014). Born (1995), argues that the most common employee reaction is resistance through an instinctive defensive reaction. Therefore, management should acknowledge and consider this resistance within their plan for change (Kazmi & Naarananoja, 2014).

This notion of resistance that is argued to be inevitable can however be factored in change deployment plans. In fact, one of the well-known models for deploying change; Lewin’s model is based on the guaranteed occurrence of change (Lines et al, 2015). Lewin’s (1947) model of unfreeze, move, and freeze approach for organizational change states that the presence of driving forces either brings about or resists change (Lines et al, 2015). Researchers have even gone to lengths to understand the reasons behind such an intuitive behavior on the individual level. As a result, three dimensions were described; cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Lines et al, 2015; Erwin & Garman, 2010; Isabella, 1990). Cognitive tackles how employees perceive change and reflect on how their own capabilities will match this new role or process (Lines et al, 2015). Affective examines the emotions and psychology behind how the employee feels about the change (Lines et al, 2015). And behavioral observes employee’s actions towards the change; this dimension is where the resistance of change is revealed (Lines et al, 2015; Erwin & Garman, 2010).

Gender equality work is usually met with resistance by the men in the organization (Kvande & Rasmussen, 1994). Kvande and Rasmussen (1994) attribute this reaction by men to feeling threatened by women since they bring change to the existing gender arrangements. This arrangement refers to the male dominance and superiority that Acker (1992) also mentions in her research. Men perceive women as a source of disruption to their current arrangement in which they are powerful and have the upper hand on the work environment (Acker, 1992; Kvande & Rasmussen, 1994). Other men see the movements towards gender equality as a reserves discrimination act where men are discriminated against in the name of equality as mentioned by one of the managers interviewed in Kvande and Rasmussen (1994) study. This shows that men’s negative perceptions of gender equality work vary and taking them all into consideration could go a long way in making a positive change (Lines et al, 2015).

### **Preservation of Power**

Narrowing down the focus on the gender subject as the main reason for the change mentioned here, it is found that men currently control the most powerful resources (Connell, 2005). Resources, which require real implementation of gender reforms, are usually headed by men, thus making them the gatekeepers for gender equality. Their active role can be argued to be essential to keep the change moving (Connell, 2005). Currently, there are many debates when it comes to gender reform that slows the change movement (Connell, 2005). These debates begin with how the gender reform topic came to the public debate as a main item on the agenda (Connell, 2005). The gender issue has been presented from the beginning as a woman related issue, that does not involve men thus it became looked at as women’s business and focuses only on women concerns (Connell, 2005). This alienation of men from the beginning fed into the

segregation currently present when gender reform is mentioned (Connell, 2005). This disregard of men's contribution and how it is considered a discourse for men as well has led to men not taking part in the conversation of gender reform (Connell, 2005). In the occasion of men being involved in the discussion they have quite often become portrayed as the problem and the reason women need gender reform (Connell, 2005). Subsequently, a backlash happens were men find themselves in need to defend themselves rather than focus on offering support and so they remove themselves from the gender reform conversation (White, 2000). This retreat causes more harm than good to the change process since, as mentioned earlier, men are the ones who control most resources needed for change to happen (White, 2000).

On the other hand, proposing a new approach that includes men's issue can weaken the equality position and women's authority gathered in the policy area so far (Connell, 2005). In fact, there has been significant evidence and arguments that men resist the change towards gender reform through doubt and opposition (Collinson & Hearn 1996). A survey conducted by Connell (2005) exposes that older men in power are actively opposing the change through heavy masculinized organizational culture and exclusive group environment. In some occasions, men openly accept change, however continue to behave the same way (Connell, 2005). Kanter (1977) argues that the male dominant group aims to preserve their power positions and become defensive through creating closed circles. This kinship system as referred to by Kanter (1977) makes sure women are excluded and power is kept in their hands. One of the findings made by Kanter (1977) was that even women who tried to assimilate and become 'one of the guys', often felt tired by the end of it and realized how much energy they had to put into fitting in. Accordingly, it was commonly found that these women end up deciding not continuing to try to fit in and somehow got excluded for not 'playing the game' (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). There are numerous ways to resist change thus it is difficult to pin point one method to ensure gender reform. However, understanding the reasons behind the resistance and working on them increases the chances of moving forward (Kotter & Heskett, 2011).

### **Concealed Gain from Status Quo**

Imagining the current male dominant, power centric environment could lead to the assumption that all women must be working to change this. However, research has found that women who were able to make it despite of these conditions are more resistant to change than men (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). These integrated women are referred to as "Queen Bees" by Kanter (1977) and according to Staines et al (1973) they are usually perceived unhelpful to other women. In fact, they are deemed to be reluctant to promote other females out of fear that they might negatively impact their career by making them less 'unique' in the organization (Davidson & Cooper, 1992). Queen Bees are actually benefiting from being a minority within the organization and maintaining this position drives their career forward (Staines et al, 1973). These acts by women identified as Queen Bees, are ways to normalize marginalizing women and supporting assumptions made about common norms (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). It is also argued by Simpson and Lewis (2005) that this concealment of privilege is a way for women to preserve their own power. Another way women unwillingly support and reinforce being marginalized is by seeking invisibility (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Kanter (1977) argues that

women tend to seek being unseen and remain in the shadows; she explains that this is a coping mechanism used to avoid over-exposure and its consequences. Women feel pressured to outperform and that their success not only reflects on them but also to the whole gender (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). This weight of representing all women in the company can sometimes lead women to ‘withdraw’ deciding to not take on these roles and remain in the shadows (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Tyler and Cohen (2010) argue that withdrawing has its consequences on reflecting negatively on women’s sense of worth thus diluting their performance perception.

Regarding the Queen Bees referred to earlier, women who find it easy to reject pointing out gender differences and find a way to excel in a “male” standard of management are often described to behave like men and assimilate to become insiders (Kanter, 1977). These women distance themselves from any practices or initiatives done to celebrate gender differences and in fact marginalize those who do (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Overall, these acts of assimilation and refusing to admit differences are argued to be a way of obstructing change done by women (Tyler & Cohen, 2010). Additionally, the other approach of staying in the shadows and being invisible also deters change since it feeds into their identified disadvantages and hinders their own work from being seen (Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

### **The Changing Trend in Society**

There are many documented cases of positive action taken towards gender equality, Connell (2005) argues that roles are changing within the society which blurs the past’s ideology of gender roles. This provides hope that gender equality will occur. Signs of men becoming more gender stereotype aware and begin to see things differently, with countries currently adopting paternity policies (Connell, 2005). Additionally, the outdated focus of men competing in the workplace and increasing the hours spent at work has shifted towards seeking work life balance to spend more time with their family has contributed positively towards gender reform. Associating women only to the need of spending time with the family is no longer true since now more men aspire to it (Sabo & Gordon 1995). These changes in behaviors act as a positive indication towards gender reform. Consequently, applying change models that fit within an organization’s culture becomes vital for driving effective change. If we use Kvande and Rasmussen’s (1994) types of organizations; static hierarchies and dynamic networks, it is found that the same approach to drive change cannot take place. They identified companies where men systematically have better opportunities than women as hierarchical organizations while companies with no clear variation in opportunities related to gender as flexible network organizations (Kvande & Rasmussen, 1994).

### **Organization Culture’s Link to Market Conditions**

Kvande and Rasmussen (1994) found that based on trends that hierarchical organizations usually operate in stable markets while flexible networks operate in turbulent and changing markets as a result the type of organization structure is affected to some extent by the market in which it operates. According to their research modern organizations encourage political savvy behavior due to their heavy reliance on cooperation to carry out tasks while competing

over limited career opportunities as well (Kvande & Rasmussen, 1994). These clearly two conflicting behaviors end up in progressive competition as people go higher in the hierarchy, which is argued to become the main bases of politics being conducted (Burns, 1961). Therefore, for static hierarchy organizations homosocial reproduction at top management levels becomes the main political goal to preserve power of the existing management and control competition (Kvande & Rasmussen, 1994). On the other hand, for flexible network organizations the diverse resources of their employees are used to create challenges and opportunities across. This creates a thriving environment for trying new ways. Kvande and Rasmussen (1994) argue that both organizations are gendered but their approach in incorporating gendered political systems differ, one focuses on limiting and controlling the competition to one dominant party and the other focuses on expanding and taking advantage of everyone's contribution. Acker (1992) argues the presence of gendered professional identity where the focus is on how men and women are supposed to act when they reach top positions. Women are seen as a threat to existing gender male dominance and exclusiveness especially when the company is a male dominated one (Kvande & Rasmussen, 1994).

### **3. METHOD**

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This chapter focuses on the suitable methods applied to gather empirical material. It concentrates on research design, primary and secondary sources, and how data gathering was applied and analyzed with a critical analysis of each phase.

#### **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

##### **Methodology Paradigm**

This research has an interpretive approach, where it's anchored to the view point that reality is not a single truth and it's the creation of the individuals of a group (Crotty, 1998). The ontology of this research is explained through observing what people do and how they behave in a given situation. As a result, in order to understand what people do and how they behave in a given situation, one must unveil the subtle meaning of these activities. This view point looks beyond the activities and attempts to understand the process that lead to them. To achieve this, the research will rely on theory in terms of how other researchers analyzed their observations (Crotty, 1998). Subsequently, the method of achieving the needed information will highly depend on observations to the culture of the organization, qualitative interviews that focus on how a certain process is executed and the environment in which they are done and understanding the history of the organization to build a context for all the data gathered.

##### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose for the research is to investigate in what way does the male dominant practices within industrial companies contribute to preventing a gender balanced top management team. Due to the complexity of the research topic in terms of being multilayered and effected by multiple dimensions, the evaluation and promotion process will be the main point of interest.

Additionally, since the intended contribution is to bring in empirical data from industrial organizations, Company A will be the main source of the field data gathering phase. This research is considered a relatively common issue that many companies have not found the main root cause of it yet (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). As a result, a combination of exploratory approach was taken to understand the research theory available and to identify what is lacking along with an interpretive approach to identify what exactly is the issue at hand (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015; Crotty, 1998). As mentioned earlier the research will focus on evaluation and promotion process within the R&D management department within Company A. Therefore, this report is framed to explore relevant gender issues at work, evaluation and promotion criteria, deploying processes, work culture and biases for technical focused organizations. It will also identify the underlying issues within the current process and suggest specific process improvements and recommend a new approach to close the gender gap within top management positions.

### **Process of the Research**

Due to the interpretivist nature of the research, the main method for of data gathering is interviews however other methods such as theory and literature review are used to better analyze and interpret the data gathered. Researchers within the quantitative field such as Blomkvist and Hallin (2015) argue that deciding on a method should not be made early on in the research process. However, given that the research's nature is embedded within the organization's context and behaviors, it becomes crucial to have an internal insight. Thus, it was agreed with the company to conduct manager interviews for qualitative research. The nature of our topic is considered a fairly new concept in terms of application. Many researchers argue that gender imbalance has been present in every workforce and it is not a new phenomenon, in fact many researchers have dedicated their lives to study the different spectrums of such a topic. However, when it comes to application and real steps taken to reform it is still a long way to go. If we look at the number of women in top management positions across the top fortune 500 we will discover they account for 5.4% only (Devillard et al, 2016). So much research has focused on understanding and testing theories by which they have only scratched the surface of this issue (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). What is clearly lacking is a successfully proven approach on how to structurally improve the current situation. Due to the many layers of such a topic, it becomes very challenging to narrow down the main cause of the issue and work to eradicate it. This issue is a result of many factors that had led to the current picture of top management thus the work to improve it needs a continuous empirical contribution which focuses on one organization at a time. Only then does research begin to cover the different situations and gain a more diverse and deep understanding of the situation and then suggest a concrete framework to approach such predicaments. The ability to understand the application of evaluation and promotion processes and reasoning behind it brings depth to the research (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Subsequently, the proposed purpose is best achieved through an exploratory and interpretive approach. Exploring the topic through theory and interpreting the reasoning behind certain activities brought up during manager interviews are an essential part to answering the research questions and achieving the purpose (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015).

## **Outcome of Research**

The outcomes of the research are aimed towards reaching an accurate *explanans* for the *explanandum*. Explanans refers to the usage of data gathered to understand a certain phenomenon that is under study while the explanandum is the phenomenon itself (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015). This is an essential part of the research and the main driver for the research design (Liamputtong, 2013). The use of an interpretive approach to gather material that is relevant to the explanandum is one of the outcomes for this research (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015). The research found is then understood and analyzed through theory to be used as an explanans (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015). Finally, the second objective is to reach a potential recommendation to how industrial organizations such as Company A can change the current male dominant culture and practices.

## **3.2 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES**

Data sources are usually categorized into primary or secondary sources depending on their role within the research (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015). In this research, since the focus is highly dependent on the environment and processes found within Company A, all observations and information obtained through interviews are considered primary data. Additionally, this data was produced by the author of this report which strengthens the decision to consider it as a primary source. On the other hand, the literature review conducted according to academic articles, journals, and industry reports are considered as secondary sources in which they take the role of proving a solid ground for outlining proven approaches. Theory provided a very holistic view of the research topic and was used as a tool to anchor assumptions and recommendations made.

## **3.3 DATA COLLECTION**

Applicable data for this research was collected through literature review and semi-structured interviews. The section summarizes the approach of these collection tools.

### **Literature Review**

Theory found acted as a main source to understand the different approaches researchers took when it came to understanding gender perspective within work ideals, organizations highly focused on technical competencies, type of biases experienced by women at the work environment, and the different decision-making activities that hinders women's progression past a certain point. Additionally, theory on the different tactics taken to execute change to improve gender balance within management positions and the repercussions of each tactic was analyzed. The literature review combined these different angles to provide a general understanding of the topic, specific insights into the main areas of interest for this research field and gathering previous work done by researchers (Collis & Hussey, 2014). To be more specific, academic databases were used for discovering scientific articles and material (e.g. KTHB Primo, IEEE Xplore, JSTOR, SpringerLink) as well as journals specific to management and gender studies. Keywords used included; *competence and gender, work biases, stereotypes at*

*work, promotion process and transparency, masculine gendered work, effects of skill diversity at work, HR practices to drive change, and management's approach to evaluation* to name a few. To complement the academic literature on the subject with industry performance related insights, reports from consulting firms were also used.

## **Interviews**

An interview is defined as a data collection method that allows for increased understanding of a phenomenon (Liamputtong, 2013). As mentioned earlier, this research highly depends on an interpretive methodology as a way to collect qualitative data and understand the phenomenon of evaluation and promotion process within Company A. Martin (2006) argues the necessity of studying the actual sayings and doings of managers to unveil the subtle forms of gender bias that shape the work environment. The main reasoning for this, stems from the current position of many organizations such as company A. Claiming to promote equality in management positions but failing to provide evidence to a gender balanced management team raises many questions to say the least. Hence, Martin (2006) in van den Brink et al (2016) stresses on the importance of understanding the dynamics of gender and how it is practiced in organizations. As a result, semi-structured interviews were used to get a better understanding of how the evaluation and promotion process at Company A works. Interviews were then used to discover patterns among the different departments within R&D and the possible weak spots that need to be addressed due to their contribution of gender bias. In semi-structured interviews, predefined sets of questions were drafted as a base to guide the interviewee however during each interview a degree of tailoring was allowed (Collis & Hussey, 2014). This provided the flexibility to adapt to unexpected insights and new discoveries. Descriptive and clarifying questions were an integral part of the interview (Bolander & Sandberg, 2013). This was done to satisfy the main goal of identifying the specific truth of this given activity of promoting an employee to management. To be more specific, the questions were framed in a funnel like structure similar to the approach taken by Bolander & Sandberg (2013) in their interpretive research. Questions began with a general “what is competence”, “what are the steps taken by the manager to promote a candidate” followed by a more specific question “what are the types of competencies candidates need to have”, “what are the criteria used to evaluate candidates for promotion”, “do you use any supporting documents to help make the decision, if yes? What are they”. The research conducted interviews with 32 managers from various departments within R&D. The ratio of female versus male was equally split 50%-50% for a fair representation of results. The interviews lasted around 35 minutes and were audio-recorder and partially transcribed. The analysis was based on the notes taken during the interviews and the partial transcriptions made. The main intent was to study the sayings and doings of the managers to be able to identify common practices to examine later on and recommend new ways to promote equality (van den Brink et al, 2016).

## **Interview Structure**

This structure was developed based on research on how other interpretive researches were approached. Research done by Bolander & Sandberg (2013) and Martin (2006) provided theory

on how to approach the interview structure process. They provided insight on how to have a suitable semi-structured interview that creates the right environment for information flow yet within a certain theme. Furthermore, the design of the interviews was based on an epistemological approach in which the main intent was to reduce the gap between the research field and the researcher through spending time with the managers and examining them closely at the company itself (Yilmaz, 2013).

This interview was divided into three sections, each section had a main focus area. The focus areas were competence, evaluation and promotion process, as well as gender factors and reflections. Each section was structured to be able to build an idea of how managers perceive, act, react, and see opportunities within that section theme. The first section focused on competence and how managers within the company define and perceive it. As well as understanding what types of competences the managers believe are important and look for when evaluating their team. Moreover, understanding how the managers reflect on the company's focus in terms of competence and how they implement this within the promotion and evaluation process. The second section focuses on the evaluation process itself. Followed by mapping the current process according to the manager's perspective a brief description of the steps taken was discussed further. This enabled getting a better understanding on the quality of discussion, how this assessment of high potential is done, and what kind of feedback do peer group managers commonly give. Given that managers identified the possibility for improvement within the process, a series of follow up questions were asked pertaining what kind of suggestions they were referring to. Questions such as "what do you think of the current process?", "What kind of other support do you need to help you more in the process if any?" and "what would you change or improve in the current process?". These questions were used to enable the continuous flow of ideas from the managers interviewed. They acted as a way to provide managers with a theme to participate in. The third and final part of the interview focused on the gender aspect of evaluation and promotion process as well as the culture within Company A when it comes to perception. This part was more focused on getting to listen to managers reflect on how they saw Company A from the gender perspective as well as get a chance to reflect why it is the way it currently is. Questions such as "what are your thoughts about the findings of last year's thesis 'women do not make it to top management because they are less technical competent'", "what can drive change?", "how can you attract more women to apply to your department?", "what should women do differently if any to help themselves?", and "what do you think about the current top management role to achieve gender balance?".

### **Sampling Strategy**

The sampling process of 'selecting part of the population as a representation for the main aim of determining patterns and behaviors of the whole population' (Merriam-Webster, 2017b). This step was of extreme importance in terms of determining what is the best sample that can satisfy the needs of the research as best as possible. Due to the impracticality of deciding to interview everyone (Marshall, 1996), this critical step required some prior understanding of the whole population to identify which segment will provide the most useful insight and prove to be relevant and reliable to the research as a whole.

Subsequently, several factors were taken into consideration when deciding on the sample strategy. In order to make sure the thought process behind choosing a strategy has taken into consideration as many factors as possible, a recommended guideline was followed. Boddy (2016) recommended drawing a matrix with the different segments in which the population falls within. In this research the main segments chosen to be considered were gender and management level. Additionally, when it came to sample size research has shown that a range of 25-35 interviews is optimal for high quality of gathered data (Marshall et al, 2013). A sample size beyond that range was proven to pass the saturation point and was considered to be large (Marshall et al, 2013). Consequently, the main data gathered came from 32 managers. However, when it came to interviews conducted to validate the understanding and provide context they did not comply with the abovementioned guidelines. This is a result of the reasoning behind these additional interviews to provide a solid ground that was used later to anchor the recommendation.

Another consideration taken as part of the strategy was the homogeneity of the sample and the main purpose of this research. Since the main focus of this research was to collect data from both gender perspectives, it was adamant to maintain an equal gender representation. As a result, the sample size focused on having a 50-50 split within each different management level that was included in the research. This was done to ensure that both perspectives were taken among each management level equally in order to improve the reliability of the data. Table 1 shows the selection criteria as well as the sample size while table 2 shows how the sample size was distributed in terms of gender and management levels.

Table 1: Participants' Selection Criteria

Level	Sample Size		Selection Criteria	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Section Managers	7	7	- All women except those in UH and any other supporting function	- Core Functions: "E, N, R"
Group Managers	10	10	- A minimum of 5 years and max of 10 years as a group manager	

Table 2: Gender and Position Distribution of Participants

Management Position	Female	Male	Average number of years on this level	Average number of years within company
Group Manager (1 <sup>st</sup> line)	9	10	5	15
Section Manager (2 <sup>nd</sup> line)	6	7	7	15

Table 3 below, presents the number of managers interviewed within the different management levels with an assigned code. This code used across the report when a certain manager is quoted. These codes are only meant to provide information about the managerial level and gender of the interviewee. Any other information would take away from the anonymity of the individual and does not abide with the ethical considerations taken to build trust through a communicated anonymous interview process.

Table 3: Interview Participants' Code Assignment

Management Position	Code	Female	Male
Group Manager (1 <sup>st</sup> line)	G	G1 to G9	G10 to G19
Section Manager (2 <sup>nd</sup> line)	S	S1 to S7	S8 to S13

**Confidentiality**

In order to remain abiding by the signed non-disclosure agreement with Company A; names of the interviewed managers are not stated in any of the documents or reports. Additionally, data gathered was codified to eliminate any direct linking any specific manager. In terms of ethics, all interviewees were provided by a clear explanation of the purpose of the research, their contribution and how the data gathered would be used in the report. An extra step of confirming with the company’s contact person that the way the company has been anonymized is satisfactory. Jamal and Bowie (1995), stress on the importance of clearly explaining the purpose of the interviews as well as having a transparent communication with all stakeholders involved to reflect on the ethical considerations taken during the research.

**3.4 STRATEGY FOR ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In order to consider this research as complete, the research questions must be answered (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015). Hence, the process of answering the research questions was conducted through the use of the combination of methods chosen for tis research. Table 4 shows how the research questions were answered by a specific data collection method.

Table 4 Methods for answering Research Questions

Research Question	Method	Clarifications
RQ1	Interviews and Theory	Chapter 2, Chapter 4 (4.2 Competence) and Chapter 5
RQ2	Interviews and Theory	Chapter 2, Chapter 4 (4.2 Competence) and Chapter 5 (5.1 Gendered perceptions on competence)
RQ3	Interviews and Theory	Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 (4.3 Evaluation and Promotion process) and Chapter 5 (5.2 Evaluation)
RQ4	Interviews, Theory Consulting reports	Chapter 4 (Managers' perceptions on lack of women) and Chapter 6 (Recommendations derived from key findings)
Main RQ	All the above	Chapter 2, Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6

### 3.5 CRITICAL EVALUATION OF QUALITY OF ANALYSIS

#### Research Quality

Ability to critically reflect on one's research is considered to be highly important. This adds to the objectivity outlook at sources, theory and limitations (Yin, 2013). Undoubtedly, this work is not without some limitations.

#### Criteria used to assess the Method

Qualitative researchers argue that instead of using the quantitative criteria words, such as reliability, validity, and objectivity when criticizing the quality, other words would be more appropriate to use to express the critical examination of the work. This argument is deeply imbedded to the notion that using qualitative specific terms could be misleading and having terms specific to the qualitative approach would be clearer (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Steinke, 2004). Denzin & Lincoln (1998) argue that since interpretations of context-bound cases are the essence of qualitative research, traditional thinking of reliability and generalizability are irrelevant. As a result, the evaluation of the quality of analysis will be done based on the trustworthiness and authenticity of the method used (Yilmaz, 2013). This is done not only based on the accuracy of the results from the author's standpoint but also from the participants and

readers of the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Additionally, having an interpretive approach negates the applicability of the traditional evaluation of methods criteria. As a result, the concepts of credibility and dependability have been introduced (Yilmaz, 2013).

### **Credibility**

In terms of the credibility of the method used, a list of questions compiled by Miles and Huberman (1994) are put to use. Triangulation of the gathered information showed many converging conclusions however some divergence also occurred. Even though this might be considered negatively effecting credibility, however this divergence in conclusions was in itself a validation to the theory found in the research field. In terms of coherency of the findings, several follow up questions were used to secure understanding as well as confirming the understood message and developed insight. Seeking examples for both positive and negative experiences mentioned within the interview was included in the questions developed. This was done in order to have material to be used either to validate later with other interviewees or to be provided as examples to strengthen the arguments developed. Another aspect considered in the research was the attempt to argue for both sides and not take any of the finding as a complete truth. This was done to maintain a neutral point of view and only judge the findings based on explaining these observations through theory found. Moreover, with the nature of qualitative research and it being fundamentally people oriented, developing a strong connection and trusting environment was crucial (Yilmaz, 2013). Therefore, interviews were long and negative cases observed were not dismissed. In fact, more elaboration of the case was requested.

However, in terms of the accuracy of conclusions gathered based on the participants involved some were not treated as fully accurate since there is room for potential bias and subjectivity. Due to the sensitivity of the topic and how closely related it is to the interviewees themselves it is only natural that some might be unconsciously bias not to give a negative picture. Therefore, the potential of over simplification of issues as well as downplaying negatives and personal opinions were accounted for. Additionally, when it comes to the participants selected, the credibility level can be considered to be low. This was a result of not being able to personally select the interviewed managers. A company supervisor was responsible for selecting the managers taking part of this research. However, as an attempt to negate the negative impact on the credibility, the criteria for selection was developed personally and provided to the company supervisor to use.

Overall, except for few limitations the credibility of the method used is considered to be high. Taking the role of the devil's advocate, arguing for both sides and using mostly theory as a base for final conclusions enhances the credibility of the method used. The gather information was considered to plausible and provided input from different parties within the company. Additionally, a way to maintain objectivity was through selecting an equal number of managers from both genders within a management level. This provided both genders an equal weight and contribution to the research.

### **Dependability**

Dependability focuses on the method process itself and its consistency over time (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Given the importance of understanding the current processes and culture

within Company A, clarity on my presence as well as the intent of my research was crucial. This was done through the company supervisor sending out a short description email to all the selected managers. The email described the importance of taking part and the intent of the interview as well as my role clearly. Additionally, before the interview process began all interviewees were taken through the structure of the interview as well as the focus on understanding current practices. This transparency provided interviewees to understand how their answers will be used in the research and what the main goal out of the interview is. Also, interviewees were given the chance to ask clarifying questions and feedback to help create a more trusting and friendly environment. This increases the dependability of the method since all participants were aware of the role and status of interviews (Yilmaz, 2013). The presence of only one interviewer made the process of consistency of approach and questions much easier. This as well reflects positively on the dependability according to theory in the research methods field.

In terms of bias checks, information related to the background of interviewees and their history within the company was taken into consideration. In addition to this, data was mapped to represent each management level before analysis to spot any outliers or major differences. This helped in having better insight on what seems to be in-line with the majority of the findings and what was considered to be very different. However, with the exception of having questions reviewed externally the data itself was not reviewed which might reduce dependability. It can be argued that the observations made are based on only one person so bias and subjectivity can affect the analysis (Yilmaz, 2013).

Finally, in terms of research questions, they were defined as much as possible given the nature of the research field itself. Since the field of organizational management and gender perspective depends highly on viewpoints and has several factors affecting it, narrowing down the research questions from the start was a challenge. Therefore, the research questions were clearly defined after the fact and after looking at the data gathered from the interviews. The design of the research itself was done to help understand as much as possible the culture. It left room for the data gathered in interviews to lead the research on where the focus should be. Theory acted as an aiding tool to expect the direction however the interviews had to confirm. As a result, the dependability of the research can be argued to be low.

### **3.6 RESEARCH ETHICS**

The importance of taking into consideration ethical correctness is vital when it comes to research in social science (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Abiding by the ethical principles speaks to the transparency and quality of the research (Yin, 2013). As a result, the main four principles recommended by the Swedish Research Council were followed throughout this research. These ethical principles include; information, consent, confidentiality, and good use (Sveriges Ingenjörer, 2017).

In terms of information, as mentioned earlier the purpose of the research as well as the intent of how the information gathered will be used was presented clearly to each participant. When it comes to consent, all participants were sent an email to ask if they were interested to take part

of the research and only those who agreed were contacted to schedule the interview. Additionally, those who requested more information prior to providing their consent were given an over view of the research and its purpose. Participants were even asked in the beginning if they consent for recording the interview for future references. The third principle of confidentiality was covered through anonymizing all participants. Also, all recordings and collected data were stored securely with only the report author having access to relevant material, was treated in accordance to signed non-disclosure agreements and data collected was only discussed with others who had signed a similar non-disclosure agreement. In fact, the Chatham House Rule when it comes to the freedom of using the information received but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the participant is revealed, was followed (Remenyi, 2011). This ensured that identity of the participants was left anonymous even to the project's supervisors. Finally, in terms of the last ethical principle pertaining good use, data collected was only used for the sole purpose of the research and will be destroyed once the project ends.

#### **4. MANAGERS ACCOUNTS OF THE EVALUATION AND PROMOTION PROCESSES AND NEED FOR CHANGE AT COMPANY A**

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In this chapter, relevant information about earlier work done within R&D organization at Company A is presented to provide context for the work done by this research. The empirical data gathered is also summarized as findings from the interpretive methods approach taken. 32 interviews have been conducted within Company A's management team to represent how managers within the company perceive competence, evaluate and promote their employees to management positions as well as get their input on how change can be introduced.

The presented results are divided into earlier work done at Company A, how competence is defined and looked at by managers, evaluation and promotion processes currently taking place, manager's suggestions to drive change and a more gender balance management team.

##### **4.1 COMPANY A AND EARLIER WORK FOR CHANGE**

Company A; a traditional Swedish industrial organization with focus on Research and Development 'R&D' and Production. Efforts towards the gender equality challenge began within the company several years ago. This encompasses steps taken to understand the company culture and its awareness about the issue. In Spring 2017, a master thesis was done at Company A to investigate both the current conditions for female managers as well as their perceptions of what it takes to be a female manager within the male dominated technical as part of their work on gender equality. The purpose of the research was achieved through understanding the effects of male dominance on women's opportunities to become managers themselves. As a result, four barriers were identified to be present within Company A that act as obstacles for women's further development into the top leadership positions. One of the four barriers was the bias within work environment and the gendering of technical competence. Since then R&D HR department has been working with the topic of gender balance a lot and started with a clear focus on the number distribution within the different management levels. These efforts have been received with mixed feelings across the organization even though were proven to succeed on the first managerial level. On the other hand, very minute changes were seen across the other

higher management levels, which begs the question of whether a quantitative focus is the right approach. Following this study, several steps were taken to work on promoting more women into management as well as expanding into developing a more diverse culture.

One of the visible changes following these steps was the increase in the number of women being promoted to the first line of management ‘group manager’. However, the number of women managers in higher management positions remained unhinged. It is worth mentioning as well that one of the strategies introduced by Company A is an enforced 1:1 gender quota for applicants. This quota requires managers to have their final choice between applicants be equally divided in gender (i.e.: choose between one female and one male applicant). This is done as an attempt to create a more balanced system where both genders have equal opportunities. Subsequently, the focus taken within this research is to understand the current promotion and evaluation process to have more insight on how women and men reach these top management positions. This focus is also expected to shed some light on the reasons behind this seeming career bottleneck following the ‘group manager’ position. The approach taken is based on the importance of understanding the current situation and current doing of these processes to pin point patterns. It is only through observing the gender marking of roles taking place by managers does one have sufficient grounds to provide an explanation. This is done through listening and taking note of words used by managers to explain current perceptions, their own understandings of the process and how they execute them. Figure 4 below provides a visual on the management levels to better understand the current hierarchy levels within Company A.

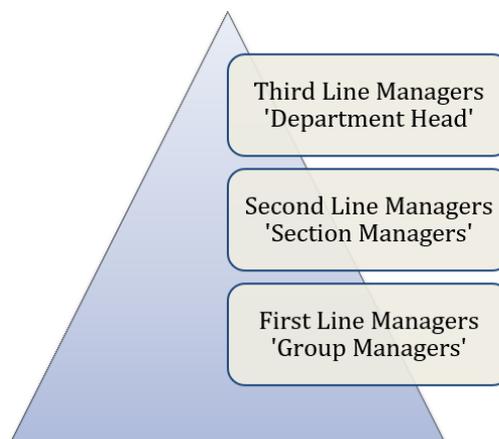


Figure 4 Management Levels in Company A (bottom represents early level, top represents higher level)

## 4.2 PERCEPTIONS OF COMPETENCE

The first part of the interview focused on understanding how managers from different functions, genders, and management levels define competence as one of the first focus areas for all interviews. Since the managers interviewed belonged to both first line (group manager) and second line (section manager), to avoid confusion the word manager will be used when referring to both levels unless mentioned otherwise. Managers were asked to explain what competence meant to them and what the different types possible are, within Company A.

## **Types of Competences**

Two main types of competences were identified by the majority of managers; technical and social competence. All managers identified technical competence, as a very basic skill needed that was expected due to the technical environment Company A operates in. Even though the perception of what technical competence is, differed across the departments and managers, it is however safe to say that technical competence is one type of competence managers at Company A clearly identified. When managers were asked to elaborate more on technical competence, the answers varied from very detailed knowledge within specific fields such as the engine and the importance of having a master's degree within a technical background to the very basic exposure to technology and an innovative working environment and the expressed interest to learn more within the technical field. These differences were observed depending on the specific functions these managers came from; the more technical oriented the function the more detailed explanations on exact technical fields were shared.

The second type of competence; social skills was also another competency type that was clearly acknowledged by all managers. Similar to technical competence, the informants defined social skills in different ways. Some defined it as how the employees behave and care for their team while others defined it as empathy towards the team and interest in coaching and developing them. However, the majority of the managers expressed that social skills incorporated a high level of coaching, developing employees, and having a strategic outlook towards the goals and plans.

Moreover, there was a noticeable difference in how learnable the different types of competency skills were considered to be. Female managers expressed the opinion that social skills are hard to teach or learn while technical skills were easier to learn and develop. On the contrary, male managers with the exception of one outlier, all expressed the belief that social skills can be taught through courses while technical skills were hard to learn.

## **Prioritizing different Competences**

Managers were asked about their personal prioritizing and weight distribution of each competence type. The results were none conclusive; it was difficult to identify one type of competence as more important than the other. This is due to having 15 managers giving a higher priority to technical competence, 11 managers giving higher priority to social competences and 6 managers giving both competency types equal priority. Answers collected were looked at from a levels perspective; answers were divided based on the manager's level (section or group manager) as seen in figure 5 below. Both levels were found to have similar opinions when it came to how they prioritized competency types. It was concluded that within both section manager level and group manager level, a 50-50 division in opinion was present. The level on which a manager was on did not directly affect their prioritizing of competence. Similarly, when looking at the gathered answers based on gender the results still looked the same. Figure 6 below shows that gender does not affect which competence type is seen more important than the other. The number of female managers who prioritized technical competence over social was the exact number that of male managers who priorities technical competence as well. Therefore, this split in prioritizing of this perception cannot be explained in reference to either gender or management level. There is no clear link between the priority given and these categories.

## How Different Management Levels Prioritize Competence Types



Figure 5 Managers ranking of the different competence types based on management level

## How Different Genders Prioritize Competence Types

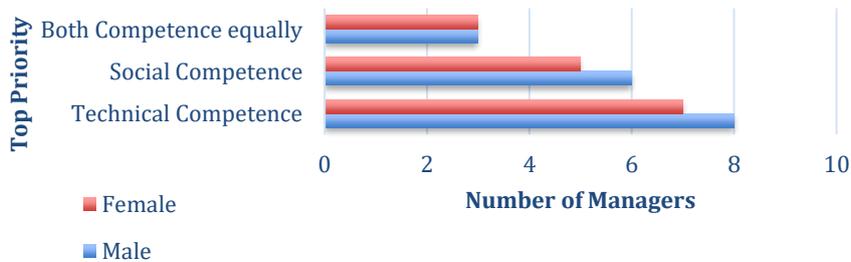


Figure 6 Managers ranking of top important competence based on gender

Furthermore, managers were then asked to prioritize both competence types according to Company A’s viewpoint and what it currently advocates for within the organization. All managers without any exceptions answered that technical competence was the main priority communicated by the company. Even if they don’t personally agree they clearly can feel and see this priority being implemented around them. Managers however gave different answers when asked about the role of social skills in terms of Company A’s view point. Some managers mentioned that they currently see a shift in having a minor interest in employee’s social skills during evaluation while others mentioned that Company A doesn’t have an interest in social skills and doesn’t consider it to be of importance.

*“It’s all about your technical knowledge and ability... if you are great technically then you will be promoted to higher levels”-G5*

*“Social skills are not that important, a nice thing to have but not a must”-G3*

### The Perfect Manager

Managers were asked to describe the perfect Company A manager based on the managers that are currently promoted and celebrated within the organization. Descriptions varied a lot between managers, no clear difference was seen based on gender with the exception of some

female managers highlighting the importance of “looking alike”, “similar age” and “white male”. However, male managers did not provide contradicting descriptions like for instance not once did they mention that managers were different or diverse, the focus of the answers provided were on skills not how they look. Additionally, words such as strength, ambition, process oriented and good core values were provided. Two attributes however were expressed by the vast majority of managers; communication aptitude and technical depth. It appears to be that according to the managers these two attributes act as success drivers within Company A.

*“Having them increases your likelihood to make it to top management”-G7 said one of the female group managers. Another male group manager added that “...being able to speak up loudly and in technical words helps you in this company”-G13.*

Once again, there were no clear distinction in the descriptions provided or any contradictions related to gender. The only clear observation was the way each gender answered the question, male managers focused on describing skills “grow people...politically smart” and some details in terms of processes “took part of development process... processor” and experiences “technical, the to go to person” while female managers focused on both physical appearances and characteristics such as “loyal...empathetic...supportive”.

To summarize, women and men managers shared the same perception in how the perfect manager within Company A needs to be technically competent and able to communicate effectively. Additionally, in terms of which type of competence is personally prioritized among the interviewed managers there appears to be a split in opinion. No clear type is given more priority over the other when it comes to opinion. In terms of the culture within Company A there seems to be a consensus among the interviewed managers when it came to what exactly is prioritized by the company in terms of competence. Differences are however seen in terms of which competence is perceived as learnable or not and in terms of what makes a good manager. Females find characteristics as an important dimension while males identify networking and type of personality as important dimensions worth mentioning. Additionally, when it comes to making it to high levels it is clear that technical depth and strong communication skills are a must have, networking skills give a good push while management skills are not necessary to make it. Another major difference seen between the genders is the importance of having strong management and leadership skills. Even though when female managers were asked to prioritize competence, the majority chose technical, they still believe that leadership skills are important to reach top management levels. This can be considered, as inconsistency to their answers however it can be argued that their answers were based on the current situation while their stress on leadership skills comes from what they wish will be in the future.

### **4.3 EVALUATION AND PROMOTION PROCESS**

The second part of the interview focused on the evaluation and promotion process for the management track. Statements such as “take me through the process of identifying a high potential” followed by questions such as “what kinds of supporting documents do you use through the process?” to be able to paint a picture of how the process takes place (see figure 7 below). The data was divided into two groups, one representing the group managers and the other representing the section managers. This division was done based on the prior knowledge that the gender balance issue appears more on the section manager level than the group level.

Thus, splitting the levels would help in observing differences if any during evaluation and promotion discussions or even provide the possibility to compare how managers look at candidates and go through the process itself.

**Process in Place**

Company A has a process in place that seems to be used to some extent by all functions. Differences are seen when it comes to how a certain step within the process is executed however in terms of steps identified, managers are at consensus. This process includes;

- 1- Direct manager assesses their team using the ABCDE analysis excel file in this management planning phase.  
Employees are assessed and given a certain letter grade accordingly; each letter represents a certain bracket in which the employee will be placed (see appendix A).
- 2- Employees that are either ready or have the potential to take the next step are then discussed in group management team meetings. These meetings include the direct manager, peers, and one level up manager.
- 3- According to the group management team meeting talks, a final list is prepared to be taken to the next step
- 4- Sectional management team meeting involves only the one level up manager, peers on that level and a higher-level manager is conducted. The list from the previous step is discussed and decisions are made on to who will be promoted and when.



Figure 7 Evaluation and Promotion Processes in Company A

**Group Managers**

The steps taken by group managers to promote their C3 employees appear to be similar among all departments in R&D. The main approach taken is that managers start having close discussions with their team and identify those who have potential to move into a management role as well as those who express their interest. Accordingly, they begin to lobby for them within their peer management team and collect feedback. This feedback is then incorporated in the

potential employee's development plan to ensure they are ready when the time comes. Once managers feel the employee has fulfilled their development plan, they begin to introduce them officially in the twice-a-year evaluation meeting. Once consensus is reached the group manager's role is now done and it is up to the section manager to continue the process.

One main observation found was that the use of supporting documents to help group managers to make decisions or evaluate their employees was not present. Supporting documents identified by HR were Excel files and documents that provide basic description on what is expected on certain levels. These documents mentioned were an ABCDE analysis file (see appendix A), planning and development discussion guide and Company A leadership principles (see appendix C). Almost more than half of the group managers interviewed mentioned they do not use supporting documents, the reasons varied from they were not aware there were documents to they found the ones available not helpful.

*“don't use supporting documents, they are too vague”-G2*  
*“the documents are too general and not helpful for our department”-G17*  
*“We've created our own internal document that we use”-G10*  
*“Not sure if there are supporting documents”-G6*

Moreover, there does not appear to be a clear structure for the management track. Many managers mentioned that the technical track had clear criteria and guidelines that made it structured to follow and even communicate to their employees. However, for the management track they find it very difficult to be transparent with their employees and share clear criteria with them. In fact, all managers expressed how as a result the discussion within the management team is very subjective and based on gut feeling more than tangible criteria.

Some managers attributed that this open free discussion is due to the lack of sufficient guidelines to follow while others attributed it to the importance of feeling this person is ready to become a manager and was seen several times before. Managers gave several reasons as to why the current process of discussing employees is unstructured however the essential point appears to be that perception and feeling seem to play a role in the decision-making process.

*“It depends from one candidate to another, not having a structure helps the discussion to go freely”-G2*

*“I don't want to follow a document when looking at a candidate”- G15*

Going back to the lack of using supporting documents observation, some managers mentioned that they have occasionally used the ABCDE excel file (see appendix A) as a basic guide to understand if the employee is ready to be mentioned with the evaluation meetings or not. Other than that, no other documents were used.

Furthermore, during gender probing questions all the group managers claimed never to have witnessed any clear gender bias. A few male managers along with all female managers, however, stated that women in general are seen as less technically competent than men, therefore there is a silent agreement that women need to prove themselves more. Women tend to do this before getting to the high potential list and getting to the discussion and evaluation process itself.

*“As a manager, I work with the female candidate to present more her work and to make her technical ability visible”-G12*

*“I always get the feedback from my manager that I’m not deep into technical things... I should speak up more in meetings” -G5*

Another major finding was that when it came to having one common definition for competency, none of the functions aligned or discussed it. Each manager mentions competency assuming other managers know what he/she means. It is observed that the type of competence needed for each team is not clarified with everyone before evaluating employees. Finally, 15 out of 19 group managers mentioned that the manager currently has full control of whether to suggest that a specific employee should be promoted or not. The group managers are also free to choose how they present candidates to the team. This shows that employees who might not have a good relationship with their manager can end up being negatively affected in terms of career progression.

In sum, it is clear that the current process appears not to be structured or open for perception and that gut feeling plays a big role in the final decision made. Additionally, unlike the technical track, there are no clear guidelines or criteria that managers should use to assess their employees and discuss them as well as there is no unified definition of competence within different departments that accordingly employees are being assessed.

### **Section Managers**

Section managers go through two different processes, one which is to hire from another department into their team and another, is to promote one of their group managers. Both processes are very different since in the first case the group manager is at the receiving end and evaluates this person’s likelihood to fit the team, while in the second, it is the group manager that evaluates which employees should be promoted and moved to another team.

Questions asked focused more on the second case of evaluating a current employee to be promoted and moved to another team. This was done since the direct manager is the one that goes through the evaluation and promotion process itself while in the first case of receiving the employee that is not the case. This process is quite similar in terms of steps and meetings to the group manager’s process mentioned earlier. However, the main difference is the way the section managers go through these steps. Section managers look at their group members and ask themselves *“are they good enough?... do they have enough skin on the nose?”*-S3, (this is a Swedish phrasing referring to how tough this person is), according to these answers it’s clear how they will assess their group managers’ readiness based on their own perception of toughness. Similar to the previous process, there seems to be a great dependence on the manager’s feeling. One manager mentioned *“you get a gut feeling ... this sense that they are ready”*-S8. Managers interviewed stressed on the importance of making their group managers visible, seen, and exposed to the other section managers. They mentioned that due to the limited time within the allocated meeting for evaluation, if candidates mentioned are not recognized and everyone agrees they are ready then they decide against promoting this person. Hence, managers need to make sure they lobby heavily outside the meetings and work with their group managers a lot based on feedback to ensure that agreement is reached once their name is brought up.

*“part of your job is to lobby for them (employees) ... if you don’t get the feedback outside the meeting room you won’t get consensus ... ”*-S5

*“you must know what other managers think of them ...and work with them to develop accordingly”-S9*

When it comes to the depth of discussions, section managers mentioned that it is about whether or not you see this person as a manager or not. In the case of female candidates, several managers highlighted that technical competence is usually asked more than in the case of a male candidate. Both male and female managers mentioned this, however the total number of managers expressing it was low.

Additionally, all managers referred to the process as *“unstructured...very informal...fluffy discussions”*. All managers said that there are no formal supporting documents that they can use. In fact, almost half of them had developed their own documents to help them either in the evaluation itself or in the tracking of progress.

Another clear insight was that no prior alignment on what competence and which type of competence is needed for the department were done. However, it is worth mentioning that both male and female managers interviewed, expressed their opinion that technical competence is discussed too much compared to the actual need of management competence in the section manager role.

In sum, similar to the group manager process the section managers' process appears to be unstructured, informal, and based on feelings. The main difference is the presence of gender related differences when it comes to questioning technical competence of candidates.

### **Opportunities for Change**

Follow up questions such as “what do you think of the current process?”, “If any, what kind of additional support do you need to help you more in the process?” and “what would you change or improve in the current process?”. Consensus was seen when it came to expressing the need to have a more structured process and more involvement from HR.

All thirty-two interviewed managers touched upon the importance of having a more structured and clear process. The way each manager elaborated the importance differed, however the main suggestion was the same. Some managers focused on suggesting to having a similar track to the technical (C-level) positions, attributing transparency to this idea since the current technical track has clear criteria that can be easily communicated and monitored while the management track does not. It was argued that this provides a more objective framework for managers when assessing their team and having to depend less on their perceptions or gut feelings.

Another structural recommendation made is to have a standard form that is used by all departments when evaluating and promoting their employees. These documents would introduce a way to look at candidates with a wider view and open new approach when assessing candidates. It was argued that this would encourage viewing candidates in a different way and to think outside of the box, all while ensuring that departments are using the same criteria to guarantee standardizing the level of calibre being promoted.

Dissociating subjective perceptions and feelings as much as possible was one of the main incentives for managers when suggesting these ideas. Additionally, increasing HR involvement included broadening their role as strategic advisors and coaches to managers when evaluating and promoting their employees. This would ultimately allow HR to guide, question, and suggest a more comprehensive approach when looking at their employee's profiles, providing managers

with the tools to think outside of the box and to become aware of unrecognised criteria to make better-informed assessments.

Most of the managers mentioned their awareness that their current methods are limited, and that they usually promote people most like themselves. Alongside this, they added that they are not aware of what could be done differently to address this limitation. They further expressed the necessity of support and guidance from HR to teach them how to formulate their questions differently. This increase in HR's involvement could also help reducing the manager's full control of their team's assessments and consequently career outcomes and progression. In addition, this would increase accountability and provide space for the questioning of a manager's decisions as justification of any evaluation would be required. This visibility and accountability process provides a better understanding of what needs to change within the manager's current thought process and provides HR with a platform and room to truly influence decisions.

Other suggestions made by a few managers included having cross-functional discussions when evaluating candidates thus reducing the direct manager's full control on the evaluation process and having a more participatory and inclusive approach in the decision-making process. Another suggestion was to promote open communication between managers and their team to better understand each individual's career aspirations. It was mentioned this would require a process of clear communication between a manager and his/her team members to prevent any assumptions made about a person's best fit and preferences. Increasing the importance of and focus on leadership during assessment and the lessening of technical depth was suggested by half of the managers interviewed; this was justified by the notion that technical depth should be expected more of specialists and leadership skills more of managers.

Another idea mentioned more specifically for the group managers wanting to move to section managers as there is greater transparency of what qualifications and skills are required to advance to each level. This would act as a quality assurance step with the basic expectations and help unify the language spoken across managers thus reducing the workplace ambiguity that currently exists. Finally, managers discussed that it is not enough to encourage changes in evaluation. Parallel work on celebrating differences and uncommon career progressions and experiences that still made it to top management is essential. This acts as a foundation for movement towards change and reflects the possibility of career advancement based on merit and employee dedication.

#### **4.4 MANAGERS' PERCEPTIONS ON LACK OF WOMEN**

Questions such as "what are your thoughts about the findings of last years' thesis 'women do not make it to top management because they are less technically competent'?", "what can drive change?", "how can you attract more women to apply to your department?", "what should women do differently if anything to help themselves?", and "what do you think about the current top management role to achieve gender balance?".

An interesting observation was made when all managers seemed to confirm that women are in fact perceived as less technical competence in Company A when asked "what do you think of the previous thesis conclusion; that women's lack of technical competence is the main reason behind the low number of women in senior positions". This was deemed interesting since

although they confirmed this perception to be present, all thirty-two managers interviewed added that they personally did not agree with this. On one hand, they all claim that they have not witnessed any clear gender bias or personally agree with this perception, while on the other hand, they all claim that it is a common view that women are perceived as less competent and are not surprised by it.

### **Difference in Perception of the Gender Issue within the Group Managers**

When looking at the group managers level, a clear split was seen between men's and women's perspective on the issue of gender imbalance at the workplace and what is thought to be the leading cause for the imbalance. The male managers were quick to mention not having enough women applying to their departments as the main driver for the gender balance issue. Some male managers claimed there are not enough women in the 'pipeline' so it is "not something weird to not have women".

On the other hand, female managers mentioned they feel "excluded and alone" and how it is quite common to be the only female in many teams within R&D. One female manager mentioned that unless a female is working as an object leader or in HR, chances are quite high she will be one of the only women in her team or one of two if she is lucky. Another distinction between both gender's responses was that male managers highlight that they witnessed many women refusing to be promoted. When pushed to mention what were the reasons given, the answers varied some said, "*don't know why she didn't want to, I thought she was ready*" while others said, "*she wanted to be more technical first... she didn't want to manage other people*".

Female managers were then asked, in their opinion, why women would refuse a promotion given how rarely that occurred. Some were baffled by the statement and could not believe that women refused to be promoted, one even said "this is nonsense, this is not true ... why would women in this time refuse a promotion, things have changed". This female manager felt the world has positively evolved for women to have a chance to have a career. However, other female managers mentioned that they themselves may refuse a promotion due to pressures and how the environment at the top managerial level feels like an exclusive club, which to some of them is not worth the effort or time lost from their personal lives.

All female managers believed that having teams that are outweighed by men and having job ads that seem to speak to male candidates adds a sense of 'masculinity' to the corporate position. This feeds into an existing culture and stereotype that prevents women from receiving promotions to the section manager level and higher.

### **Gender Bias and Career Related Assumptions**

Additionally, few female managers mentioned that sometimes their male managers assume they would rather continue as a project manager or object leader position. This then creates clear position segregation in terms of gender and feed into the perception of coordination heavy positions are for women while technical heavy positions are for men. This gendering of position makes it more difficult to promote women within technically heavy position because it feels like it's against the norm. However, all female managers have commented that things have improved within the group manager level and it has become easier for women to get promoted. Unfortunately, this is not the case on the higher levels.

Even though women and men group managers had different explanations to the current low number of women managers, they all agreed, that there is an issue that needs to be addressed. In fact, one male manager mentioned *“we are going through a disruptive market change, 9/10 companies fail during these times ... we are now competing with Uber, Google and Tesla ... they are very different than us and very adaptive and diverse companies ... we need to change if we want to remain competitive in this market”*-G15. One female manager even added *“what makes us so sure we are doing well because of the current top management ... it could be because of the company’s culture of going the extra mile and commitment to drive results ... there could be more potential we are not aware of if we had women in the top management”*-G7.

Taking advantage of the current culture within Company A when it comes to commitment and going the extra mile, managers were asked “what they would change or do to drive this change in the right direction?”. This open-ended question was received by several suggestions and improvements to the current approach. Answers were given within three dimensions; top management’s role, HR’s role, manager’s role. When it came to top management, the majority of the managers with two male exceptions believed that there was more to be done. One male group manager argued that they didn’t see or hear of an actual plan that would be executed to change the current culture. Group managers believe that awareness has grown, and the topic is now part of all meetings and discussions however no one is taking a real step towards change. Suggestions such as having top managers become part of the mentoring program to show they are part of this change as well as having top managers celebrate women and actively communicate their successes were given. Having women accomplishments put into the spotlight would show that women can and do have a positive impact on business and performance.

Some managers even questioned the current top management statistics and suggested that change should be seen on that level as well. One male manager mentioned that top management *“are all white 50+ men ... send the message that they are not part of this change needed”*. Hiring women on that level fast is needed even if it has to be from the outside, this would show that top management is leading by example and are part of the change itself argued another male group manager.

### **Re-structuring of Responsibility**

On the HR’s role dimension, managers suggested they take a more active role when it comes to driving change through aiding in gender-neutral position advertisings. Having a one approach when it comes to writing ads would provide all departments a fair chance of attracting talent from both in and outside the company. This would also provide the managers more time to focus on their managerial role than on administrative tasks such as writing job announcements.

Another thing HR can assist in would be to spread awareness through various seminars and lectures about unconscious bias, benefits of diversity, how other companies strive because of it, and perceptions versus reality awareness to name a few. All managers agreed that HR is doing a great job in keeping the conversation alive however when it comes to forcing the 1:1 ratio both genders disagree. Women mentioned *“I want to be hired because I am good not because I am a woman”* another *“this will be the excuse men make for women who get promoted”*, this will create a buzz of women getting promoted because it will become a numbers game. Men similarly mentioned that this effect the quality of candidates, *“this*

*jeopardizes the company's quality and sends a wrong message that women should be hired for a quota target not for skills*". Finally, on the manager's dimension; group managers agreed that women should be *"less sensitive ... more self-confident ... brave and daring ... not to wait for others to and go for what they want ... challenge more and not adapt"* while men should actively seek women applicants, coach women that doing things perfectly is not what's important and that good enough is what is needed some times, develop them technically if they see they need to do more instead of saying they are not technical enough. Additionally, mentor more women and take an active role to advocate for diversity and accepting change.

### **Section Manager's Take on the Gender Balance Issue**

Looking at the section manager's level, there were many comments made and positions taken similar to the group managers. The difference on this level was that both genders seemed to be more in sync with each other and that there were no gender differences in terms of perception or answers given. Female section managers mentioned the issue in having few women in the pipeline just as much as the male section managers mentioned it. Male section managers even mentioned the stereotype issue present and that they can argue that both men and women are less interested in the technical depth nowadays. One male section manager even made the distinction that *"it's not that women are less competent ... women tend to be less interested in technical aspects versus development and coaching aspects of a job ... its interest not ability"*.

It was clear that both genders on this level as well saw and agreed that there is an issue which needs to be addressed. One male section manager mentioned that *"yes we are a technical company ... but we can't afford to lose employees ... women represent around 30% of our employees we can't send a message that you don't have a career here ... we shouldn't limit them"*. However, unlike the previous level (group managers) there was no mention of women refusing to get promoted, in fact both genders on this level focused more on the clear need of hiring more women and even work on retaining the current ones. On this level, it seems that retaining women is an issue and it's one of the things that is slowing the change in terms of numbers according to the interviewed section managers.

Another issue mentioned by female managers more than male managers on this level is the technical depth argument. Female managers mentioned that they are still being questioned about their technical competence more than their other skills and in fact for both genders the focus should be on leadership competencies. The role description and focus on the higher levels is coaching, growing a team, and creating strong networks. These competencies are not considered technical, so the focus should be more on what is needed for that level rather than what used to occur in the past argued several female managers.

### **Way Forward**

On this level, managers focused more on what needs to be done rather than what is causing the current situation. On the top management's role, all section managers mentioned the need to *"walk the walk ... they talked about it and kept the conversation going but it's time for action"*. Female section managers focused on how people on the top management level all look the same and there are no women, while male managers focused on how they are all technically focused and interested. Male managers continuously mentioned how, due to the detailed questions being asked during meetings with top management, the expectation is now that section managers should be able to answer on the spot and have a very detailed knowledge of the product/process.

This top down expectation has made technical depth a huge part of getting promoted to this level. With this new change of having diversity and people with a different set of skills, the current set up acts as a mixed message. A manager mentioned that having two different messages from top management is cause for confusion and unclarity on what should be done.

Another comment made was on the need to have trust in the experts and let them focus on technical depth, so managers can focus on developing them and managing their careers. Additionally, and similar to the group manager's emphasis on the importance of having an action plan, the section managers pointed out that as a big company an action plan needs to be communicated to ensure change.

### **Future Role of HR and Women Managers**

On the HR's role dimension, consensus was seen on the need to remove this new 1:1 quota and to focus on having more women in place to apply and be considered. One male section manager mentioned he does not have women applicants at all, so this quota makes it impossible for him. He believes that HR should assist in making sure women apply before putting this target. Others mentioned the importance of retaining the women leaving especially the high potentials. HR needs to identify what causes women to leave and develop a plan to tackle it. Several female section managers mentioned ideas pertaining flexibility at work. Ideas such as possibility for part-time work and working from home.

Finally, on the manager's role dimension, male section managers unlike the male group managers stated that women should not change and that its men who need to change and include them more. Female managers however mentioned a few things they can do to help themselves, these included "building stronger networks together ... challenge more ... focus on what makes you stand out and different ... don't assimilate and adapt". Some even mentioned that women tend to think several times before speaking up or even think they are experts at something while men are the opposite, so women should speak up more and have more confidence in themselves and their capabilities. On the other hand, male managers need to ask their team about what they want to do with their career before assuming, when it comes to women who show high potential they should focus on having them in technically heavy positions to develop their knowledge more rather than rushing to promoting them in product management positions. Take more risks when promoting their team in terms of celebrating differences and working towards the goal of more gender balance.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

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In this chapter, the findings presented in the previous chapter will be discussed and analyzed in relation to the theory. The analysis will attempt to answer the research questions and provide insights to the observations made at Company A anchored to previous research on other companies. The intent is to better understand the observations and provide them context within the available theory.

### **5.1 GENDERED PERCEPTION OF COMPETENCE**

Competence as a concept is very complex and intertwined with several socially embedded constructs (Eraut, 1998). Simply identifying different types would not do the concept any

justice. However, looking behind what types are identified and how managers perceive them and articulate them is what is important (Kmec et al, 2010). Competence within Company A was divided up into two main types: technical and social. Even though all managers interviewed agreed on these two types, the perception of them were very different.

Female managers identified social competence as an inherently non-learnable skill while technical competence as learnable. On the contrary male managers thought the exact opposite. This clear split reflects on how female and male managers perceive the same competences in a completely different way. This suggest that one perception should not be taken as an ultimate truth over the other. Both genders expressed their thought process very logically and both made fair points as to why they believe so. Women saw that technical competence can be learned in class and through courses while social competence reflects more of a talent on how to deal with people, which is more difficult to teach. On the other hand, men saw that technical competence is a sense that is very difficult to teach while social competence can be taught in a management class. Theory does not suggest that there is only one school of thought when it comes to this issue, in fact both argument made are argued to be logical. Therefore, both genders are considered to be correct, and the way they articulate and perceive a skill to being easy to learn or not goes back to social aspects such as their own personal experiences. Looking at how both genders described each type it seems to be very similar and the only difference is seen in the opinion of how easy it is to learn such a skill. However, the insight here is on how their conflicting perceptions as previously mentioned in the previous chapter is based on a sense and personal opinion. This then becomes part of the evaluation and promotion processes through translating their own beliefs to how easy it is for an employee to develop these competences and judge them accordingly. This difference can be argued to subsequently affects what kind of competences each gender hires and promotes for. This matches the research done by Synder and Ebeling (1992) where they described how competence is a functional judgment process. They argue that it goes down to judgment and one's own views when determining the needed competence. These close relations of how competence's description is linked to a person's own perception echoes the findings of Delamare and Winterton's (2005) study. They also identified that defining competence and deeming it as important has a lot to do with one's own personal ideas of what competence ought to be, making it a very subjective process. Subsequently, observations made within Company A's management team and how competency is defined reinforces the theory found about the development of competence typology that adapts to one's learning ability and likelihood to advance in a career (Delamare & Winterton, 2005; Eraut, 1998; Kmec et al, 2010).

Another clear theme iterated during the interviews was how women are looked at as less technically competent. Even though the number of managers who clearly pointed out the occurrence of this theme was low (almost 9 out of 32), both male and female managers still mentioned it. This makes it an issue which is noticed by both genders and not just women. Additionally, the low number of managers mentioning this issue could reflect on the current low awareness levels pertaining this issue. Which can be argued to be an alarming reflection since a previous study conducted last year explicitly identified this issue of perceiving women as none technical competent to be present within Company A as in other male dominated industrial companies. The issue of low technical competence being gendered as female strengthens the homosociality practices theory that was identified by many researchers such as Holgersson (2013) and Peterson (2007). Acts of keeping the gender order of attributing technical competences to males reflects the gender bias practices within companies as

mentioned by Tienari et al (2013). Accordingly, the current perception on women's technical competence can be argued that gender bias practices are present within Company A. This gender bias however is not just directed at women but also directed at employees who do not fit the gender norm of work ideals (Tienari et al, 2013). Similar to what Acker (2006) argues about having the typical 'white man' image when evaluating employees, Company A appears to follow a similar approach. This stress on technical competence as the main priority for the company hinders other candidates who have other competences from being perceived positively. In a way, the 'white man' image Acker (2006) depicted is reflected in the 'highly technical engineer' image that Company A currently stresses on. This observation is even seen in the way managers described the perfect Company A manager as "*white male...above 50*"

The consensus on the perfect manager reflects how similar they currently are and it's easy to have a clear description for them. On one hand having all managers use the same description words with very few variations seems to hint the presence of a precise and arguably narrow profile for management. While on the other it could also reflect how specific, clear and consistent Company A is at communicating the values it celebrates. In all cases, this observation opens up the possibility that this can be a way of reproducing the same type of managers, which gives birth to homosociality. This notion of having similar people as managers might suggest the presence of an exclusive club that those who assimilate to are able to progress while others don't (Wahl & Höök, 2007). Additionally, having male and female managers mention how important it is for females to actively show and prove themselves technically can be seen as another example of how gender stereotyping is being practiced. This would be in line with research on how one of the reasons of low women representation in top management is structural and ideological in nature (Acker, 2006; Festing et al, 2014; Britton, 2000). Women's continuous maneuvering through a male dominant definition of competence and work ideals leads to them being perceived as less competent (Festing et al, 2014). Which in Company A's case, is being seen as less technical and not management material.

## **5.2 EVALUATION AND PROMOTION PROCESS**

One of the main observations seen when it came to the process of evaluating and promoting managers, was about how reflective the managers were about the process. When asked about their opinion about the current process, there was a consensus about how unstructured it was. However, when asked if they believed the process needed to be changed the answers varied. Not all managers agreed that the issue of gender practices such as stereotyping gender roles and competence level perceptions were linked to the process. Managers seemed to lack the ability to reflect on their current process even though they clearly pin pointed some common themes when it came to gender bias, gendering of competence and room for personal perceptions. Theory suggests that organizational structures that do not have any imbedded bias control processes such as things to consider and reflect on before making a final decision or even having a second opinion enable managers to look for candidates that are similar to them (Holgersson, 2012; van den Brink, 2009). In a way, unstructured processes can act as a tool that enables the presence of biases and personal preferences rather than help in focusing on removing opinion and personal judgments. Applying the same thought process on Company A, suggests that the current process enables continuous conforming of dominant norms through looking for candidates who are similar to the evaluator and the presence of gender bias rather than controlling their presence. The lack of structure mentioned by all managers during the

interviews suggests that one of the factors nurturing this culture is the process itself. The mere absence of bias control and pauses for reflection on decisions within the process creates the culture for assimilation and reproducing managers that are similar and fit the current gendered work ideals (Lemons & Jones, 2001; van den Brink, 2009). Another observation was the lack of criteria in which evaluation and promotion decisions are made, all managers have stated that they usually end up on creating their own criteria depending on the team or feedback they receive from other managers. This appears to be a bit subjective and changes from one time to another. In fact, the criteria managers mentioned were reflecting the manager's own perception of how work ideals are and what should others do to be considered good employees. This goes back to the issue of gendered work ideals and how continuously evaluating employees based on very gender specific work ideals puts those who are different at a disadvantage especially women (Nieva & Gutek, 1980; Millmore et al, 2007). A reoccurring theme that comes up within both management levels by both genders, is the amount of time "*gut feeling ... sense*" was used while referring to how they make a decision. These feelings provide a platform for the male constructs of what competence is and how managers should look and act like (Acker, 2006; Wahl, 1995). As argued by Holgersson (2013) the social construct and gendered connotation plays a role in reiterating homosocial activities and excluding women by default.

Moreover, according to the common reference of direct managers having full control of the process brings the transparency of the process to question. Processes that are open for scrutiny and auditing are argued to be more objective and gender biased (van den Brink et al, 2010). Having clear accountability within the culture of evaluating and promotion contributes to improving the trust within the employees and reflects a fair process (van den Brink et al, 2010). Currently, the process seems to be controlled by the manager, which can be argued to be a good way to empower managers and enlists trust in them however, it can also allow unfair or inconsistent actions to occur. Due to the presence of research on how having transparent processes reduces gender biases and increases women's chances of being promoted (Ledwith & Manfredi 2000; Rees 2004; Academy of Finland 1998) it becomes a crucial point to consider at Company A's current processes. The recommendations made by managers to include more people in the process become valid, since it is considered one of the factors that directly affect gender balance.

Another observed reflection made by most managers was concerning the new 1:1 quota requirement put in place by top management. The current condition of having to make sure that the final list of candidates to be considered for a promotion must have a ratio 1:1 in terms of gender is perceived negatively by both female and male managers. The reason behind this reaction however differs from female to male managers. Female managers see this new requirement as a way that takes away their ability to show their competence though hard work and somehow provides other male managers a new reason to claim women receive special treatments. They see this new target as a way that hinders the focus on what they offer and their qualifications and shifts it toward their gender. The women's reaction shows how they see this as a way to be putting numerical goals against competence as if they are on opposite sides, one contradicting the other (Tienari et al, 2009). If women make it then it automatically means they got there despite their low competence contrary to getting promoted as a result of their high competence levels (Tienari et al, 2009). This also matches the available research by Ely and Meyerson (2000) about how quotas can sometimes have a backlash effect on women and reinforces the rhetoric around how women are only promoted for their gender and not competence issue. Kanter (1977) even argues that this approach neglects the true reasons behind

the issue and acts as ammunition to men in highlighting stereotype differences related to women thus strengthening them. On the other hand, men's reaction was related to how this jeopardizes the quality of the company's products and gives women an advantage just because of their gender. During a study conducted on two Norwegian organizations to assess the effects of managerial practices on gender equality by Teigen (2002) it was discovered that in one of the organizations considered female candidates only due to the push for gender equality considerations policies. This is argued as a concern for the way gender equality is achieved through having it as the convincing argument for hiring the woman candidates rather than their own competence (Teigen, 2002). Some even mentioned how the quota won't fix anything since they don't have women who apply to begin with. This reaction matches the argument made by Kanter (1977) on how this does not address the underlying problem and just causes more problems internally. She even regards this numbers approach as the root cause of sexism and having only quotas cannot create equality (Kanter 1977). She cites social and cultural factors as other things to consider since they take an active role in devaluing female presence in male dominant environments (Childs & Krook, 2008; Gustafson, 2008). Tienari et al (2009) also argue that quotas can reinforce the perceived contradiction between women and competence.

However, this approach can be argued to be suitable in the case of pushing managers to seek women applicants more and encourage them to apply. The fact that the requirement does not state that recruiting the women is a requirement, it can be seen as only a way to nudge the importance of looking at women candidates and consider them more while still having full control on the final decision. One argument is having observed many of the male managers citing that lack of women applicants is the issue not that they perceive women as less competent can now be challenged with this target quota. The claim is based on putting the managers in the proactive seat forcefully to find and approach more women and actively encourage them to apply. This can also have more male managers get out of their current assessment criteria and widen the scope to include different kinds of candidates. One female manager even mentioned that this could be good in terms of breaking the current selection cycle. One of the findings was that some managers already have certain people in mind and that affects the selection process, so this would be one way to reduce homosocial behavior.

### **5.3 RATIONALIZATION OF THE GENDER ISSUE**

A controversial issue such as gender is bound to attract different emotions; it is a complex topic that differences in opinion and citing's of diverse explanations and reasoning behind it is quite common (Hentschel et al, 2013). During the interviews one of the first thing that clearly stood out was how male and female managers reacted differently. Male group managers cited not having enough women in the pipeline, lack of women applicants to their department and women refusing to get promoted as what they thought to be the main reasons as mentioned earlier. One can argue that these reasons seem to be things that are out of their own control. This can give the impression that they might feel they are not part of the problem thus they don't think they should change something in their own approach. Additionally, this behavior can be reasoned to be a way of resistance to change through detaching themselves from the problem (Born, 1995). It was already established that men usually hold the power to drive change since they control the needed resources (Lines et al, 2015). As a result, men do not see how their everyday practices contribute to the reproduction of male dominance which reflects on the current

awareness of the gender balance issue. Through inviting everyone to look at the issue from a wide perspective and thinking how they can contribute, the likelihood of improvement in awareness increases (Connell, 2005). This notion does not negate or deprioritize the cited issues; they are to be considered in parallel of providing awareness to the male group managers about their role in driving change. Driving change is argued by Connell (2005) to require a holistic approach that involves the whole organization. In fact, consulting firms such as McKinsey and Boston Consulting group have published numerous reports on how crucial it is to involve both male and female employees in driving gender reform. Ely and Meyerson (2000) dig even deeper in terms of analyzing the different approaches taken in organizations and how the most successful are the ones that focus on incremental change and is careful not to formulate the gender issue as a 'women's issue' but as a topic important for all.

On the other hand, female group managers cited feelings of exclusion and loneliness as one of the main reasons they believe are contributed to this gender imbalance. They reflected on how currently unattractive the position is and how it is perceived to be very difficult not because of the work but mainly due to the conditions. This matches research by Holgersson (2013) and Wahl and Höök (2007) about how the top executive level tends to be very intimidating through celebrating sameness and very specific characteristics that are predominantly male associated. In fact, one example mentioned was a woman who left the company shortly after being promoted who then returned but at a lower level due to her request. This case was given as an example to how sometimes the environment of management tends to be off putting for women. Another clear reason stated by most women and few male group managers was this silent expectation of technical depth. The group managers expressed how there is this informal talk about depth of competence when it comes to women. Even though this is rarely expressed or discussed in formal evaluation settings, there is still some sort of undertone of it in the process. This again reinforced the claims made by Wahl (1995) on how competence interpretations take a big role in who gets promoted to top levels. The lack of clear definition of competence and the level needed for a role is argued by Kmec et al (2010) and Eraut (1998) to be one of the main reasons evaluation processes depend heavily on the evaluator's own perceptions and feelings.

This subsequently can be one of possible reasons for the current gender issue in Company A. Another difference was that several women managers mentioned that at many times managers assume women are not interested in technical roles and start planning accordingly. This mind set leads to potential women managers to be put on project management tracks or object leader tracks that develop their social skills more than their technical skills, which then creates a gap. It is argued that this gap is used against them at a later stage when they are expected to get promoted. These roles can be argued to be 'pigeon holes' since they end up putting women at a disadvantage (Kmec et al, 2010). Women who end up succeeding in these roles end up not being able to move further and become examples of why things should not be changed (Heilman & Chen, 2005). The assumptions done by male managers about women's interests are considered an act of gendering ideals and certain jobs (Acker, 2006). In Company A's case it can be argued that project management and object leader roles are gendered female and thus seen as less technical roles. Similarly, jobs within core functions are seen as male gendered

causing managers to more likely practice homosocial activities when it comes to promoting and hiring in them (Holgerson, 2013; Acker, 2006).

Moreover, an interesting difference between both gender's reaction and the rationalizing of the issue was the fact that the majority of the men believe that women refuse to get promoted while women claim that this is not true and that it is a rare occasion. Granted both statements depend on each person's own experience and in a very big company such as Company A opposing statements are uncommon. Men's rationalization that this issue is not linked to the process or their very own perceptions taking part in the decision-making can be argued to be defense mechanism due to them being continuously accused to be the problem (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). One example given by a male manager was a woman who did not want to lead a team thus remained on her level. They used this to argue for the idea that women are the one refusing to get promoted rather than questioning her reasons more. On the other hand, the way women react and rationalize the issue through only looking at others can be considered victimizing (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). According to the interviewed women manager's experience, very few women refuse to get promoted due to personal reasons and that women are rarely asked to be promoted to begin with. The phenomenon is interpreted very differently between genders; however, this claim's validity was not confirmed. These two reactions are different however have a major similarity of refusing that they are part of the problem. Ely and Meyerson (2000) argues this to be a crucial point when gender transformation tactics are developed. Considering the effects of the strategy taken to drive gender reform must be sensitive to how both genders will react and perceive the problem addressed in the first place (Ely & Meyerson, 2000).

The approaches currently used by organizations are not fully encompassing the issue and fail to tackle all parts of the problem. On the other hand, the approach recommended by Ely and Meyerson (2000) seems to be the most fitting one, since it focuses to both the means and ends of reaching equal gender representation. Their approach admits the complexity of social relations and practices and the importance of tackling both processes and procedures to informal everyday social interactions (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). They address the gendering processes of formal policies, work practices, language used and social interactions (Acker, 1990). They also tackle the hidden criticism of people failing to stay in line with gender stereotype such as assertive women being called aggressive and men who are caring seen as overly sensitive (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Their proposed approach takes the position of incremental change as the way forward, by understanding people's behaviors and trying to change the narrative they expose any apparent neutral practices as oppressive, and attempt to adjust it to become more accepting of a wider spectrum of people (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Working on making this a company issue and not a single gender problem is crucial so as not to have such conflicting positions as seen in Company A.

#### **5.4 MANAGERS' WAY OF WORKING AROUND THE CURRENT CULTURE**

The way managers react in the current situation and transition towards more gender balance across all levels was interesting. The approach taken by managers from both levels were somehow similar and cannot be segregated according to gender. There was no one clear approach taken by each gender that can be named the female way or the male way. Each

manager took the approach they felt suits the way forward and the findings could not be categorized by gender or level. Therefore, the results are discussed collectively. How they approach male versus female subordinates was quite similar, but some said they would work more with women on their assertiveness and ways they express their technical knowledge while they would focus on communication with male subordinates. This according to research can backfire since it supports current gender biases (Acker, 2006). It brings in the social imbedded constructs into the evaluation of work and people thus boxing people into very limited labels (De Vries & van den Brink, 2016). This ignores differences among people that do not follow the norms and puts them at a disadvantage (Festing et al, 2014). However, it is necessary to mention that before changing this approach, change needs to be introduced to the culture. As mentioned by one male section manager, women represent almost 30% of the employees. Maintaining the current culture is equivalent to informing them that they have no career prospects in the company.

Furthermore, changing the wording of position adverts to be more gender neutral was one way several managers mentioned as a focus area they are working on now. They mentioned using their female coworkers to help them understand how they perceive the job in the ad and how they can make it more appealing to women. This approach is an attempt to attract more women to male gendered departments. According to research, employees coordinate their own skills based on the core competences expressed thus having a more neutral wording can actually appeal to a wider audience (Pralhad & Hamel, 1990). Using ads that focus on the capabilities and skills needed can help in streamlining a more common understanding to the organization's needs (Boon & van der Klink, 2002). Additionally, male managers mentioned they now actively reach out and look for diversity among candidates with difference skill sets to apply into their departments. They even try to encourage more women to stay in the technical field rather than go to other non-technical roles. This is a way to reverse the previous trend of pushing women to supporting roles. This again can be seen as a way to work with the current gender bias culture of roles (Acker, 2006). It is unfortunately, not addressing the root cause of the problem itself (Ely & Meyerson, 2000).

Moreover, several managers mentioned, joining the mentoring program and working to sponsor women to help them develop and build a career within the company, as a way to become part of the solution. Keeping the conversation going and having the topic of gender balance on top of the agenda as well as trying to look outside the box and challenge themselves is another method towards positive change that managers mentioned. Some even added that they have developed internal checklists to look at during evaluations and discussions as an attempt to remain neutral. This can be argued to be a promising approach since as argued by Lee et al (2013), having clear attributes defined with little room for one's own perception is a step toward improving evaluation processes. Having a list of some sort can even be considered a move in the direction of improving accountability and transparency to the process (van den Brink et al, 2010).

## 5.5 SUMMARY

It becomes clear that working for gender balance is not an easy task and that there is no one solution fits all approach. An organization's culture, norms, way of working and communicating all play a role when it comes to beginning with gender equality work. Each organization is different, and the combination of these mentioned pieces create an environment in which change needs to be introduced. Granted that the themes to be included in the reform could be similar however the uniqueness of companies is what makes the execution and approach a very case by case process.

Looking at the theory found on gender equality work and organizational management in relation to the data gathered from interviews at Company A, several points surfaced. The difference of perception of competence in relation to gender is one point. It was clear how both genders attribute talent and sense to opposing competence types, men to technical competence and women to social competence. It somehow reflects a direct relation between the competence in which a certain gender is perceived to be superior at and what they consider as talent (Delamare & Winterton, 2005). In research it is common to find that men are considered as more technically competent and women as more socially competent (Kmec et al, 2010). Theory also shows that a manager's personal judgment reflects on how they prioritize competence subsequently reflecting on how they assess their team (Delamare & Winterton, 2005; Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Another point observed was how the evaluation and promotion processes are conducted. One main insight was on the lack of structure present within the process and the space to have each manager conduct the process based on their own discretion. Gut feeling, and sense currently take a big portion of the decision making, as well as the manager's full control on the team's career. Additionally, according to the manager's input lobbying outside formal meetings was found to be an important step that managers needed to take in order to ensure their employees were promoted smoothly. This lobbying somehow takes away most of the discussion from the formal meeting. The way managers describe formal meetings seem to reflect how they have turned into this formality of getting consensus and signing off the promotion, while the lobbying phase is more about getting feedback on the current perception of the candidate to work on it until the time of the formal meeting comes.

Moreover, the rationalization of the gender issue and the possible reasons for it was another discovery. The way both genders reflected on the issue and pin pointed certain things as the problem. Women focused on the current environment and culture of excluding and homosocial activities while men focused on not having enough women applicants and that women are the ones who refuse to get promoted. This act of making the problem seem as something they do not take part of leads to excluding themselves from the solution. This insight is crucial since according to research we find that for gender balance to occur, everyone in the organization needs to take part (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). This insight reflects on the current awareness and reflectiveness level of managers within Company A. It is clear that the current awareness on gender inequality across both men and women has increased not only in Company A but also in other Swedish organizations according to research (SOU 2003; Wahl & Höök 2007; Wahl, 2014).

However, the observations made at Company A, indicate the presence of some negative reactions towards measures taken and even some are questioning the point of changing the company's gender distribution. According to Wahl (2014), this is an expected situation since quite often men are not aware of the inequalities present so they see no reason for all this work. Wahl (2014) even argues that men are rather hesitant to change due to the ambiguity this gender balance bring to their current privilege, they fear losing the currently present homosocial culture that they benefit from. These insights provide a good starting point to recommend new ways in approaching gender equality work especially since it is clear that many homosocial activities are taking place and current perceptions are being brought into policies and gendering of work (Wahl, 2014; Holgersson, 2013; Acker, 1990). Finally, how managers who are aware of the lack of gender equality act within the current system was also one of the key identified points. Current acts that attempt to spread awareness and help women such as working on their technical competence and their assertiveness are considered to be doing more harm than good based on research. Researchers such as Acker (2006) argue that these steps reinforce the idea that gender inequality is a women's issue and the only way around it is to work to improve women. Ely and Meyerson (2000), argue that organizations must not fall into this trap and be careful in how they communicate the issue and express it as a full organization problem. Additionally, Acker (2006) mentions that it's is crucial to address the real cause of the inequality issue through addressing current gendered work and competencies and diffusing this gender link and making it more neutral. These key findings act as a base for the next chapter in which recommendation to how Company A can approach change towards a more gender equal and balanced management team.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

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In this chapter, the research questions will be addressed and answered according to the findings and discussions from the interviews conducted at Company A as well as the theory in the field. The purpose of this research to investigate in what way the evaluation and promotion processes can contribute to the reproduction and change of male dominance on management levels in industrial companies is fulfilled with the help of answering these research questions.

### **6.1 WHAT PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGEMENT COMPETENCE CAN BE FOUND?**

In order to identify the current perceptions on competence and the different types considered with competence, a two-step approach of extensive theory research within the competency types and the ways to unify them followed by conducting a field study within one of the industrial companies to provide context to the research found, must be done This approach enables the research to be relevant to the specific types of organizations chosen to focus on as well as provide empirical data to strengthen the theory found.

The analysis provided insights on how tangled competence is with social contracts (Eraut, 1998). The presence of different types of competence does not help in making the process of dissecting important skills any easier (Kmec et al, 2010). In fact, it was found that not all managers within the same organization agree on which type is more important than the other. During the interviews, it was clear how a manager's perceptions differ after they all agree on

having two main types: technical and social. According to theory, the types of competences vary, however three distinct types were mentioned (Harzallah & Vernadat, 2002). Two of these three match the types found in the interviews; technical and social. While one competence type related to process know-how was not mentioned. Theory defines know-how competence as the ability to apply certain processes effectively and independently (Harzallah & Vernadat, 2002). Even though in the eyes of researchers this competence is a type of its own, managers interviewed considered this skill to be part of the technical competence. This then shows that in practice, the skills needed to reflect competence can be perceived and grouped differently than in theory. However, it all leads to having two distinct competences; one focused on social attributes and the other focused on technical knowledge for the job.

Looking at the interviewed managers' answers deeper, it was observed that the perception on the ability to learn each competence differed. Some saw technical competence as a learnable skill and social competence as a non-learnable skill while others believed the exact opposite. According to Synder and Ebeling (1992), competence is a functional judgment process. A person's judgment and own views take part in determining the competence needed for a certain job (Synder & Ebeling, 1992). This deduction was also echoed in the findings of Delamare and Winterton's (2005). Their study stated that the definition and level of importance of competence is highly effected by the assessor's own personal views on what competence ought to be. These insights from the interviews as well as the research found on the competency perception topic show us how the development of competency typology is a very subjective process. This process adapts to the person's own views and learning ability thus making it a very personal matter that changes according to the manager and their background and ideologies (Delamare & Winterton, 2005; Eraut, 1998; Kmec et al, 2010).

## **6.2 HOW ARE THESE COMPETENCES GENDERED?**

To identify how the different types of competence identified in the previous RQ are gendered, theory was used as guide on the potential gendered factors, which was then tested during the interviews with managers. Theory provided potential insights on what research has identified as how competencies are gendered and these were taken into consideration during the analysis of the data gathered.

A clear theme of how women are looked at as less technically competent compared to men was observed during the interviews. It can be argued to have been an act for preserving gender order of attributing technical skills to men exclusively, this assumption that women can't possibly be interested in technical work, shows how homosociality is being practiced (Holgerson, 2013). Several female managers mentioned that their managers frequently assume they do not wish to continue in a technically deep role and try to shift their career focus towards project management and coordination heavy roles. Some managers even mentioned how they personally see these project management roles as more fitting to women's competence. This is argued by Tienari et al (2013) as a reflection of gender bias practices. This gendering of certain competencies and attributing to what can be argued a very narrow description of what men ought to be excludes not only women but also men who don't fit the gender work ideals norm (Tienari et al, 2013).

Additionally, an extension of this gendering of competencies and ‘highly technical engineer’ image the managers focus on is reflected in the way managers describe the perfect manager. The words used by all managers interviewed were very similar and all reflect the typical ‘white man’ image, which Acker (2006) mentions in her research regarding the effects of gendering work ideals on evaluations. The notion of having similar people within management appears to be detrimental to the company’s talent pool. It has caused this reproduction of homosociality and having the same type of ‘male’ managers all reaching the top sending the message on the need to assimilate to make it further within the company (Wahl & Höök, 2007). Similarly, the mention of how important it is for women to actively show and prove themselves technically show how gendered competencies and stereotypes play a big role in one’s own career progression. This is seen in line with research on how one of the reasons of low women representation in top management is structural and ideological in nature (Acker, 2006; Festing et al, 2014; Britton, 2000). Therefore, this very ‘masculinist’ dominance developed according to very old social constructs has led to having gendered competence.

### **6.3 WHAT DOES THE EVALUATION AND PROMOTION PROCESSES LOOK LIKE?**

Given the complexity of the evaluation and promotion processes and how much they are dependent on company culture and strategic goals, focus on Company A’s own process was used in order to understand how one type of industrial organization operates. This was achieved through mapping out the process from managers’ accounts and reflections. Follow up questions were then asked after this mapping of current process to gather insight and patterns from across different departments and levels within the organization. The main insight found regarding the current process, is the lack of structure available in the process. Several managers described the process as very subjective and affected, to a large extent, by one’s gut feeling. Research correlates failing to have a clear structure in place to having a role in enabling gender bias activities to take place. Therefore, one can argue that this has an effect on women’s chances of promotion (Holgersson, 2013; van den Brink, 2009). In a way, the process provides room for preferring candidates who fit the stereotypical gender norm and for gender bias to take part in the evaluation process. The main argument here is the absence of clear bias control within the process itself given birth to reproduction of homosocial behaviors and evaluating people using the gendered competences they may have when it comes to gender roles (Lemons & Jones, 2001; van den Brink, 2009).

Availability of criteria for evaluation and promotion decisions was also discussed as a result of the lack of structure. It became clear that due to the minimum enforcement of how to approach the process, many managers were left to create their own criteria. This room to act as they saw fit is again seen to contribute to the process’s subjectivity. In fact, managers mentioned criteria that reflects their own perception of how work ideals are and what should others do to be considered good employees. Thus, bringing us back to the issue of having gendered work ideals as the main source of evaluation and promotion decisions and how this puts women specifically at a disadvantage (Nieva & Gutek, 1980; Millmore et al, 2007). The main argument here is that as mentioned by Holgersson (2013) the gendered connotation is left to play a role in reiterating homosocial activities and excluding women by default without any accountability.

Transparency was another issue observed within the process, having direct managers with full control over the process was considered a negative factor when it came to accountability by the interviewed managers. They mentioned that this full control does not allow for open scrutiny and objectivity, which makes the possibility for the process to not be biased more difficult. Auditing and clear accountability culture is argued by van den Brink et al (2010) to be crucial to developing trust and fairness to any process. Research conducted by Ledwith and Manfredi (2000), Rees (2004), and Academy of Finland (1998) argue that transparent processes are shown to reduce gender biases and even improve women's chances of being promoted. This then brings the current set up, of direct managers having full control, under question.

#### **6.4 WHAT PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CHANGE CAN BE FOUND?**

As a result of the gathered insights and opportunities identified within the evaluation and promotion processes, ideas were gathered from the interviewed managers on what needs to be changed and how. Additionally, theory was used to identify potential areas that need to change to create a culture that enables gender balance in organizations. The main arguments for change discuss how change needs to come in the form of incremental changes across the whole organization. Managers discussed how change shouldn't focus only on the evaluation and promotion process but also on the role of other management levels and functions as well. Ely and Meyerson (2000) also discussed how it is important to involve all parties in the change so as not to send a message that this change is related solely to women or men. Consultancy reports from Mckinsey (2016) and BCG (2017) argue that involving the full organization within the change process increases its chances for success.

Managers also mentioned how specific changes within the current processes of decision-making and involvement of functions such as Human Resources are needed. These changes discussed reflected how the opportunities mentioned in the earlier sections could be eliminated. These included new ways of making the evaluation and promotion process involve more people and have set criteria to use when making these decisions. These changes are in-line with research found on how to make processes more transparent and how to ensure evaluators are more accountable. Managers seemed to be aware about the lack of gender balance and the majority of them saw that it needed improvement. As a result, some managers suggested that biases awareness needed to be introduced more as well as exposing the culture of homosociality. This according to research will help in providing managers with the tools to identify these personal biases and how to overcome them. Overall, the perceptions to change are in-line with research except for few suggested changes that are more specific to one gender over the other. These segregated changes cause more harm in the long run than benefit the gender reform, according to research. Ely and Meyerson (2000) as well as Acker (2006) argue that focusing too much on women makes the issue into a women's problem thus alienating the men. This is harmful not only since it makes it a problem for the minority group (in this case, women) but also alienated the men who are in control of all the resourced needed to drive the change. As a result, any change introduced must involve the whole organization to ensure all parties are moving towards the same goal.

## **6.5 IN WHAT WAY CAN EVALUATION AND PROMOTION PROCESSES CONTRIBUTE TO THE REPRODUCTION AND CHANGE OF MALE DOMINANCE ON MANAGEMENT LEVELS IN INDUSTRIAL COMPANIES?**

Taking the current evaluation and promotion process in particular along with the insights gathered about competence, process of gendering competence, and perceptions of change, helps in developing an idea of how male dominance could be reproduced. Insights about how competence is perceived differently among managers and to what extent one competence is teachable over the other plays a role within the evaluation process. For instance, in the case of a manager who believes social skills are learnable while technical skills aren't the candidate under evaluation is more likely to impress if they exceed expectations with their technical skills. Using the same logic, a candidate with better social skills over technical skills will be perceived as less competent in regard to the previous candidate. This perception puts technical oriented people at a constant advantage over other candidates who are better at other skills. This can be argued to play a role in promoting the same type of skills and people and preventing other skills from reaching top management. Additionally, since the majority of managers in a position to evaluate and promote others are male and perceive technical skills to be more crucial, male dominance is therefore reproduced within the promotion process.

Moreover, based on the current data about the process and the expressed change; structure and involving more people are amongst the main reoccurring themes brought up. Consensus concerning having a more structured standard process that is based on clear criteria can be reason to argue how the current process's lack of standardization creates more room for discrepancies since perception and manager's own views take a part of the process. Having a process that unifies the approach and way evaluation is done not only does it help managers have a comprehensive approach and look at all skills rather than the ones they personally know of but also it provides the company with a unified caliber across all departments. This will make it easier to move managers from one department to another since the organization will be more uniform and less like silos separated from one another. Also, the expressed need to have more HR play a more active role in the process, and have more managers have a bigger weight in the decision process addresses the current concern of the direct manager's full control of the process. Encouraging more managers to share their own experience with working with the candidate will help having a more objective opinion as well as increase transparency and accountability of the direct manager. These changes work towards reducing male dominance reproduction through the current evaluation and promotion process. The more steps taking to making the process transparent, accountable, and objective the less possible it becomes for narrow skill sets and male gendered work ideals are promoted.

This all comes together to create a diverse set of skills that are promoted and making sure candidates are being evaluated for their own strengths and skill sets according to the job description and real requirements over manager's own perceptions of what competence should be and how work ideals look like. The main goal becomes having a process that celebrates diverse skills and look beyond gender, stereotyping of roles, perception of competence and looking at what the organization really needs to remain competitive in the market and relevant.

Thus, making it more difficult for male dominance to use evaluation and promotion process to keep on reproducing the same masculine traits and keep on alienating other people who don't fit in this way of thinking according to the findings.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

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In this chapter, based on normative theory and the discussion of findings, recommendations will be presented. These recommendations are based on a combination of the gathered empirics (results) as well as 'best practice' normative theory frameworks that help explain how change can be achieved effectively. The intent is to provide a direction for companies such as Company A in which it can focus its efforts to drive change. Sustainable considerations are also discussed in relation to the recommendations provided. The main approach towards change can be reapplied to other company's however areas of change are more specific to the gathered empirics and Company A's structure.

### **7.1 BUILDING AN ECOSYSTEM**

Taking change may seem to be a simple task especially when its communicated in a simple target number that needs to be achieved (Nahavandi, 2000). However, this is far from reality when it comes to actually driving this change in culture and gender reform (Nahavandi, 2000; Thompson, 2014). Thompson (2014) argues that driving change is about not just changing processes, protocols and rules but also changing the culture of doing things and the way they understand certain things. Many times, organizations find themselves driving to change a culture they have worked to develop several years back (Nahavandi, 2000; Thompson, 2014). Thus, it becomes a challenge of convincing people that it's time to let go of how things are being done and start doing things differently (Nahavandi, 2000; Thompson, 2014). It becomes even more difficult when this change is a proactive step to expected market changes and not to low performance or loss in the market (Thompson, 2014). In fact, this was brought up with one male section manager who expressed his puzzlement on "*why fix something that is not broken...the company is doing well and growing*". This is a clear example to what researchers such as Thompson (2014) and even Wahl (2014) discuss. Communicating change in a stable organization that is doing well is considered to be extremely difficult since it relies on how well this change is perceived and accepted by the organization. In many cases organizations are likely to resist change and companies need to work hard when driving gender equality change forward and include the people in the process (Wahl, 2014).

Taking the gender reform as our focus, it becomes clear that driving this change needs the involvement of everyone in the organization (Ulrich, 1997). Ely and Meyerson (2000), argue that involving the organization as a whole eliminates the factor of having this be perceived as a women's issue or even unintentionally confirming already present gender stereotypes. According to a recent Mckinsey report (2016), a comprehensive gender diversity ecosystem within organizations must have women represented at all stages of the organization. Having one level as the focus will not help the issue but could make it harder to accept (Devillard et al, 2016). They identified that the main game changers are persistence, CEO commitment, and

holistic transformation programs (Devillard et al, 2016). This process of change will take time and needs people with perseverance and persistence to see it through to reach a systematic and long-term change (Devillard et al, 2016). It was also found that organizations that have this change for gender diversity on top of their agenda are more likely to achieve this target and have more employees engaged in driving the change (Devillard et al, 2016). Researchers have also found that a model that embeds values of equality and cultural diversity through core business functions is more likely to have a positive long-term change (Rachele, 2012).

This approach of a holistic change across the organization is a result of the current statistics of how organizations with gender and diversity initiatives are still not accomplishing the needed change (Rondeau, 1999). This pushes for taking a step back and looking at the organization as a whole to develop real change (Rondeau, 1999). Taking into consideration the practices at work and the culture as a whole, a solid context to use when recommending changes will be provided (Kingma, 2008; Rondeau, 1999). This increases the likelihood of success since it is actually considered the current culture and practices and is customized based on this information (Kingma, 2008; Rachele, 2012; Rondeau, 1999). Finally, an all-encompassing program that develops change agents and role models with every small win increases the likelihood of seeing a true improvement in the gender diversity issue, this includes processes and policies that support the goal (Devillard et al, 2016).

Taking this into consideration along with the recommended approach, it becomes clear that change across all the boarders is needed to drive this transformation. Below is an overview to the different streamlines that organizations need to address in order to effectively change. Having only one of these changes in place is not enough; they all contribute to the change together and need to be addressed fully to succeed (Ulrich, 1997). Figure 8 below, illustrates how the CEO commitment and managers' involvement are the base on which this change stands on. Without clear communication from the top management on the importance of this change and clear endorsement through both action and talk, it will be very difficult to succeed (Devillard et al, 2016). Once this is achieved, the three main pillars that stand on this base are HR processes and policies, women's leadership development, and organization's de-biasing. Each pillar takes a role in aligning the way the organization works towards this change. HR processes and policies need to reflect this change through providing clear steps on how to make it happen, as well as have policies to reflect the seriousness of these new processes (Garcia-Alonso et al, 2017). Women's leadership development is to provide women with the tools to approach gender bias at work, shift the way they communicate their own competence to reflect more confidence, as well as mentoring and networking opportunities (Devillard et al, 2016). Organization de-biasing focuses on spreading awareness as well as providing the organization with tools on how to detect unconscious bias, gender stereotyping assumption and how to reduce them and have a more inclusive approach (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). These three pillars when met with transparency and accountability will converge towards the same goal of gender balance and change the current culture to become more inclusive and gender neutral (Ledwith & Manfredi 2000). It is considered the first step toward creating a more self-aware organization while arming them with tools to develop further and create a more gender-neutral culture with real processes that enable it. Additionally, CEO and management follow through along with

work-life balance steps and cultural change efforts are considered to be the foundation on which other department's work will build on, which is represented through the color scheme seen in figure 8. Among the three pillars, HR policies and processes are considered the orchestrator to ensure the other two pillar's work is enabled to drive real change.

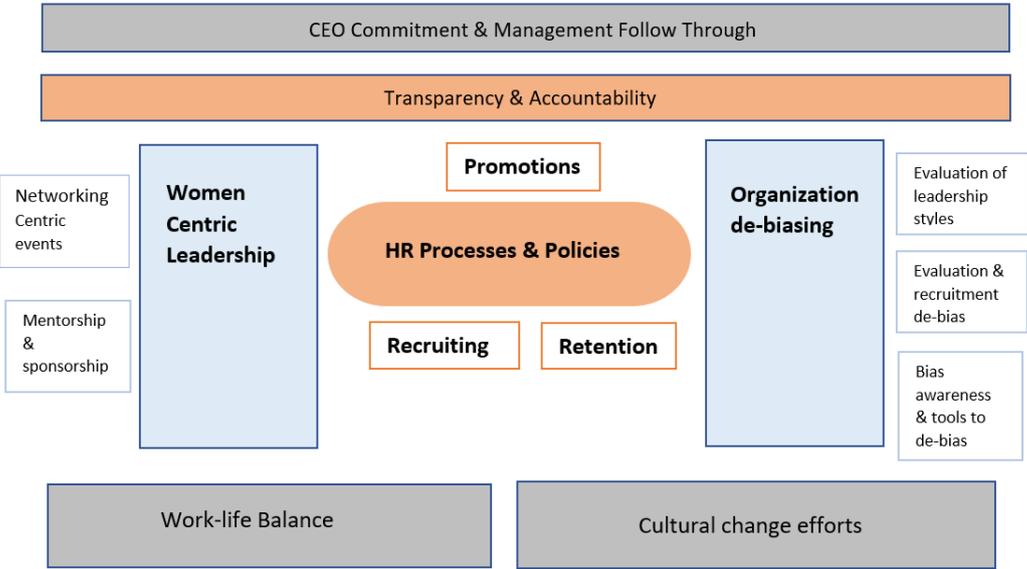


Figure 8 Ecosystem that encompasses the full organization's contribution to change (source: Devillard et al, 2016)

## 7.2 COMMUNICATION AND THE MANY PLAYERS INVOLVED

Communication is considered to be one of the crucial tools top management needs to consider when driving change (Ulrich, 1997; Thompson, 2014). According to the previous section it was established, that the top management's clear engagement and involvement to the gender balance cause, needs to be made very clear. This reflect on not having any mixed or double messages sent out to the organization and management having a one unified front and attitude towards this change (Thompson, 2014). For instance, only mentioning that change is important, and that top management fully endorses it without real change from top management itself will not suffice. Top management are urged to start from within and make a change to send out a stronger message of how important and crucial this change is.

### Top Management Role

In the case of Company A, findings reflected that people on the top management level are all alike, *white males above 50 years old*, and that there is a room to change on that level as well and not just group or section manager level. In fact, many managers articulated the double standard in the communication made. Change needs to happen on all levels especially on top to engage the full organization. Failing to do so reduced the importance of the change and puts the genuineness of its intentions to question (Thompson, 2014; Devillard et al, 2016; Garcia-Alonso

et al, 2017). The change focuses on having a gender balance management team and top management should not be excluded from this given the current profile of its managers. Seeing that top management did not take any steps towards change within their own level led to lessening the impact of this issue. One section manager reflected that, *“I don’t see that much change on their level...they are all still in the same positions...maybe change is not that important”* Additionally, one of the suggestions mentioned was having top management take part of the mentorship program as mentors. Gordon (1993) claims that mentoring is considered a form of relationship building that provides a supporting environment for the mentee. She argues that this environment has shown positive outcomes and mentees who receive extensive mentoring are more likely to get promoted and be satisfied in their work (Gordon, 1993). In fact, research has shown that top management’s clear support of mentorship programs positively impacts its chances of success (Allen et al, 2006). Similarly, Eby et al (2006) deducted that managers who support the program seem to benefit from it as well. Adapting this on Company A’s position, there seems to be an opportunity in involving top management in the program. This will then improve the likelihood of it making a strong impact. In short, when it comes to top management lead by example is the main strategy. By doing and taking part of the process of change, their actions reflect how genuine and important this change is to the organization and provides everyone with what words fall short on, which are ‘follow through and trust’ (Nahavandi, 2000; Thompson, 2014; Devillard et al, 2016; Garcia-Alonso et al, 2017).

Moreover, based on the observation made during the interviews there seems to be an issue of misalignment of communication. Several managers reflected on their current perception on how important it is for managers on all levels to be able to reply to detailed technical questions on the spot. Some even attributed this to why they ask their employees to build technical depth even if the role doesn’t require it. They argue that since top management digs deep in technical issues during meetings, managers must be very technically aware or else they will be perceived as incompetent or not good enough. Subsequently, this presence of deep technical questioning during top line reviews can be seen as top management stressing on the importance of technical competence (Richardson & Vandenberg, 2005). This creates this current environment where they put technical competence over everything regardless of the position (Story et al, 2011). When combining this insight to the current culture of technical competence as core and gendered work ideal, it becomes clear that this can be seen to be a contradicting message compared to the message of celebrating other competencies. Managers are then left to decide whether to take a risk or continue to focus on technical competence since it still remains to be what is focused on in reality (Story et al, 2011). As a result, top management needs to align both their communication and actions about diverse skills. Few changes such as inviting specialists into these meetings could take away the pressure of deep technical knowledge development from managers and at the same time provide top managers with the information they need. Another change could be allowing managers to check with their specialist or team after the meeting and provide the information later and not on the spot.

## Human Resource Managers Role

A different key player in driving the gender reform change is the Human Resource (HR) team (Wahl, 2014). As a strategic partner to top management, HR needs to create the right policies, processes, and culture that enable this change (Beardwell & Claydon, 2010). Additionally, taking an active role in process such as evaluation and promotion is needed. Acting as a coach that guides managers in asking the right questions and identifying what the needed competencies for the next step are is what Company A lacks. With the current unclarity on competencies needed and the habit of focusing on the technical aspect only, HR's role is crucial. Providing a toolbox that enables managers to look at their team with a wider perspective, that celebrates differences and avoids sameness is what will drive the change in the needed direction (Thompson, 2014). Contributing in developing a shift in the mindset to look past what is known and familiar and actively getting managers out of their comfort zone and taking more risks with unfamiliar skills is what HR can do differently (Devillard et al, 2016; Garcia-Alonso et al, 2017).

Moreover, pertaining to the current evaluation and promotion process more standardized approached need to be put in place. As mentioned earlier it was observed that the current process acts as a guideline and manager are left at their own discretion to it use or not. This has led to many managers either creating their own version of it or taking it case-by-case. This lack of standard approach was mentioned to affect the caliber of managers from one department to another. Several managers brought this up during the interview as well as in the research about evaluation processes. The lack of having one common base to evaluate employees creates a mismatch in what is considered a good manager that reflects negatively on transparency (Festing et al, 2014). This, according to research, can result in having promoted managers facing situations where their promotions are in question or even challenged, which was mentioned by a few women managers in Company A (van den Brink et al, 2010). Therefore, unifying the base criteria and steps to be taken for evaluating and promoting employees as well as enforcing them should be introduced. This not only provides guidance and helps introduce different skills to be considered but it also makes the process more transparent (Festing et al, 2014). The organization will be aware of the existing criteria and skills they are being evaluated on and they will even help managers provide constructive feedback that employees can work on (van den Brink et al, 2010). This is crucial to address the current case in Company A when it comes to providing feedback to managers especially women in relation to their technical competence; *“my manager says I am not technically deep enough to become a manager...nothing more is said about how to change that”* said a female group manager. Finally, this structured process also unifies the caliber across the organization, which enables smoother department changes with fewer discrepancies in performances (Thompson, 2014).

Furthermore, introducing new formal ways of gathering feedback other than the current lobbying techniques taken by managers such as 360 feedbacks creates a new source for objectivity (Fletcher, 1999). This helps with claims of having a one-way feedback process or even the feeling of not knowing what needs to change to become better (Garavan et al., 1997). This can

help in creating a new way to consider input given by other managers and have more weight rather than the full weight on the direct manager's input (Garavan et al., 1997; Fletcher, 1999). Millmore et al (2007) argues in their research that with the growing emphasis on team work and cross functional collaboration, other managers should also be involved in providing their judgment based on their exposure with the candidate. Another thing to consider that HR could focus on is retaining talent. Several counts of high potential women leaving the company were cited during the interviews. Investigating the reasons behind these women leaving can be a great way to retain them since they are considered to be closer to promotion than newly hired women. Understanding why women leave the company and subsequently working on developing programs that support these reasons can make a positive impact on the gender balance journey (Buse & Bilimoria, 2014). Being able to keep women will help in developing the pipeline with ready to be promoted women from within the company (Devillard et al, 2016; Garcia-Alonso et al, 2017). Arguably, this can also help HR in not having to take quota steps or hiring from outside to close this gender gap. According to the women managers interviewed, women either leave due to workload and not being able to balance between work and family or because of the lack of career progression at the company. Programs related to part-time work, work flexibility, and even women post-maternal leave could be a way to help women stay in the working field (Ely et al, 2011).

Finally, for HR to effectively achieve this they must be empowered and equipped to do so. Thus, internally they need to go through extensive training on how to coach, guide, challenge, and stand their ground with managers (Beardwell & Claydon, 2010). These skills will equip them with the needed knowledge on how to execute and drive change through other people (managers) as well as provide them with a position of knowledge and expertise to strengthen their perceived image as people with superior knowledge in that topic (Beardwell & Claydon, 2010).

### **Male and Female Managers Roles**

At times of change, managers are looked at as the ones who can actually execute what is needed to make things a reality. Top management set the direction, HR puts the policies, and process, then creates the needed tools and have them all in place while managers and other employees react and create the change itself. As mentioned earlier, change must involve everyone in the organization. When it comes to managers, they are often looked at as change agents who through their daily work contribute towards the change (Wahl, 2014).

In fact, when it comes to male managers they are argued to be those in control of the majority of the resources that influence change (Connell, 2005). Therefore, having male managers on board and working towards gender equality will help change norms and cultures that emphasis gendered work ideals and practices (Wahl, 2014). Additionally, as argued by Ely and Merson (2000) in order for change to diffuse evenly across an organization, the process of dismantling current practices should be clearly rationalized and include the full organization. Such a context sensitive change in gendered formal policies and work practices might need to consider the narrative (Acker, 1990; Ely & Meyerson, 2000). As a result, involving male managers and

showing how these changes will have a positive impact on them as well is crucial (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Going away from the typical 'masculine' norm in management towards a more diverse norm encompassing alternatives and even 'feminine' management opens up the floor for men who do not fit the current symbolic male ideals (Wahl, 2014). Thus, making this gender deconstruction beneficial for both men and women in terms of opportunity and for the organization in terms of diversity of competences (Wahl, 2014). Wahl (2014) argues for the importance of male managers in taking part in scrutinizing the male norm and gendered work ideals, by speaking up and exposing these behaviors to help in eradicating them faster. Awareness is not enough to drive change, however accompanied with action it has an impact (Wahl, 2014). Having men acknowledge their homosocial activities and work on eliminating them can go a long way in creating the platform needed for women to shine (Holgersson, 2013).

When it comes to women managers, they have a role to play as well. As Ely and Meyerson (2000) argue how the women act becomes part of the change rhetoric. This translates into women who adapt to 'masculine' characteristic do not help the cause. In fact, they unconsciously reinforce this gendering of work ideals and indirectly advocate for it. If all women, let go of their 'feminine' norms just to assimilate it becomes much harder on women who don't (Acker, 2006). The goal is to create an environment that is gender neutral and does not favor those who behave in certain male like ways (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). According to the interviews, several female section managers emphasized on the importance of being bold and staying true to one's self. They agreed that it is not an easy task, but the more women do so, the easier it becomes to fight assimilation and gendered ideals. This follows the same findings of Ely and Meyerson (2000), organizations that work on developing women to adapt or create this rhetoric of 'it's a women's problem'. Therefore, having more women who dare to not change into one of 'the boys' can arguably challenge the norms and drive this culture of change faster. Having more women also reduces the pressured of representing the full gender which Lewis and Simpson (2012) argue to cause women to 'withdraw'. Enabling more women to come out of the shadows eliminated the current minority position they are in and empowers more women to take more risks (Lewis & Simpson, 2012). Another thing to consider is women helping other women, creating networks that provide support and guidance. Instead of having several 'Queen Bee' women who as mentioned by Acker (2006), push women out and protect their rare position, women could open up doors and help other women to reach higher positions. Lewis and Simpson (2012) argued that these acts ensure the rest of the women to remain at a disadvantage. Maintaining this disadvantage works against gender equality work and will limit positive change occurrence.

Additionally, women can speak up more instead of remaining silent then choosing to leave (Luis & Parsons, 2007). Being part of the solution and going after what they want can help women reflect their career ambitions and goals. Voicing out their career aspirations and not waiting for their managers to take the initiative can eliminate any gendered assumptions made by managers as well provide them with a clear goal they can work on (Luis & Parsons, 2007). In a way, women could consider owning their career more and manage their managers accordingly. Offering guidance and being involved in these discussions make women have a more active role in the process. According to the gathered opinions from the few women who

became section managers, it was observed that they attributed their own initiative of daring to speak up and going after what they want without being afraid as the main reasons they think helped them make it. When male managers were asked what they thought women could do to help, some of them mentioned they shouldn't "*play the victim card*". These observations confirm the need for women to take an active role and focus more on breaking the stereotype and leading change instead of complaining without action. Finally, women could advocate for themselves and own their image and perception more. For instance, several managers across both genders and levels mentioned that women tend to say they are not technical enough. Ironically, according to many male managers, women who make that claim are actually perceived as very technical. It can be argued that this self-doubt harms women more in terms of their perceived image within the organization as well as their own self-confidence. Having more confidence in their ability and not focusing on having everything perfect, will positively affect their competence perception. If women keep on questioning their technical ability they create this cloud of uncertainty around themselves and it will feed into the norm of perceiving women as less competent (Luis & Parsons, 2007). This approach however; should be taken with caution since research has shown that women who are self-assertive and self-promoted are often perceived negatively. Lewis and Simpson (2012), argue that since women are usually perceived as 'motherly' and 'supportive', those who show signs of swaying towards 'assertiveness' and 'masculine' gendered traits are perceived negatively. This gender marking according to traits and behaviors often lead to negatively impacting women during evaluations (Lewis & Simpson, 2012).

To sum up, it is clear, not only from the theory research stand point but also from the field research conducted by consultancy firms, that this is a change journey for everyone (Angier & Axelrod, 2014). Academic researchers have shown numerous times how gender biases and own perceptions are found in relation to both men and women. The journey to rewrite these biases and push for awareness involved everyone's involvement and building their trust (Angier & Axelrod, 2014). Devillard et al (2016), argue that this comprehensive approach of creating an ecosystem (see figure 8) ensures that change is achieved and provides room to focus on establishing the concept of 'new normal' as well as the tools to do so. For instance, working on flexible hours should not just be targeted at women but should target the whole organization thus making the current top management roles compatible with flexible working hours. Since several women cited that some management roles seem to be too demanding and require staying more hours at work this could work on reducing the attachment of too much work load label to top management roles (Dhillon et al, 2006). Additionally, developing a more structured promotion and evaluation process with proper guidance on what skills to look for and how to celebrate differences can help in promoting different leadership styles and make the perfect manager at Company A be described using numerous and diverse attributes (Dhillon et al, 2006). Not to mention ensuring the current process criteria reflects a diverse performance model that complements the organization de-biasing process for leadership style evolution (Wright et al, 2001).

### **7.3 SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS**

As the recommendations in this report demonstrate, involving the full organization increases the likelihood of driving change faster. Having everyone play a part to drive this gender balance ensures the presence of this goal on every agenda within the organization. This creates this culture of working towards the same goal and all efforts are synchronized together to reach it. As mentioned before gender balance work contributed to the sustainable development of industrial organizations. It ensures that organizations have diverse set of skills inhouse within its management team. This, as argued by researchers improves the chances of organizations to maintain their competitive advantage and relevance in the market (Nadler & Tushman, 1999; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994).

Moreover, according to the United Nations (2015a), the definition of sustainability consists of three dimensions: environmental, social and economic sustainability. Due to the project's focus on internal gender balance and ways in which evaluation and promotion processes contribute to male dominance in industrial organizations, the economic implications were the most significant to address. This does not take away from the effects of gender balance on social and environmental dimensions however the topic's focus and recommendations were limited towards internal organizational processes.

According to Basiago (1999), economic sustainability is defined as "...a system of production that satisfies consumption levels without compromising future needs". Thus, using this logic it can be argued that to reach economic sustainability, market's future states should be considered. Nadler and Tushman (1999) argued that in house competencies are expected to contribute to the company's ability to compete within changing markets. Porter (2008) argued that one of the important factors to consider when operating in a changing market is how much the company's current strong competencies still match the new required skills by the future market. From this perspective, ensuring industrial organization's ability to reach gender balance and a diverse set of competencies works towards having more skills to adopt during market changes. This then helps organizations to narrow the gap between the competencies available and the future skills needed. As a result, the contribution of this report facilitates achieving a culture and environment that celebrates differences and cultivated more diverse set of competencies to be available which then helps companies to develop and remain sustainable economically.

### **8. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

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A complex topic such as gender equality and reform bring some challenges to the research. Subsequently, limitations due to these challenges must be addressed and mentioned clearly. First, the participants in this study were not directly chosen by the author of this research. They were chosen by the Company A supervisor based on criteria shared with them. This absence of full control in choosing the interviewed managers can be argued to have provided some room for bias or not complete transparency of the results. Therefore, one of the main limitations in this research is not having full control on which managers to interview. Another limitation is the number of people interviewed, since there was the pressure of time and to finish this research the managers interviewed was limited compared to the wider population of the company.

Additionally, the evaluation and analysis of the data was done through the theory already available in the topic. The main focus was not to discover a new behavior but more to use the theory available to explain what is observed. Also, the main approach used was to interview managers and ask them to reflect on how they behave in the evaluation process. This does not eliminate bias and lack of awareness to one's actions (Price & Murnan, 2004). The only method to validate manager's input was to cross reference what they all said however there is still room for not having the full picture due to sensitivity or fear to misrepresent the company. Therefore, further research could attempt to observe as a real promotion and evaluation meeting is happening or attend other meetings with HR. This will provide a more unbiased environment and observations made would be more organic and less effected by how the company wants to come off like.

Moreover, in terms of analysis of the data it can be argued that due to the nature of the data itself as being self-gathered it becomes quite difficult to be independently verified (Price & Murnan, 2004). Fallacies such as selected memory, telescoping or even exaggeration can be present within the method of gathering information. Subsequently, further research can include more than one person collecting data and even fully transcribing the interviews as opposed to semi-transcribing. This will reduce the self-reflective bias and provide analysis that is less subjective. In terms of scope, further research can include department heads as part of the sample size to include the top executive's take on the matter. This can enrich both the recommendation phase and link it more to existing steps already being developed as well as the analysis in terms of giving a chance for top management to provide their own perspective on the issue. In addition, being able to get their first-hand explanation of how they view the issue and their own actions to improve gender balance. Having this would add to the discussion as well as enhance by having the feedback and perspective of top management on what lower management levels reflect on the issue. Thus, creating a good comparative analysis about the gap in perception if any and how can that be used to move forward and drive the change needed.

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# APPENDIX A: ABCDE EMPLOYEE RATING PROFILE

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<b>A</b>	Employees who are not yet promoted but have the potential for a manager position
<b>B</b>	Managers who are transmittable
<b>C</b>	Managers who have the potential for strategic management positions
<b>D</b>	Managers who need broadened/develop to be promoted
<b>E</b>	Managers who need to switch to another career without leadership

Valuation range: 1-5 where 1 is the lowest value

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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### Competence

- What is competence? Is there more than one type of competence?
- How do you rate these types of competencies? Is it different from how Company A rates them?
- What is technical competency to you? (What skills are perceived as technical?)
- Are there different technical competencies needed for each position? (Eg: E,R,N functions how different is the required technical competency there)
- Can you describe in your words top Company A performers, managers you remember the most and why?  
"What type of managers does Company A celebrate?--- leads to locus of control"  
or: What does it take to be a good manager? In what way one needs to develop to be a good manager?(What should the focus be in terms of types of competence mentioned before)
- How would you describe the culture here in Company A (Skills, experience, gender?)

### Evaluation and Promotion (How do you assess this competence)

- Can you please take me through the evaluation and promotion process step by step?
- What do you think of the current performance and promotion process?
- What kinds of supporting documents do you use through the process? Are they helpful? What other kind of support do you think you need if any?  
**Follow up:** What would you do diff or change in the process?  
Can you give live cases you went through to promote someone?
- Going back to the competences you mentioned, how well embedded in the process are they? Are they looked at during the discussion or are they only to qualify to be considered?
- Do you discuss your technical competence definition and represent the candidate accordingly? Is there a step in the process where you align the technical definition before discussing the candidate's performance?
- Who has the last say? How does discussion usually go? (heated, no discussion, smooth)
- What kind of questions are being asked once a person is nominated?  
**Follow up:** Are the questions the same for female nominees as well?  
How different are they? Are there any assumption being made when it comes to women (marriage/kids)? **'Gender'**
- Based on both your experience; going through it to be promoted and then using it to promote others, what would you change or keep?

### Gender focused

- What kind of traits/skills seen as effective for a good manager ... then group them female vs male and identify which is seen as predominant.
- Why do you think not a lot of women are in a similar position like yours right now? What did you do/do differently than them?
- On an individual level, what are the top 3 skills an employee believes they should have/develop to make it to the top? do they differ for female vs male?

## **APPENDIX C: LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES**

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1. Coordinate but work independently - take responsibility
2. Work with the details, understand the context
3. Act now – think long-term
4. Build know-how through continuous learning
5. Stimulate commitment through involvement
6. Dare to try – manage the risks

