

**An insight into the 'old boy's network' – A case study on the perceptions
of male leaders in Ireland with respect to the underrepresentation of
women in Ireland's boardrooms.**

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Abstract

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Women are underrepresented in boardrooms around the globe but with high levels of participation in the labour market and astounding accomplishments in the education system, it is even more extraordinary how women are not gaining seats in boardrooms in Ireland. There are multiple stakeholders that influence board composition that are held accountable for women's leadership experiences and this study provided an insight into the very positions of power that are argued responsible for women's career paths.

This study found that what male leaders in Ireland knew about gender board diversity was diminutive and their reasons on women not progressing to top positions at a comparable rate to their male counterparts were mainly focused on traditional gender roles in Ireland and women's pivotal role in family planning. As men hold most seats in the boardroom in Ireland today, it is imperative they understand the benefits of gender balance in the boardroom and how gender diversity can lead their organisations to future success.

While most literature in this area is based around the 'glass-ceiling' women face in organisations and on why women fail to be offered promotions, the purpose of this case study was to bridge the gap in literature on men's perceptions on the topic and to ascertain male leader's thoughts on women as capable leaders, who should be responsible for achieving better balance in boards and why gender matters in the boardroom.

The researcher conducted a multiple-case study of semi-structured interviews with male leaders that were on the board of their organisation in Ireland to gain an insight into their perceptions on the underrepresentation of females on boards in Ireland. The overall findings conveyed 'men hiring men' continues in organisations and most male leaders still hold conventional stereotypical ideals that all managerial positions are 'male' and women need stereotypical male attributes to get to the top.

While the male leaders in this work all felt women were extremely capable leaders and understood a balanced board enables every organisation to arrive at better solutions, most male leaders were against gender quotas and believed overall the responsibility was with women to change statistics on the representation of women in boards. All male leaders claimed flexible work patterns for men and women would strengthen women's position in organisations while simultaneously strengthening male's position in the home. However, it was felt that government intervention was required in Ireland to implement such change.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

There is a plethora of literature and research on the lack of women positioned in higher echelons of organisations throughout the world. The enduring gender gap in the board room and senior management roles has attracted much attention across the globe and the issue of women not progressing to top levels of management is being discussed at length within many disciplines. This is not surprising when an economy as large as the US announced women make up 50% of its workers, 80% of its consumer and 40.4% of its investors, with only 16% of its population comprised of female directors (Katividad, 2012). Feminists, economists, psychologists and researchers alike are all offering reasons, theories, impacts, consequences, approaches and methods on this issue, with an overarching focus on the 'glass-ceiling' women have encountered over decades and the barriers that women are faced with in organisations while trying to climb the career ladder. In more recent years, the literature on women in management has been dominated by efforts to explain *why* women continue to experience difficulties in attaining senior management positions (Berkery, Morley and Tiernan, 2013) and *how* stereotypical views on gender and leadership styles have affected their careers negatively (O' Connor, 2012).

More recent research includes a conference which took place in London titled "Women at the Top – Where now, what next?" and while the aim of the conference was to interrogate the role of psychological research in understanding gender diversity, tackling the dearth of women at the top of organisations was highlighted (Atewologun and Doldor, 2013). There were many findings at this conference and many suggestions as to what needed to be done to further contribute to empowering women and the current literature around it (Wyatt et al, 2012). One such suggestion in particular stood out; more research on the multiple stakeholders accountable for women's leadership experiences was called for, "particularly those in position of power and privilege" (Tatli and Ozbilgin, 2012). And so the motivation for this work began.

While questions continue to be asked about the lack of women positioned in senior levels of organisation structures worldwide, it is of particular interest in the Ireland's context as a result of the economic boom between the years 1991 and 2001, more frequently referred to as 'The Celtic Tiger' (Cross, 2010). Ireland saw a dramatic increase in females entering the labour market during this time and despite the recent economic down-turn, literature shows women still have a huge presence in the Irish economy, not only by continuing to participate in the Irish workforce and educational system, but to participate in large numbers, at an extremely high level, surpassing not only their male counterparts, but many EU countries and EU standards (Murphy and Doherty, 2011).

The researcher found that literature on women not progressing to senior management roles or not gaining seats in board rooms is extensive. However, *men's* attitudes and perceptions on women not progressing to top management structures, is considerably scarce. Furthermore, the views of *male leaders* and Chairmen, on the lack of women in any given board room, is also particularly scant, despite their positions of power and influence. What is even more significant is literature on the views of male leaders and Chairmen in Ireland on the lack of women in senior positions or boards in Ireland, is virtually non-existent. Thus, the researcher aims to fill this gap in literature by critiquing the very positions of power and privilege that are deemed somewhat responsible for women's career progression in organisations in Ireland.

Given that women in Ireland have extremely high levels of participation in the Irish economy and that the responsibility for social change ultimately lies with those who have power, the researcher seeks to ascertain the perceptions of *male leaders* in Ireland on the dearth of women in Ireland's boardrooms as in most cases these *male leaders* are ultimately the 'gate-keepers' for their female colleagues career progression (Atewologun and Doldor, 2013).

Simultaneously, the researcher seeks to gain an insight into male leaders' understanding of gender diversity in boardrooms, on the relationship between gender and leadership, on leadership and work-life balance, on gender and work-life balance and finally on their perceptions on *why* gender matters in the boardroom, *how* organisations can achieve better gender balance in the boardroom and *who* should be held responsible for implementing change within this field.

In Chapter 2 the researcher outlines current literature on gender board diversity in Ireland and the gaps within this literature around male leader's perceptions on the topic, in particular male leaders in organisations in Ireland. Literature around the main issues that potentially lead to gender imbalance on boards is also discussed, which includes the relationship between gender and leadership and leadership and work-life balance in organisations. Finally literature on *why* gender balance on boards benefit organisations, *how* gender balance on boards can be achieved and *who* the responsibility lies with in achieving gender balance in the boardroom.

In Chapter 3 the researcher highlights the proposed research problem and provides a break-down of the aims of this piece of research. The aim of this study is to firstly answer the call for more research on positions of power accountable for women's leadership experiences, secondly to bridge the gap in the literature on this topic and most importantly to gain an insight into the perspectives of male leaders on why women are failing to get onto boards in Ireland. The researcher outlines specific objectives within the reoccurring themes throughout this literature to ascertain a true understanding of male leader's views in Ireland on the underrepresentation of women on boards.

In Chapter 4 the researcher conveys the research design that will be used for this study and how and why a multiple-case study approach is appropriate for this work. Through in-depth interviews and purposive sampling the researcher hopes to gain valid and reliable results on male leader's perceptions on the lack of women in boardrooms in Ireland. The strengths and limitations of the methods used, the size

and boundaries of the sample and how the data will be collected and interpreted through field notes, recordings and coding are all discussed.

Chapter 5 outlines the research findings of each individual case study as well as a cross-case analysis on male leaders' perceptions on the underrepresentation of women on boards in Ireland. Findings are outlined thematically and diagrams are used to give the reader visibility of results

Chapter 6 discusses the findings of this multiple-case study by considering previous literature from Chapter 2 and the initial aims and objectives of this work from Chapter 3. The researcher compares and contrasts both the previous literature and the objectives of this study with the research findings which highlights the key results found and justifies the rationale of this research piece.

Finally in Chapter 7 the researcher draws the main conclusions of this study while identifying if findings have supported, contradicted or disproved previous literature and the aims and objectives set out initially. Areas are also recommended for further researcher based on the research findings.

It is hoped this work will not only have a significant contribution to the current literature surrounding this gender board diversity by researching the very gap this work proposes to fill, but that it will also contribute to women's progression to senior management positions and to boardroom seats in Ireland.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In this Chapter the researcher discusses current literature around gender board diversity and board composition in Ireland. Themes include women’s participation in the educational and labour market in Ireland, theories on why gender imbalance exists in boards today, the relationship between gender and leadership, work-life balance in senior management structures, work-life balance for women, why gender balance should be achieved, how gender balance can be achieved and who should take responsibility in achieving better gender balance on boards.

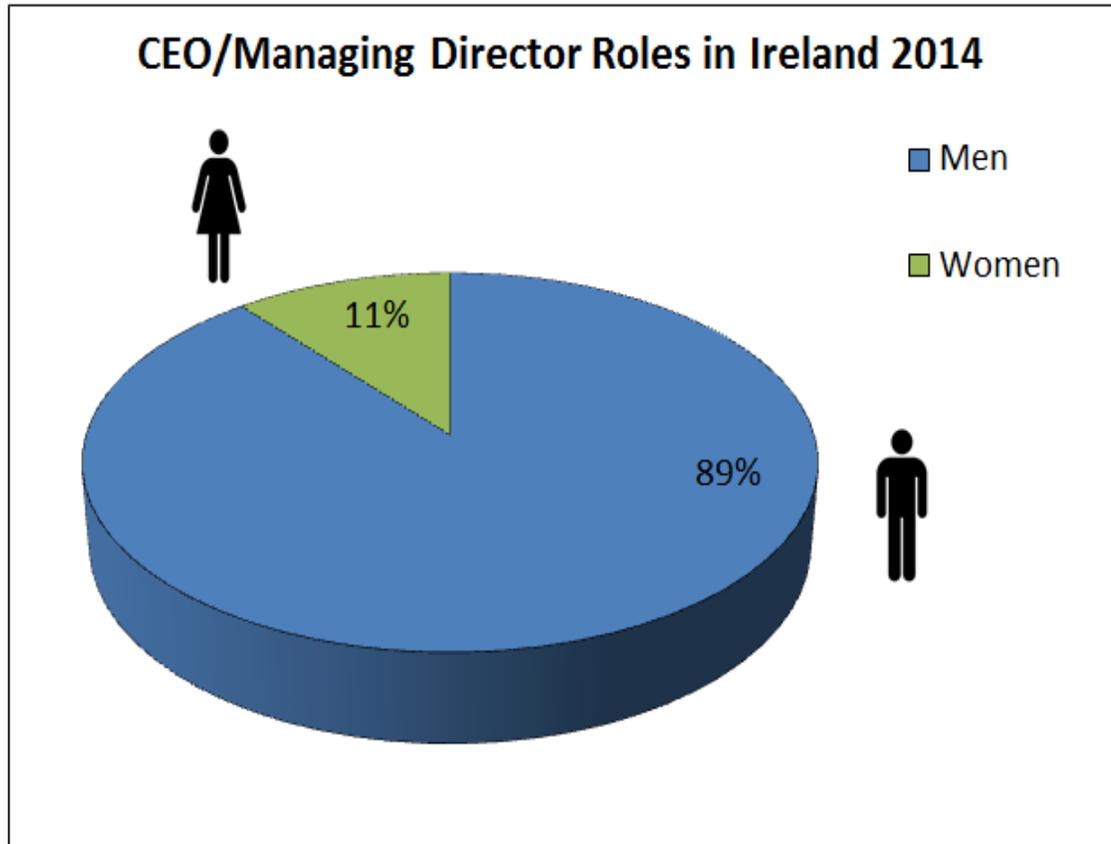
2.1 Gender board diversity in Ireland

The European Union’s Commissioner for Justice, Citizenship and Fundamental Rights, Viviane Redding claims “The EU has a long tradition of acting to further gender equality – it’s now time we tackled the boardroom” and advises getting more woman “board-ready” makes business sense (Strategic Direction, 2013). However, this optimism is not consistent within the composition of boards in Ireland.

In February 2011, in the UK Lord Davies’ report *Women on Boards*, it stated “at the current rate of change it will take 70 years to achieve gender-balanced boardrooms in the UK” (Stephens, 2013). While Ireland may be moving in the right direction in terms of gender board diversity (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013), it still remains disproportionate on a national and a global level (Cross, 2010). 9 per cent of PLC board members were women in Ireland in 2013 compared to the EU average of 16 per cent (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013; Grant Thornton Report, 2013). In early 2014, 89 per cent of CEO managing director roles in Ireland were male and 11 per cent were women (Figure 1) (Grant Thornton Report, 2014), which indisputably conveys the lack of female representation on boards in Ireland prevails. The Institute of Directors in Ireland is committed to building better boards in Ireland as “diversity is of paramount importance to the leadership and success of a business and its interests” (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013). They claim “a diverse board is more capable of

understanding potential risks and identifying the impact of such risks to the business and various stakeholders” (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013).

Figure 1: CEO/Managing Director Roles in Ireland in 2014.



In their research they surveyed female directors and found that 58 per cent of them think gender board diversity has improved over the last five years in Ireland (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013). However, they also found that women felt they did not have access to the same level of networks as men and there was an over-reliance on the existing ‘directors club’ with little effort given to exploring the wider talent pool (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013).

These statistics are not only extremely disillusioning for Irish business and the Irish economy in terms of diverse thinking but extremely disappointing for women in Ireland and indeed around the world. Furthermore, they do not correlate with the

high level of participation and success rates women in Ireland have in both the educational system and the labour market.

2.2 Women in Ireland

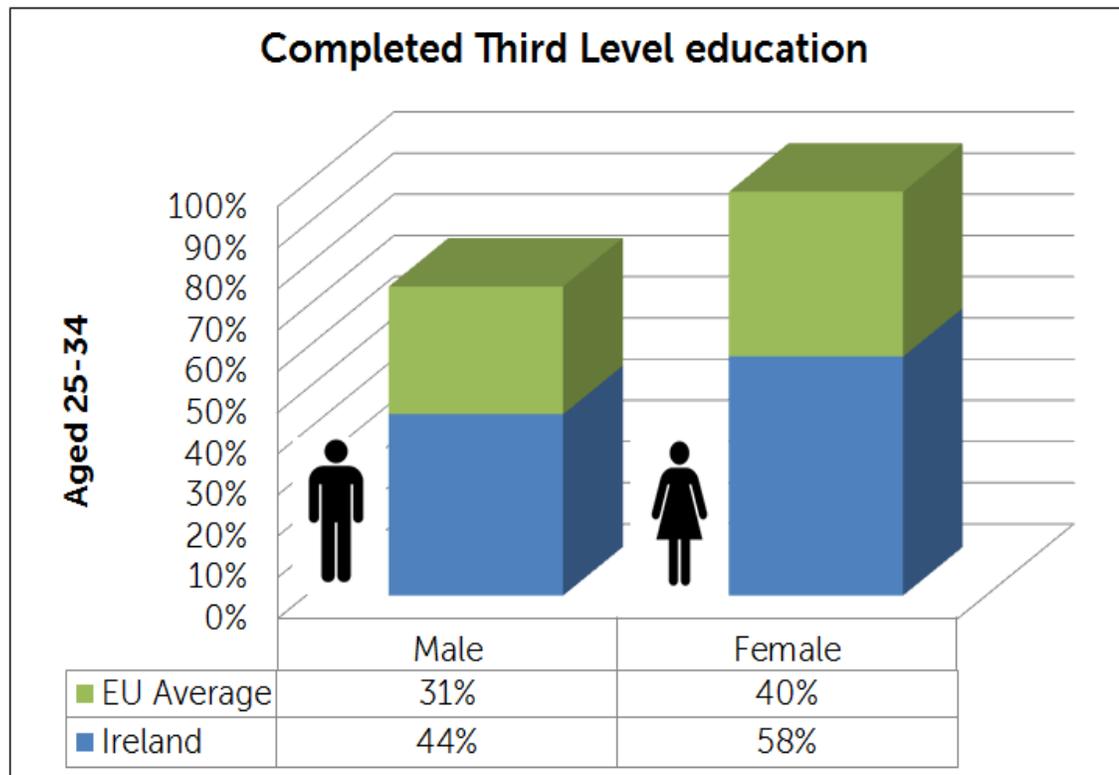
2.2.1 Education

Literature around women's education levels in Ireland conveys they are the most educated in Europe with 58 per cent of women here aged 25 to 34 having completed a third-level education while the EU average is 40 per cent (European Commission, 2014). In Figure 2, this is compared with men in Ireland where 44 per cent have completed third-level with the EU average being 31 per cent (European Commission, 2014). This has steadily increased from 44 per cent in 2011 (CSO, 2011) to 53 per cent in 2012 and 56 per cent in 2013 (European Commission, 2013). Women account for 82 per cent of graduates in Health and Welfare, 74 per cent in Education and 63 per cent in Arts and Humanities in Ireland and yet remain under-represented at senior positions across these sectors (CSO, 2011). 57.9 per cent of women in Ireland have a qualification beyond secondary school in 2014 compared to only 44 per cent of Irish men in the same age bracket (European Commission, 2014; CSO 2011). With these astounding figures in education compared to men, how is it women do not progress to senior positions in management structures or boardrooms in Ireland?

Interestingly, the dearth of women at this level is not only evident in the business world in Ireland but also in the world of academia. Research conveys the gender profile of senior management and professorial within Irish universities are predominately male with Irish men being at least five times more likely than women to obtain full professorship (O' Connor, 2012). The differential between men and women's promotion opportunities to professorial level in Ireland is one of the worst in the EU (O' Connor, 2012). Not only does the lack of female representation have profound impacts on "the creation and validation of knowledge" (O' Connor, 2012) in any environment – business or educational – it is another male-dominated senior

management structure that lacks a female presence which creates an imbalanced picture for younger professionals and students to take example from.

Figure 2: Men versus women between 25 and 34 years that have completed third level education in Ireland versus EU average.

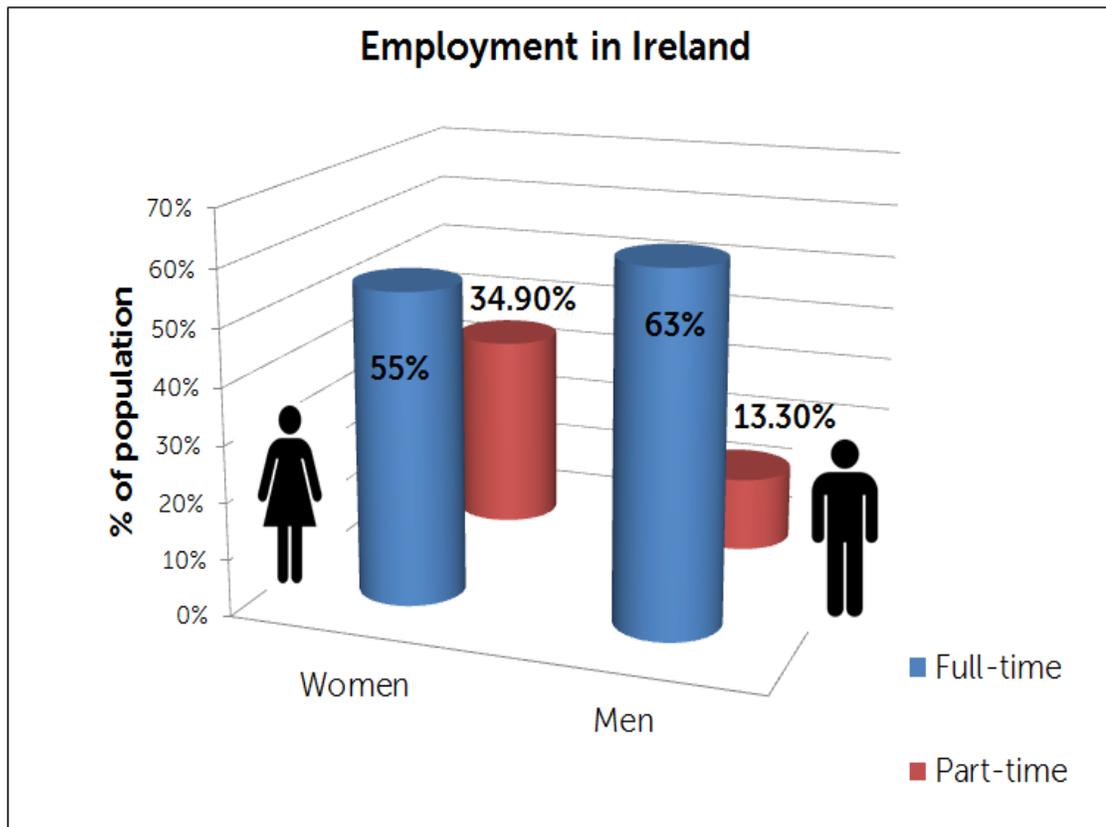


2.2.2 Employment

As researchers continue to investigate the lack of women positioned in senior levels of organisational structures worldwide, it is of particular interest in the Irish context where, as a result of an economic boom from 1991 to 2001 there was a considerable surge in the number of female workers in the Irish economy (European Commission, 2003). This economic boom saw unprecedented growth in Ireland with women accounting for 60 per cent of total labour force; growth compared to 28 per cent in 1971 (CSO, 2007; Cross, 2010). Research conveys, the number of females entering employment in Ireland surpassed EU averages, with the increase in female

employment in the EU totalling to 2.1 per cent in 1998, compared with 10.2 per cent in Ireland in the same year (European Commission 2003; Coughlan, 2002). Although women were being employed in similar numbers to their male counterparts, they were not progressing to senior management at comparable rates (Cross, 2010) and the majority of senior managerial positions across all sectors of the Irish economy are still occupied by men (Cross, 2010; O' Connor, 2012; CSO 2011).

Figure 3: Men versus women in full-time and part-time employment.



Today, more than half of Irish women are in employment (55 per cent), compared to men (62.7 per cent), but this figure remains below the EU average of 58% (European Commission 2014; Grant Thornton, 2014). Furthermore 34.9 per cent of women work part-time compared to 13.3 per cent of men (Figure 3) (European Commission, 2014). Due to the economic downturn in 2008 fewer women are in the workforce in Ireland

(CSO 2011; European Commission 2014), however this reduction came at a slower rate than their male counterparts.

Interestingly, the number of females in the 'Management and Administrators' category of employment in Ireland rose by 56 per cent from 1998 to 2010, unlike the number of males from the same category who decreased by 6 per cent from the same years (CSO, 2011). While this fails to differentiate between the levels of management (higher or lower), research shows women in Ireland are well represented at junior levels of management and under represented at senior levels (Ruane and Sutherland, 1999; CSO, 2011) and in total they accounted for a mere 34 per cent of managers in Ireland in 2013 (Rothery, 2013).

Some theorists argue the situation may only be getting worse for women in Ireland as just over one fifth of senior business roles in Ireland were filled by females in 2013 (Grant Thornton, 2013). Other arguments convey Ireland is moving in the right direction but more of a focus needs to be put on addressing issues that lead to the gender imbalance on boards for the number of women on boards to increase (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013).

What are the main issues that potentially lead to gender imbalance on boards?

There is extensive literature on the barriers women had and indeed still have to face in organisations today that make their career progression more difficult than that of a male's. The literature on women in management has been dominated by efforts to explain *why* women continue to experience difficulties in attaining senior management positions (Berkery, Morley and Tiernan, 2013) and *how* stereotypical views on gender and leadership styles have affected their careers negatively (O' Connor, 2012). Work-life balance in senior management (Murphy & Doherty, 2011) has also been a reoccurring theme within this literature and on the work-life balance needs women require when balancing their careers with child bearing and rearing.

Why do women experience difficulty in attaining senior roles? Theorists argue that often senior leaders focus on the preconceived notion of *who* should perform the role rather than the qualifications *required* for the role (Cross, 2010). In these instances women's biological make-up is focused on rather than their ability and women can be viewed as the "greater risk" when promotion opportunities arise (Flanders, 1994). Furthermore men can be more likely to be promoted to managerial positions as theorists claim they feel more comfortable working with other men than they do women (Tharenou, 2005). The 'one-best model' continues to be used in organisations which insinuates anyone who is different "can only be worse" which can lead to the thinking that being a woman effectively means being "less good" if the standard leader is a male (Rosener, 1995). The 'men's club' or the 'old boys network' constantly emerges in the literature as a significant organisational barrier for women (Cross, 2010). Effectively it shuts women in the workplace out and discourages women to go for promotional opportunities as men's relationship with other men is key in perpetuating male dominance (O' Connor, 2012). This phenomenon has been referred to in various different terms in literature including "homosocial behaviour" (Lipman-Blumen, 1976), "homosociality" (Hearn, 2001) and "male homosociality" (Blackmore et al, 2006) and when it is reflected and reinforced within senior management structures, this can deter women from promotional opportunities (O' Connor, 2012). Other theories and concepts in this area such as the "Apex Fallacy" and "female hypergamy" suggest women claim "most CEOs are men" because most of the men they can see are CEOs but this is not true for men (Zed, 2011). These theories in research are all linked with the notion that men get promoted faster than women, despite the fact that women may have the equivalent or higher qualifications, because of the prejudice and the culture that exists within organisations.

While there is endless literature on the "glass-ceiling" women face in the workplace nowhere within this literary space did the researcher find a focus on male leaders and what their perceptions on this topic were, nor was there specific reference to male

leaders in Ireland and what their attitudes were towards women in senior positions in Ireland, or lack thereof.

2.3 Gender and leadership

Another issue highlighted in the literature was how stereotypical views on gender and leadership styles have affected women's careers negatively (O' Connor, 2012). The relationship between gender and leadership in management structures is extremely topical in this field of study with the stereotypical view of what 'being a woman' entails and what 'being a leader' means, can hold huge significance in deterring women from going for senior roles. From the literature it is clear the characteristics typically affiliated with a female continue to be considered by hiring managers as the reasons a female may or may not obtain a position. Research shows male's continue to gender type the managerial role in favour of men (Berkery et al, 2013) and both males and managers are continued to be viewed as agentic in nature, while women are viewed in more androgynous terms by both males and females (Berkery et al, 2013).

On the contrary, literature surrounding this area also asserts that management structures are becoming more feminine and qualities associated with women are now associated with effective management (Duehr and Bono, 2006), neglecting the past ideal where all managers had to possess stereotypical masculine and aggressive qualities to succeed (Gartzia et al, 2012). Findings on flexibility and how it is needed more in the workplace as a result of the promotion of a healthy work-life balance (Murphy and Doherty, 2011) suggest management structures need to be more collaborate, cooperative, sensitive and empathising in order to succeed (Kark et al, 2011). Most theorists argue that women are better equipped to adopt androgynous leadership styles and practice transformational leadership in particular, and men on the other hand will probably find it more difficult to adapt such leadership styles as they may be less prepared to display stereotypical feminine leadership behaviours (Berkery et al, 2013).

Other theorists argue people have similar beliefs about leaders and men but dissimilar beliefs about leaders and women (Bosak and Sczesny, 2011). While people's beliefs about change in women's roles and characteristics may increase acceptance of female leaders and accelerate the pace of social change (Bosak and Sczesny, 2011), people that hold conventional understandings that all managerial positions are male, only continue to perceive the male figure as "the norm" which not only loses the dynamic characteristics of managers but the appreciation of women and their experiences that can be used for leadership roles and board room decisions (Billing, 2011).

Opposite to the "male norm" it was found that women felt there was a stereotypical conception of the "female norm" where their colleagues thought they are well suited for the job before getting it by attempting to 'read' them as the traditional woman (Billing, 2011). Studies show stereotypical societal and cultural gender norms created expectations for women in managerial positions to behave in accordance with gender-stereotypical ideas of women (Billing, 2011) This was also discussed at the 2012 "Women at the Top" Conference held in London where presentations were delivered by many speakers, all of whom touched on the construction and definition of leadership and the way in which it is subjected to prejudice and stereotyping (Atewologun and Doldor, 2013). Similar to previous readings, there was an overarching interest in how females tend to be more transformational leaders and better at developing relationships, being more democratic and participative in organisations compared to men (Atewologun and Doldor, 2013).

While some researchers still focus on Schein's Descriptive Index (SDI) from 1973 which looks at the relationship between gender roles and leadership characteristics identifying the extent to which men and women are viewed 'leader like' (Berkery et al, 2013), others call for new valid instruments to measure gender roles in leadership and believe areas such as personality and self-efficacy need to be focused on more to produce better leaders (Coder and Spiller, 2013).

Another barrier that limits the movement of women into leadership roles is behaviour in the workplace and how behaviours that are successful for men in organisations are not successful for women (Budworth and Mann, 2010). When the relationship between modesty, lack of self-promotion and access to leadership are examined, research shows women do tend to under-represent their accomplishments as they think people will think less of them (Daubman and Sigall, 1997). Research on 'female modesty' found that women who 'brag' about their performance find women liked them less and women who are socially dominant are disliked as it conflicts with their feminine attributes (Rudman and Glick, 2001). Furthermore, it was noted that men are financially rewarded for holding modest values, while women are economically penalized as they are supposed to be 'socially sensitive' (Budworth and Mann, 2007). All of these behaviours contribute to gaining access to becoming a leader and while some theorists claim women do not need to adopt male's behaviours to be successful, others argue the current models of leadership need to reflect all behaviours and cannot be applied to men and women in the same way (Budworth and Mann, 2010).

2.4 Leadership and Work-life balance

Another common theme throughout this literature and another issue that can potentially lead to the gender imbalance on boards is the work-life balance that currently exists in leadership roles; or the lack thereof. Researchers argue the culture of '**long-working hours**' that exists in senior management roles (Murphy et al, 2011) conflicts with life in the home, and people need to stop spending longer hours at work than are contractually required (Cross, 2010). Similarly, there is the debate that achieving a desirable work-life balance at a senior management level in Ireland is not possible, not only due to the long-hour culture but to the culture of 'presenteeism' in the office and how this further discourages women from senior roles (Murphy et al, 2011).

Research shows Ireland in the lowest-ranked EU country on **flexible work patterns** with 53 per cent of companies offering family-friendly working solutions compared to

the EU average of 74 per cent (Grand Thornton Report, 2013). Murphy argues there is little research which focuses on managers in Ireland in senior management and their ability to successfully manage their work-life balance (Murphy et al, 2011) and it seems it is much more difficult to for managers to achieve a desirable work-life balance at this level due to the level of hours required in a role at this level (Straub, 2007). It is argued that commitment to work is often measured in terms of time spent in the office (Drew et al, 2009). Overall literature suggests that taking on flexible working patterns is not seen as compatible with holding a senior position in organisations today and working long hours is expected (Drew et al, 2009; Murphy et al, 2011).

2.5 Work-life balance and women

While research conveys men have increased in participating in domestic duties in the home (Murphy et al, 2011), women are still recognised as the sole carer and the burden of responsibility still lies with them in Ireland (Cross, 2010). Without flexible work-patterns, such as working from home or outside the normal working hours, women face great difficulty in excelling to senior roles (Cross, 2010). While technology has eliminated the need to be present in the office some women still feel 'being visible' in the office is required (Doherty, 2004), while others feel being accessible through technology is more important than being present in the office (Murphy et al, 2011). In any case, theorists claim juggling both mother and working roles means women need flexible work patterns and without them, progressing to senior positions is simply not an option. Evidence indicates that women who try to reconcile both family and career aspirations seem unlikely to succeed in their career while working less than full-time hours (Tomlinson & Durbin, 2010). Evidence also conveys that while part-time employment at managerial levels allows women engage in work and family life, it creates more challenges than opportunities for majority of women (Tomlinson & Durbin, 2010).

Literature around the various stages of women's careers, convey it can be particularly difficult in their early and mid-careers as this time often clashes with child bearing and child rearing (Inkson, 2007). Career ambitions and the desire to have children quickly change positions on the priority ladder, which leads to making the choice between one or the other and it becoming difficult to successfully pursue both (Cross, 2010). In Ireland, women can take up to 42 weeks away from work on maternity leave which effectively means putting their career on hold and no such leave is available to the father of the child (CI, 2014; Cross, 2010). This severely impacts woman's visibility in the organisation which is crucial in the promotional processes according to some theorists, which ultimately hinders women's promotional opportunities (Cross, 2010). Equally the life-cycle of their family can be a huge burden on their career goals, as having small children demands time and energy. With more than half a million women in Ireland in 2011 looking after home/family-life compared to only 9,600 men (CSO, 2011), women become more demanding of flexible working arrangements (Julien et al, 2011). Some literature argues flexible working arrangements are not only a good business idea but long working hours and inflexible work patterns are not good for work environments and can contribute to work-family conflict and potentially cause occupational stress (Murphey et al, 2011; Sirajunisa & Panchanatham, 2010).

Norway and other Scandinavian countries have evolved their parental-leave schemes to allow employed fathers have equal access to paid parental-leave as mothers and also to allow female mothers return to work sooner if they wish (Naz, 2010). The scheme reserves a period of time of leave specifically for fathers which is not transferable to mothers and lost if not utilized by the father which promotes father's involvement with their children (Brandth & Kvande, 2003). A further period of leave known as gender-neutral leave can be shared by parents as they wish where the father can 'borrow' leave from the mother's leave so couples can split their combined leave as they choose. Evidence found not only is the gender-neutral leave shared between parents fully supported by employers but it has had a hugely positive effect on women's health leading to reduced sick leave and better performance of women in

the labour market (Bratberg & Naz, 2009). This suggests sharing maternity leave promotes gender equality at home and in the office (Naz, 2010) by strengthening the woman's position in the workplace and the male's position in the family. Reserving parts of parental leave exclusively for fathers is not heard of in Ireland. "*Employers are not obliged to grant male employees special paternity-leave (either paid or unpaid) following the birth of their child*" (Citizens Information, 2014). Nowhere in this literature is it mentioned that males in Ireland should act as role models and seek such leave.

2.6 Gender balance in the board room

Why does gender balance matter?

It is increasingly referred to that closing the gender gap at the top of organisations is a win for everyone. Studies show strong links between gender balance and financial performance, innovation, competitiveness and corporate governance. It seems it is not only important to have female representation at senior management levels in terms of diverse thinking and better decision-making (Institute of Director in Ireland, 2013) but it is pertinent in adhering to the principals of equality and gender discrimination (O'Connor, 2012), not to mention building the foundations of a gender balanced future for younger females in Ireland to aspire to. Furthermore, researchers claim it is essential for organisations today to recognise women's capabilities by utilising the pool of expertise, talent and resources available to them, so they can continue to gain competitive advantage by showcasing collaborative styles of leadership that will capitalise female managerial qualities and the talent within their organisation (Bosak and Sczesny, 2011).

Researchers claim senior management structures need to be made aware of the benefits of having women in their boardrooms (Koenig et al, 2011), as there is much research on women being powerful change agents and how their characteristics are more suited to recent leadership structures, in particular transformational leadership

(O' Connor, 2012). While findings suggest gender stereotypes are unlikely to change rapidly (Paris and Decker, 2012), more positive theories suggest women's leadership skills will be appreciated more in organisations in the near future; "A CEO who goes the extra mile to help women overcome barriers to their managerial advancement will often be rewarded with improvements in firm performance" (Dezso and Ross, 2012).

The UK Lord Davies' *Women on Boards* report in 2011, outlined how the benefits of a mixed board can bring organisations different skills and perspectives to the table (Stephens, 2013), not to mention increased profits and higher returns for shareholders (Corbett, 2014). In the year following the report the percentage of women on boards of FTSE 100 companies rose from 12.5 to 15.6 per cent (Stephens, 2013). In the study *Women on Boards: A life-Sciences Perspective* 62 per cent of 417 board directors and senior executives (57 per cent male and 43 per cent female) recognized that women possess specific, vital skills and provide different and valuable contributions such as higher rates of intuition and empathy (Stephens, 2013). Other researchers claim women in the boardroom is a "business imperative" as it can send a powerful signal within the organization to all levels and by including women on corporate boards certain organisations have positively associated this action with better stock returns (Daily & Dalton, 2003).

With researchers arguing women have a huge contribution to make to business, armoured with the fact that 94 per cent of 155 female directors surveyed in Ireland feel *equal* in the board room (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013) how do we achieve women obtaining seats?

2.7 Gender quotas

One particular technique that has caused huge controversy within this field is the implementation of gender quotas. The EU initiative has created a debate that has divided researchers into two categories; for and against.

The year 2003, saw Norway passing a law requiring all organisations on the stock exchange to allocate 40 per cent of board seats to women and resulted in all companies reaching their quota and many other European Governments implementing similar legislation requiring women to hold a certain percentage of seats (Katividad, 2012). Board composition transformed and 'quotas' offered change for women in Spain, France, Belgium and Italy, to name a few (Dezsco and Ross, 2012). However, not everyone saw this change as positive. The negative connotations attached to the word 'quota' suggested women were merely a number and researchers against such laws proclaimed these efforts to get women into the boardroom were 'demeaning' (Strategic Direction, 2013). They argued women should gain a seat in any given boardroom, based on merit and not merely to "make up numbers" which in any case would never deliver long term sustainable results (Dezso and Ross, 2012). Further readings suggested in many of these situations women may not necessarily have the qualifications to be on boards but due to 'quotas' they were now required to be there rather than achieving to arrive there on merit (Mahadeo et al, 2012). When female directors in Ireland were asked if they were for or against gender quotas as a means of increasing the number of women on boards, 43 per cent said targets rather than quotas were preferable and 25 per cent said that quotas were the wrong approach and roles should be given on merit and not gender (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013).

So who is responsible for increasing female representation on boards? 81 per cent of female directors claim women themselves need to take some responsibility for the low level of female representation on boards in Ireland (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013). They believed women had lacked confidence and self-belief and they needed to support and encourage each other more (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013). Others claim a focus needs to be put on mentoring women particularly by male directors who frequently mentor male managers (Ibarra et al, 2010), however Susan Vinnicombe does not agree; "senior females do not need mentoring; they need someone high profile to sponsor them. Women often lack the high-level relationships

which their male colleagues find easier to foster in the male dominated executive suite” (Vinnicombe, 2011). While most of the literature puts the onus on women and women empowering women, there is little research on men and their perceptions on how to achieve better board balance.

Chapter 3 - Aims and Objectives

In this Chapter the researcher will outline the gaps found in the literature and the aims and objectives of this study.

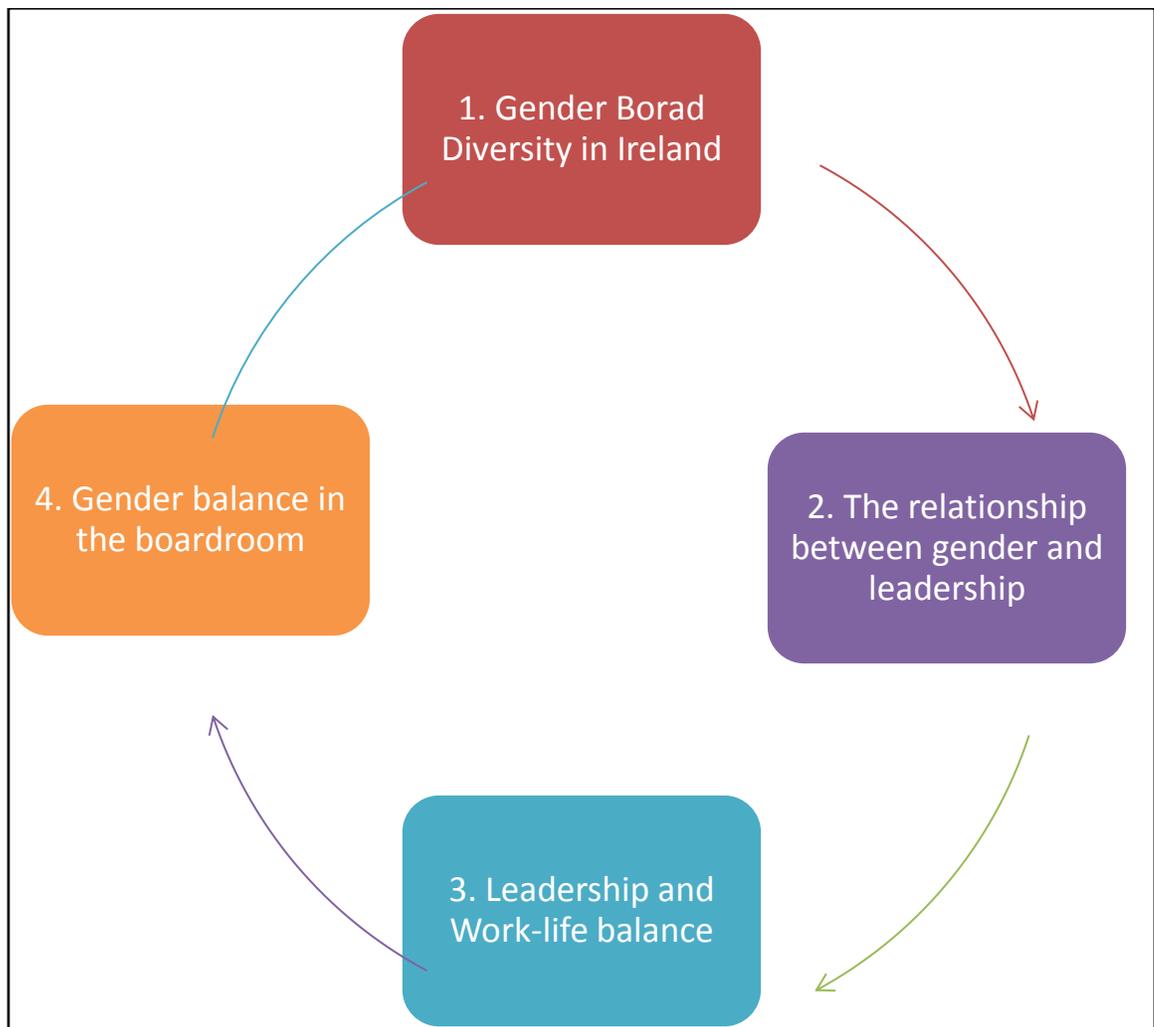
Women in Ireland may be progressing to senior management levels but the pace is far slower than it should when compared with their participation levels in the education system and labour market in Ireland (Chapter 2, Literature Review). By defining a compelling theoretical framework around the aims and objective of this work, the gaps in the current literature in this field are highlighted. The researcher aims to facilitate other researchers in this field that have called for more studies to be undertaken on multiple stakeholders accountable for women's leadership experiences, particularly those in position of power and privilege such as current male leaders and chairmen (Atewologun and Doldor, 2013). Furthermore, little or no significant research has been conducted on male leaders in Ireland on their attitudes, views or perceptions on the lack of women in senior management roles in Ireland or their boardrooms. This is of particular interest to the researcher given that women have high participation levels in both the workforce and educational system in Ireland, surpassing not only their male counterparts but EU standards (Chapter 2, Literature Review).

Majority of the literature in this field has focused on *women* and their disadvantage in organisations, the barriers they face and the 'glass-ceiling' effect in their management structures. The researcher seeks to bridge this literature with feedback from male leaders on their perceptions on the lack of female representation on boards in Ireland. This will not only allow women in Ireland gain an insight into their male leader's perceptions but it will allow all stakeholders in Ireland see this topic from a different lens offering a different perspective. Finally the researcher hopes this work will add value to the current literature in this field and more importantly encourage more women to progress to senior management positions in Ireland in the near future.

The researcher's objective is to gain an insight and an understanding into how male leaders view the roadblocks women face on the path to senior management; it is after all their leadership decisions that influence women's leadership experiences and ultimately the composition of boards. The researcher aims to identify how they make-sense of the on-going inequalities and of corrective measures aimed addressing them.

This study contains specific propositions, which ensures this study will stay within feasible limits. Each proposition serves to focus the data collection, determine direction, purpose and scope of the study and later will lead to the development of a conceptual framework that guides the researcher's data collection, analyses and findings (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Figure 4: Themes of analyses



The propositions are within the four main reoccurring themes found in previous literature (Figure 4) (Chapter 2, Literature Review). They are:

1. **Gender board diversity in Ireland:** To examine the perceptions of male leaders in Ireland on gender diversity in the boardroom in Ireland.

It is here the researcher seeks to gain an insight into male leader's understanding and perceptions on the topic and if it is a priority in their organisation. The researcher would like to see what their opinions are on the topic; the current statistics in Ireland and why they think women are not getting to the top.

2. **The relationship between gender and leadership:** To understand male leaders' view on the relationship between gender and leadership. The researcher seeks to gain an insight into their thoughts on leadership styles and if they vary between men and women. The researcher seeks to see if these male leaders feel women are capable leaders; what they think being a good leader means and do they hold conventional stereotypical ideals that all managerial positions are 'male'.

3. **Leadership and Work-life balance:** To assess the perceptions of male leaders in Ireland on work-life balance in their current role in senior management.

The researcher seeks to gain an insight into male leaders' experience in having a healthy work-life balance while holding a senior position; to see if the long-hour culture and 'presenteeism' continues to exist in senior roles. The researcher also wants to see if male leaders think men should act as role models and take on more flexible work patterns; in their opinion would sharing maternity leave work in Ireland between couples or would men be putting their careers in jeopardy.

4. Gender balance in the board room: To identify the perceptions male leaders have in relation to gender balance in the board room.

WHY - The researcher seeks to gain an insight into why male leaders think gender balance matters; do they believe there are benefits of a mixed board and why they think gender board diversity should be achieved

HOW - The researcher seeks to ascertain an understanding of how male leaders think gender balance in the boardroom should be achieved and what their views on gender quotas are and why.

WHO - The researcher seeks to gain an insight into who male leaders think should take responsibility for the lack of diversity at the top.

All of the above propositions will allow the researcher to see if the current literature surrounding this topic is valid and if this work can contribute to the research literature.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

This Chapter outlines the research method adopted for this study to achieve the aims and objectives of this work. The method chosen is justified and the strengths and limitations of this approach are also outlined.

4.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy relates to “the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge” which provides “certain assumptions” on how we view the world (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). While some researchers claim developing a philosophical perspective requires several assumptions to be made within two dimensions; “the nature of society and the nature of science” (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) others argue the importance is more significant in social science than natural science as natural sciences have a more established body of successful answers (Rosenberg, 1995). The researcher adopts an inductive approach as it complements the objective to gain insights into male leaders’ perspectives and a deductive method as it supports the testing of previous theoretical findings.

The researcher holds an ontological view point as “ontology is concerned with the nature of reality”. Furthermore the researcher holds a subjective view point as this means “social phenomena are created through the perceptions and consequent actions of affected social actors” (Saunders et al, 2009). This emphasises that the onus is on the researcher to remain subjective in gaining an insight to the perceptions of the male leaders to understand their reality.

4.2 Research Design

The researcher chose a qualitative research design as literature conveyed “qualitative approaches provide answers to people’s feelings, experiences and thoughts around the research question” (Ivey, 2012) and facilitate “the connection between theory and reality” (Polit & Beck, 2006). This supports the purpose of this research piece as the

researcher seeks to gain an insight into and an understanding of, male leaders' perceptions on the lack of female representation on boards and senior management structures in organisations in Ireland to link the theories in this literature to the reality of the boardroom. Furthermore qualitative approaches "understand phenomena in context specific settings" which is hugely prevalent in this work (Salehi & Golafshani, 2010) and are beneficial for the interpretation of data considering 'individual's personal experiences' (Polit & Beck, 2006). As such the value in choosing a qualitative approach for this work provides the feelings, experiences and thoughts of male leaders around the research question while preserving the context for the data rather than eliminating information on variables (Ivey, 2012).

Interestingly, research also conveys qualitative methods should never be assumed "intrinsically superior" (Silverman, 2005), rather it depends on the nature of the research question. While qualitative methods are more open to personal opinion and judgment, it has been argued they can only ever offer observations rather than results (Silverman, 2005). Quantitative research is equally important in research as this technique is often necessary for drawing conclusions or results in humans' social patterns (Neuman, 2000) using deductive logic and numerical values of measurement (Salehi & Golafshani, 2010). However, if the researcher had followed only a quantitative logic in this work, the study of how male leaders perceive and understand the interesting phenomena of female underrepresentation in boards in Ireland would have been ruled out (Silverman, 2005). While a quantitative method may have verified the researcher's previous ideas about how there is a lack of female representation on boards in Ireland, it would not have captured male leader's desire for change for example or how they viewed the gender quota debate.

Some theorists claim the distinction between the debate on qualitative versus quantitative research methods is unclear and entirely dependent on the research question and what is trying to be achieved within the study (Silverman, 2005). Others

argue the strengths and weaknesses of any model will only be revealed in what the researcher can do with the method they choose (Figure 5) (Silverman, 2005).

4.3 Research method

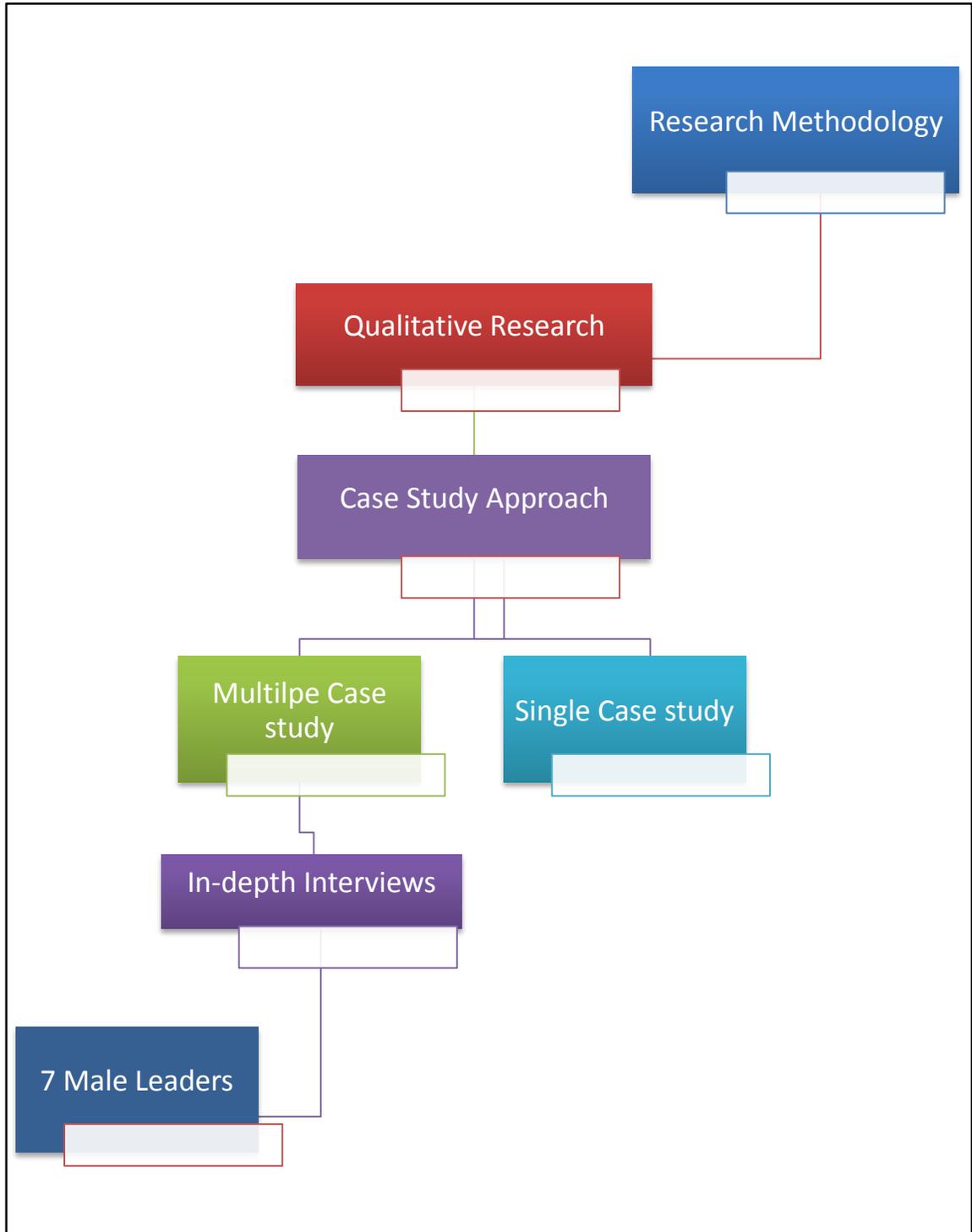
4.3.1 The case study

The researcher chose the case study research method. The rationale for using this method was due to the researcher's research question; to explore the phenomena in Ireland of the lack of female representation on boards by focusing specifically on male leaders perceptions on the topic.

The case study research approach is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context (Crowe et al, 2011). Stake claims the art of the case study is "the study of particularity and complexity of a single case while coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (Stake, 1995). Case studies can be used to explain, describe, or explore events or phenomena in the everyday contexts in which they occur (Yin, 2009). According to Yin a case study design should be considered when "the focus of the study is to answer the 'how'; the 'what' and the 'why' and you cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study" (Yin, 2003). This approach supports this work as the researcher will explore the phenomenon and gain an insight into male leaders' perceptions on *how* so few women are on boards in Ireland (where female participation levels in education and the labour market are so high), *what* needs to be done to achieve better balance in the boardroom and *why* they think women are not gaining senior positions in Ireland.

The case study method supports this piece of research as male leader's perceptions could not be considered useful for this study without the context in which they work. Males working in Ireland were not merely sufficient for this work; males that held senior

Figure 5: Research Methodology Route



positions in organisations for many years and were now currently on boards working in organisations in Ireland were required. It would have been impossible for the researcher to gain a true insight into male leaders' perceptions without considering the context within which they occur. In this way the researcher can aim to answer 'how' and 'why' type questions, while taking into consideration how the phenomenon (the underrepresentation of women on boards in Ireland) is influenced by the context within which it is situated (male leaders dominating senior positions within organisations in Ireland). It is through the case study approach the researcher hopes to obtain a more naturalistic understanding of the issues around the gender imbalance in the boardroom.

The advantage of the case study approach for this work meant close collaboration between the researcher and the participant occurred, while enabling the participant to tell their story (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Through these stories the participants are able to describe their views of reality and this enables the researcher to better understand the participants' actions and perceptions (Lather, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993). It allows the researcher to explore individuals simply and supports the deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction of various phenomena (Yin, 2003). This approach is valuable for the researcher to develop theory, evaluate perspectives, and develop interventions because of its flexibility and rigor (Robottom & Hart, 1993).

However the case study approach is, as with all research, not without its limitations. Literature conveys some weaknesses around the case study approach which include that they provide little basis for scientific generalization (Flyvbjerg, 2006), however Yin argues "how can you generalize from a single experiment?" (Yin, 2009). He claims scientific facts are rarely based on single experiments; "they are usually based on a multiple set of experiments that have replicated the phenomena under different conditions" (Yin, 2009). Crowe explains there are several ways of addressing this issue; draw on a particular conceptual framework; respondent's validation on the

researcher's interpretation being accurate and providing transparency throughout the research process (Crowe et al, 2011). In this work the researcher has outlined the conceptual framework of this work and Figure 6 shows the structure around this. The researcher received respondent's validation for male leaders in this work and provides transparency throughout this study by outlining case selection and data collection.

Criticism is also evident in literature on how case studies take too long and result in massive unreadable documents (George & Bennett, 2004; Yin, 2009; Crowe et al, 2011) which impact the depth of analysis that is possible (Crowe et al, 2011). Another weakness revealed in the literature is that case studies cannot directly address the issue (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2009); however Yin argues it has been overlooked that case studies can offer important evidence to compliment theories or experiments. For Yin the most important condition for differentiating among various research methods is to classify "the type of research question being asked" (Yin, 2003). For the case study "this is when the 'how' or 'why' question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control" (Yin, 2009).

4.3.2 Multiple-case study

The researcher chose a multiple-case study (Figure 6). A collective or multiple-case study involves studying multiple cases simultaneously or sequentially in an attempt to generate a still broader appreciation of a particular issue (Yin, 2003). This allows comparisons to be made across several cases and/or replication. Yin suggests two or three literal replications (i.e. predicting similar results), if the theory is straight forward and five or more if the theory is more subtle (Yin, 2009). In multiple case studies, data collection needs to be flexible enough to allow a detailed description of each individual case to be developed before considering the emerging similarities and differences in cross-case comparisons (Stake, 1995). It is important that data sources from different cases are, where possible, broadly comparable (all male leaders on boards in Ireland) for this purpose even though they may vary in nature and depth (Crowe et al, 2011).

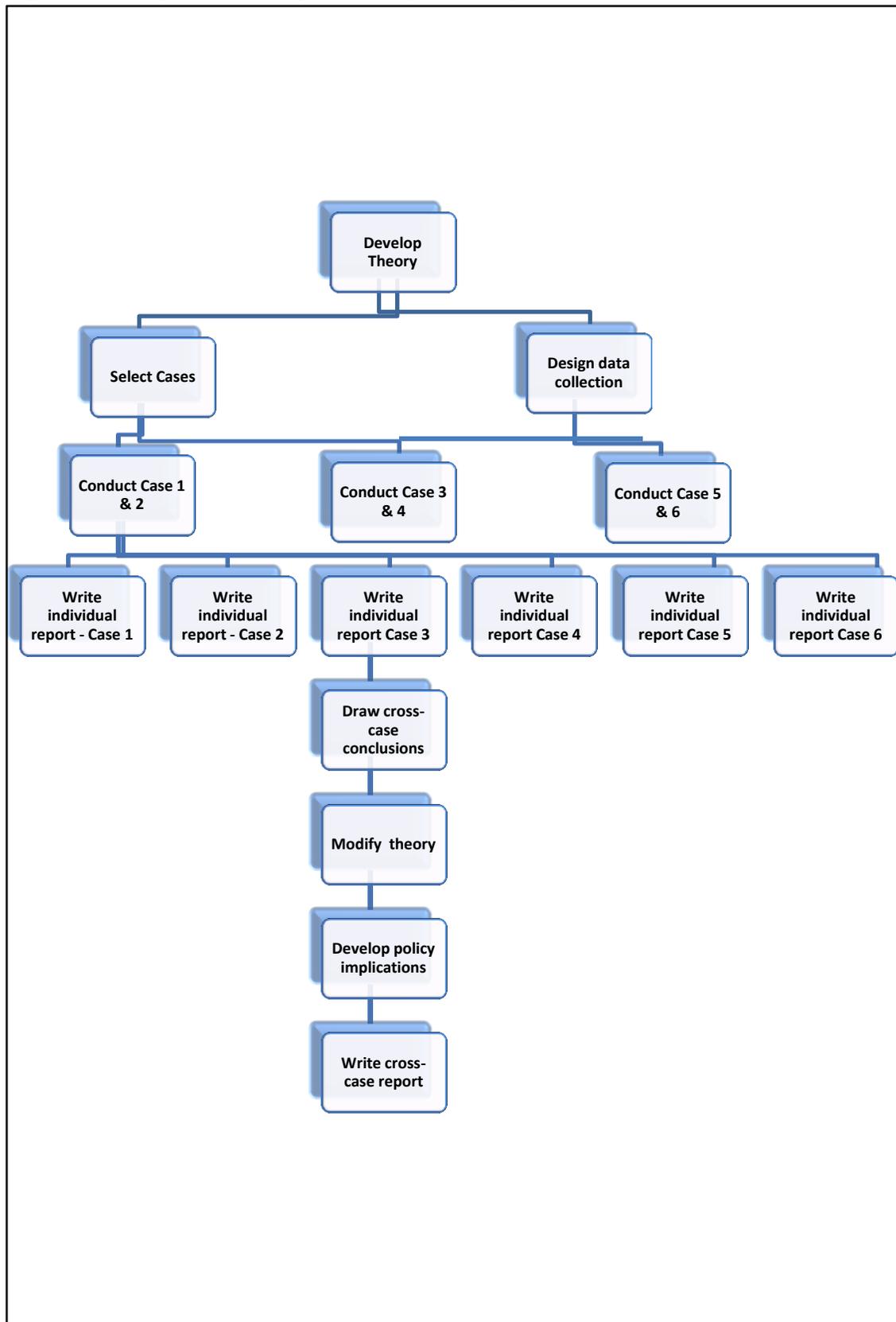
While research shows the multiple-case study design is usually more difficult, time consuming and expensive to implement than a single case study design, the ensuing data can provide greater confidence in your findings and therefore the researcher chose this design (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, Crowe et al, 2011). Yin (2003) claims multiple case studies can be used to either predict similar results, a literal replication or predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication) (Crowe et al, 2011). Overall, the evidence conveyed from a multiple-case study is considered reliable and robust.

4.3.3 Instrumental case study

The researcher chose an instrumental case study which means the study is used to “understand something else” (Stake, 1995) and to ultimately accomplish something other than understanding a particular situation (Yin, 2009). In this work the cases (male leader’s perceptions) will be instrumental in understanding the phenomena (the underrepresentation of females in boardrooms in Ireland).

The focus of the cases (male leaders’ perceptions) is of secondary interest and plays a supportive role in the underrepresentation of women on boards in Ireland and around the globe (Crowe, et al, 2011). This instrumental multiple-case study will be looked at in depth; its contexts scrutinized which will help the researcher pursue an understanding of the bigger picture (Stake, 1995); that is female underrepresentation on boards in Ireland which will allow the researcher draw on a comprehensive conclusion.

Figure 6: Multiple case study method (Yin, 2009).



4.3.4 In-depth interviews

“The purpose of an in-depth interview is to explore the experience of others and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 1998). According to research observing managers merely provides access to their behavior, having them fill in surveys restricts their ability to provide personal input and make meaning of their experiences, however, interviewing allows the researcher to put the behavior in contact and to understand their thoughts and actions (Garnot et al, 2012). The researcher used in-depth interviews as they allowed the researcher to collect data that was specific to this study and measurable, accurate, realistic and time-bound (Johnson, 2002). The researcher used semi-structured in-depth interviews to allow a greater insight into the perspectives of the male leaders and an outline of some of the interview question used can be seen at the back of this work at Appendix A. Open-ended questions were asked in relation to the reoccurring themes within this literature which allowed male leaders freely express their perceptions, beliefs and feelings on the topic. The fact that the interviews were semi-structured allowed the researcher to decide the order and type of questions asked. Not all questions were needed for each interview due to some leaders covering topics naturally and probes were used where necessary to understand the leader’s perceptions better. All interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis so the researcher could understand their responses more through gestures, body language and facial expressions. The researcher was able to gain a deep understanding and a more conscious awareness of the issue in question and the realistic processes that permeates organisations to give a fuller appreciation of male leaders’ perceptions on why more women are not on boards. Through in-depth interviews the ‘lived experience’ or the world as participants immediately experience it, rather than categorize or reflect on it (Garnot et al, 2012), are conveyed in this work.

Each in-depth interview was semi-structured and the researcher gave each participant the opportunity to speak on the topic as much or as little as they wished. As a result each case study may have different variations of each topic and not all questions were

asked of each male leader – it depended on how the conversations flowed. This was to insure an in-depth understanding of their perception was obtained. Before conducting interviews a pilot study was designed and used on a work colleague to identify any possible issues with questions. From this exercise the researcher removed questions that were too broad, added questions that ensured the interviewee understood what was being asked, and identified ways to rephrase questions to gain meaningful answers. The research could also identify what questions to use to further probe certain topics.

4.3.5 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling rather than random sampling was used to select the male leaders on the basis of their roles being ‘information rich’ about the issues related to the purpose of this study. Purposive sampling is the chosen strategy here as it allowed the researcher to choose the type of interviewees that would best contribute to the study (Kemperaj et al, 2013). Research conveys purposive sampling means who to sample next depends on who has been sampled already (Kemperaj et al, 2013). Accordingly the researcher chose men, as women are regularly interviewed within this field of study.

The perceptions of these male leaders that are based in top organisations in Ireland are explored through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Based on a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, an interview guide was prepared to ensure that critical research topics were covered for all the participants and was used as an analytical framework for analysis (Yin, 1994)

The researcher purposively chose seven male leaders as they possessed the experiences valuable to the researcher as they were all at a senior level in their organisations and they all worked in Ireland. Their titles ranged from global managers, chief executives, executive directors, and vice presidents to CEOs and they were all key stakeholders in their organisations and made decisions that impacted the

composition of their boards. All interviewees were provided with sufficient information to make an informed choice to join this study.

4.3.6 The case boundaries

Each case serves as the main unit of analysis and is a bounded entity within the social phenomenon (Yin, 2009). As such each case has specific boundaries which indicate what will and will not be studied by the researcher. These are:

- This study focuses on the lack of women on boardrooms specifically in ***Ireland***.
- This study focuses on ***male leaders'*** perceptions on the topic as opposed to what females in Ireland perceive the situation to be.
- This study focuses on male leaders that ***work and live in Ireland***.
- This study focuses on male leaders ***that are in senior management roles 8-10 years in Ireland and are on their organisations board***.
- This study focuses on male leaders that work in Ireland in ***large organisations that have an excess of €8 billion turnover in 2013***. (Turnover being one of the main criteria for justifying large organisations (CSO, 2011)).
- This study focuses on male leaders' perceptions in ***2014*** and not what their perceptions were before this time.

4.4 The sample

Due to time and resource constraints the proposed sample for this work was seven male leaders that were key stakeholders in large organisations based in Ireland. However, one male leader (a CEO) was unavailable for interview but six male leaders committed to taking part in this study provided their name and the name of their company remained anonymous. Each male leader met all the case boundaries outlined above and was on the board of their organisation. Please refer to Figure 7 for more information on each male leader and their interview.

Figures 7: Outline of male leaders interview details

Case 1 - Male Global Manager in in Technology Consumer Organisation

- Interview date: 11-Jul-14
- Interview length: 57 minutes 25 seconds
- Years service in senior management: 8 years
- No. of employees: 2,500
- Turnover: €8.6 billion

Case 2 - Male Executive Director in Technology Consumer Organisation

- Interview date: 17-Jul-14
- Interview length: 38 minutes 7 seconds
- Years in senior management: 18 years
- No. of employees: 2,500
- Turnover: €8.6 billion

Case 3 - Male Managing Director in Manufacturing Organisation

- Interview date: 26-Jun-14
- Interview length: 52 minutes 49 seconds
- Years in senior management: 9 years
- No. of employees: 38,373
- Turnover: €8 billion

Case 4 - Male Executive Director in Manufacturing Organisation

- Interview date: 26-Jun-14
- Interview length: 58 minutes 56 seconds
- Years in senior management: 15 years
- No. of employees: 38,373
- Turnover: €8 billion

Case 5 - Male Commercial Director in Energy Organisation

- Interview date: 27-Jun-14
- Interview length: 74 minutes 17 seconds
- Years in senior management: 17 years
- No. of employees: 9,153
- Turnover: €13 billion

Case 6 - Male Managing Director in Energy Organisation

- Interview date: 7-Jul-14
- Interview length: 22 minutes 35 seconds
- Years in senior management: 20 years
- No. of employees: 9,153
- Turnover: €13 billion

4.5 Data

Strategies the researcher integrated into each interview to establish credibility included the recording of each interview, the maintenance of field notes and interviewee examination of the data. The researcher took field notes on body language, eye contact and facial expressions to ensure the true meaning of every answer was correctly interpreted by the researcher. The researchers' interpretations of the data was shared with the participants at the end of each interview and the participants had the opportunity to discuss and clarify the interpretations or contribute new or additional perspectives on the topic under study (Krefting, 1991). An analyses of within-case data can be found in each individual case in the next Chapter.

Interviews were then transcribed which was extremely time consuming and lengthy process. Once transcribed the researcher began to analyses data by colour-coding each male leaders' response using the colour associated with them in Figure 7. The key themes that emerged were then broken into categories which represented each aim and objective of this work. The researcher then completed a cross-case analysis where data was further analyzed through colour-coded themes across each case. Finally the researcher then aligned the main findings from each case with the main findings from the literature around this area.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Each candidate in this research study was given information around the study and the reason for it, and made an informed choice to part take in this work. All male leaders were ensured they would remain anonymous and so too would their organisations. The researcher received consent from each interviewee to use their interview in this work. During interviews male leaders had the choice to move to the next question if they did not feel comfortable answering or to finish the interview at any stage. All documentation will be held by the researcher and will not be released without consent of the participants.

4.7 Limitations

The main limitation of this work is that the findings are based on six male leaders working in organisations in Ireland therefore it would be incorrect for the researcher to generalize and deem these findings a true and accurate representation for *all* male leaders in Ireland. These findings are merely an insight into six male leaders' perspectives on the topic.

As the researcher is female it cannot be guaranteed that some views or perceptions of participants were not subconsciously altered to suit a female audience where giving the ideal answer as opposed to the genuine answer may have occurred.

Finally, while the researcher gave every effort in remaining objective throughout this study, because the researcher is female it cannot be guaranteed that this may not have influenced the interpretation of data at different stages.

Chapter 5 - Research findings

The purpose of this Chapter is to summarise the findings of each research case study analysis. A multiple-case study analysis was adopted to gather field evidence of the perceptions of male leaders on the lack of female representation on boards in Ireland. The researcher summarised each case study by linking the findings of each case to each research objective outlined in Chapter 3. By coding consistent patterns in each case study the researcher found significant meaning reappearing through categorical aggregation and direct interpretation of each case (Stake, 1995). The researcher used this logic as “pattern matching compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one and if the patterns coincide the results help a case study to strengthen its internal validity” (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, the researcher chose to conduct a technique known as *cross-case synthesis* which applies specifically to the analysis of multiple cases (Yin, 2009).

Cross-case syntheses is performed where individual cases have been conducted as a predesigned part of the study and it is through this technique findings are likely to be more robust when there are multiple cases, which will strengthen the researcher’s findings even further (Yin, 2009). Yin claims the challenge for the researcher with this technique developing strong, plausible and fair arguments that are supported by the findings (Yin, 2009). The researcher then compares and contrasts the findings from the cross-case syntheses with previous literature on this topic seen in Chapter 2. This is completed to situate the new data into the preexisting data (Yin, 2003). In doing so, contrasting findings, rival propositions and a thematic analysis is achieved.

5.1 Individual case study reports

Case 1 - Male Global Manager in Technology Consumer organisation

- Interview date: 11-Jul-14
- Interview length: 57 minutes 25 seconds
- Years service in senior management: 8 years
- No. of employees: 2,500
- Turnover: €8.6 billion

1. Gender board diversity

What is gender board diversity?

Male Leader 1 (ML1) claimed gender diversity is a “huge talking point” with all organisations at the moment in Ireland. Once a quarter his organisation meets with other large multi-nationals based in Dublin where a large focus of their meeting is on how to achieve gender balance better. It is absolutely vital to have different ways of thinking in any organisation and the organisations that do that best are typically the ones that tend to be the more innovative according to ML1.

ML1 expressed how women are becoming more confident in knowing they have a place at board level and encouraged them to “lean in more” at the table and have a voice. He claimed the current statistics in Ireland at the moment with regard to CEO managing director roles were shocking and alarming. He stated it was not good for the organisation in terms of diverse thinking. “It’s not good for women, it’s not good for men. It’s not good for the country”.

Why does female underrepresentation occur at the top?

ML1 claimed his understanding was firstly due to Ireland historically having a more male dominated workforce and while today as a country Ireland is more open-minded, “old-school thinking” still exists. Secondly, he claimed no matter what strides Ireland has made as a society, having families still tends to fall more of the responsibility on the female in this country— whether it is something they take on

themselves or something that is bestowed upon. He continued that this can then impact a female's career if they are planning time out to have children. Their career has to go on hold and so too do their surrounding leadership teams. According to ML1 planning a family directly and indirectly impacts women in top leadership as a whole.

What are the main obstacles for women when going for senior roles?

ML1 referred to times where 'men hire men'. He explained it was down to the psychological 'like me' piece whereby people want to hire 'like them'. He explained this can happen in the Technical space where woman may not have a degree in computer science but in something equally relevant but a manager may decide to take what is the less risky option because it's like me or it's "the route I took". He claimed organisations need to be more appreciative of diversity as a whole, not just gender diversity, but the industry backgrounds that people came from. While a female may not have a degree in computer science, he insisted she may have an equally relevant degree or outstanding customer service or superb leadership skills. ML1 felt that candidates' competencies needed to be recognized more as the 'like me' hire is not always the right hire.

Is gender diversity a priority in your organisation?

ML1 claimed gender diversity had certainly increased in his organisation over the last five years, 24 months and even in the last 12 months as it had become more of a focus at a significant acceleration rate. The finance department in his organisation has a 50:50 blend of male to female. Gender diversity is one of the main items on the EMEA president's radar ML1 explains. As a result it is now something the president monitors on a consistent basis in terms of the improvements being made and it has become a huge priority in their hiring.

2. Leadership and Gender

What does being a leader mean?

ML1 claimed being a leader meant creating engagement, creating a culture of trust, creating a winning culture. He claimed it was a lot of the “soft skills” that become the more important skills when looking for competencies in a good leader– being able to influence people in the right way, listening to the different variety of opinions, ask appropriate question and then arrive at an answer while at all times acting with the utmost integrity where everybody feels that they can voice their thoughts, have their say and that its heard and appreciated.

What is the relationship between gender and leadership styles?

ML1 claimed he tended to associate a lot of these softer skills with a lot of the women leaders he knew. “I think sometimes women can have a better appreciation for the impact of those softer skills – I think sometimes women will come at things from a different angle and have a more in-depth or intuitive appreciation for a diversity of input and a diversity of different types of thinking prior to arriving at a suggested solution”.

ML1 thought leadership styles depend on the individual but women can bring a different way of thinking which is invaluable.

3. Work-life balance

What is the work-life balance dynamic like in senior management?

ML1 claimed work-life balance was good in his organisation however the reality was the more senior a role “the more demanding it gets” and senior managers probably do work longer hours, certainly in certain times of rapid change or rapid growth. He claimed leaders know what needs to be delivered; once they deliver they can avail of annual leave etc. He claimed senior management may need to work harder and more

often than junior level managers due to the level of complexity they are dealing with but the work-life balance is equal across all levels.

What is the work-life balance combination like at your organisation?

ML1 claimed his organisation proactively promotes gender balance in the uptake of work-life balance policies and even more so in the last 12 months as it is becoming more of a focus. Flexible working patterns are balanced and there is no distinction between men or women at all in this regard. When asked if men should act as role models and avail of more flexible work patterns ML1 said this is not a problem in his organisation. Everybody is flexible in his organisation culture, whether male or female

If men share maternity leave with their partners are they putting their careers in jeopardy?

ML1 claimed it would be a positive thing if that flexibility was an option and that women would appreciate it more too. He claimed there is more flexibility in a solution like this as it shares the responsibility more across the entire family.

4. Gender balance in the board room

What would achieve a better gender balance in board rooms?

ML1 claimed boards absolutely should be balanced. He claimed organisations need to be pushing for that balance and it needs to come from the leader down. He claimed organisations need to appreciate the different backgrounds and different types of skills and thinking that can come with different candidates, whether they are men or women.

What are the benefits of a mixed board?

ML1 referred to it as a football team explaining “if you hire loads of strikers you will not have a good team as there are different positions and different skill-sets. If you have a board room with the same type of people, then you are not getting the team

right” he claimed. If we have the diversity of thinking and the diversity of competencies and the diversity of backgrounds from a team perspective then, ultimately we will arrive at better decisions he concluded.

Are you for or against the introduction of gender quotas and why?

ML1 said he was more for gender quotas than against them but it is necessary to look into the complexities of quotas. ML1 explained that while some spaces like the technology space can be genuinely hard to find female representation this does not mean women are not out there. The talent is out there, organisations just need to change their focus on how they are going to hire and address the gender balance.

He claimed it was critical to call out the niche complexities and genuinely appreciate them and what is available in the market areas where there might be a particular shortage of women for whatever reason. If not he worried potentially roles could be filled with unqualified candidates. He said a mechanism needed to be out in place to differentiate what was genuine shortage in the market from what was not. This was critical in terms of keeping the standard of candidates as high as possible for every role.

However, overall he felt for the large proportion of organisations it was realistic that they could align better and fairer percentages to the hiring of women. As a result he said it would be an advantage for everyone, and would not negatively impact the standard of employees in organisations. The suggestion that women perform less than the man for example was in his experience absolutely incorrect. He thought the route the man or the woman take to get to that point may well be different, but equally relevant both with equal amounts of value to bring

Who is responsible?

ML1 did not agree that women are not “stepping up” as the majority of great leaders he has seen in today’s organisations are women. He thought change would only come with a cultural shift – a cultural acceptance by leadership structures that organisations

need to proactively change the statistic in Ireland. ML1 stated that more leaders will need to step up and show how they will address this issue by holding people accountable to actually deliver on fixing it. He thought that while the culture and leadership within an organisation could change the statistics, this should also apply to the country. If Ireland was seen to be a country that did gender diversity better, this would generate several positive knock-on effects for the nation as a whole, where potentially more roles would want to work in Ireland. He thought organisations and Ireland as a country need to proactively act and work together around positively impacting the number of females on boards within Ireland.

Case 2 - Male Executive Director in Technology Consumer organisation

- Interview date: 17-Jul-14
- Interview length: 38 minutes 7 seconds
- Years in senior management: 18 years
- No. of employees: 2,500
- Turnover: €8.6 billion

1. Gender board diversity

What is gender board diversity?

ML2 said gender board diversity was really topical at the moment and something everyone in the organisation is conscious of trying to rectify. He said currently there were a lot of female leaders in the multi-national companies that are doing really well which is great as they are acting as role models for younger females. ML2 claimed the statistics in Ireland at the moment were extremely poor and only organisations in Ireland can change them.

2. Leadership and Gender

ML2 claimed leadership styles may vary slightly between men and women but in his experience a good leader is a good leader. He mentioned needing passion, drive, confidence and being able to influence to be a good leader. He being able to stand up to people and to pushing back on managers was also needed. It is in this area he thought women may be stereotyped and it can be thought “they are not able for it”.

3. Work-life balance

ML2 said the work-life balance in his organisation was fantastic and probably the best in any other company he has worked with. He explained while it was an extremely fast-paced environment everyone worked at an incredible pace and you can work from home. At senior level no one feels in any way obliged to stay in the office for the sake of it. In his organisation men and women availed of flexible work patterns equally. “It means more people can work for longer ultimately”.

ML2 claimed Ireland as a nation needed to “wake up” to more flexible work patterns and options like men sharing maternity leave. He thought most men would not take three months off work as they would fear their job being jeopardized but claimed if more and more men did it and it became accepted they would all “jump at it”.

4. Balance in the board room

Gender quotas

ML2 said he would encourage gender quotas as they will get women “in the door”. However, people need to be sure they are not hiring for the sake of hiring he claimed and while it could be challenging in certain industries and it was not ideal, it was a measure Ireland needed now with the current statistics. In achieving a better balance in the board room ML2 thought male and female leaders needed to put it on their agenda. “A mixed board is a better board all around”.

Who is responsible?

He said that both men and women need to take ownership of the problem and work together to give women more opportunities and encouragement. “There are 6 great female leaders in our organisation throughout EMEA however there are about 46 male leaders” he said. Gender diversity is a huge priority in his organisation because “people at the very top are creating enough hype about it”.

Case 3 - Male Managing Director in Manufacturing organisation

- Interview date: 26-Jun-14
- Interview length: 52 minutes 49 seconds
- Years in senior management: 11 years
- No. of employees: 38,373
- Turnover: €8 billion

1. Gender board diversity

What is gender board diversity?

ML3 claimed he did not have facts on this topic but from his experience the balance would always favor men on boards. He acknowledged organisations need a gender balance but the reality was the person to make the “cut throat decisions” and really wants to get to the top, and is willing to be “devious enough” to get there, is usually a male. He continued that in his experience that is why men were predominantly at the top whether this was right or wrong. He said there probably was still an “old-school” mentality and an older generation that are still the heads on these boards. He said in his experience these men would be of the view that women and their ‘softer approach’ is more suitable to a certain level of management or a certain area of the business but “not at the very top on boards”.

What are the main obstacles for women when going for senior roles?

ML3 stated that in younger more progressive companies women may have more opportunities but in the older well established companies where the senior management are an older generation, there is a perception that the decisions that need to be made at these levels – “cut throat decisions” – can only be made by men - Women are perceived as incapable of carrying out tough decisions on a daily basis.

Is gender diversity a priority in your organisation?

ML3 admitted there was an extremely low percentage of women in his organisation and none on his board. Gender diversity percentages are not given any care or

thought in his company. ML3 continued with explaining his organisation is in an industry that naturally attracts men and traditionally the line of work would not interest women. ML3 continued "I'm sure most at the top would argue that there is just not enough women applying for these roles – but there is no thought whatsoever given to needing to sort out the gender balance". ML3 explained gender board diversity has not improved, changed or altered in his organisation in the last 5 years.

2. Leadership and Gender

What is the relationship between gender and leadership styles?

When asked about leadership styles and gender ML3 claimed there are obviously plenty of examples of males who take holistic approaches to leadership and there are plenty of 'cut-throat' females who have made it to the very top in business. He went on to say how in his experience it was interesting that any female who ever made it high up was always considered a "tough cookie" - It seemed that that was what it took to make it to the top. ML3 said there was definitely a difference in leadership styles – women would naturally be more aware of people's feelings and better at empathizing.

ML3 said in his experience the main reason for women not reaching top positions was the level of decision making. He claimed the general consensus in his organisation was that men find decision making easier and this ultimately got them a seat on the board.

3. Work-life balance

What is the work-life balance dynamic like in senior management?

In ML3's experience in senior management there is almost an acceptance that you will have to dedicate more hours to the job. He explains certainly in his industry where the higher you go the more of your time is required by the role. He explained in his industry and organisation there was a long-hour culture and 'presenteeism' was very common. While he did not think it was necessary, he explained "the higher you go the more areas of the business you're involved in so naturally your workload becomes

bigger”. This culture filters through his organisation. “I don’t think anyone at a lower level would be willing to do an extra 2 hours a day if they saw senior management heading off with their golf clubs at 3 o clock”.

What is the work-life balance combination like at your organisation?

ML3 didn’t know if there were work-life balance policies at his organisation and when asked did men avail of flexible work patterns he said no. He said men should act as role models and avail of more flexible patterns.

If men share maternity leave with their partners are they putting their careers in jeopardy?

ML3 claimed bringing more flexible leave policies to Ireland such as men taking maternity leave for their partner “would never wash”. He said managers would want to do this as they would fear it would go against them in the workplace. He continued if women are at a stage in their lives that they are family planning, then unfortunately they could miss vital opportunities to excel in their career. He explained it can certainly go against them – they miss out. He stated that if they are not around they could not possibly be put up for promotion. He claimed if organisations gave the option for male colleagues to go on maternity leave men may or may not take it on; the industry people are in and the type of job they do would play a huge part in this he stated.

4. Balance in the board room

What would achieve a better gender balance in board rooms?

ML3 stated more women need to be in a position of senior management to make it to board level in order to achieve a balance in the board room. He explained organisations need to start at the bottom and work their way up empowering women.

What are the benefits of a mixed board?

The benefit of gender balance in the boardroom was that it was balanced – not just of men and women – but people with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds ML3 claimed. The more diverse a board the better it is.

Are you for or against the introduction of gender quotas and why?

When asked about gender quotas ML3 insisted he thought the whole concept was absolutely ridiculous. He claimed “women should be disgusted and ashamed if they are pro-quotas”. He spoke of how society often witnesses “the token black guy” or “the token ‘gay’ guy” on TV and he felt the notion that organisations need to have a certain amount of women on the boards was almost “akin to being racist”. He went on to say “any person regardless of their colour, religion, creed, sexuality, and gender should get to the top because of their abilities and not for any other reason”.

Who is responsible?

If women have all the credentials ML3 explained they need to come together and be more vocal and put pressure on organisations to speak out and explain exactly why they are not in these roles. ML3 argued it was not the responsibility of men “not whatsoever”. “If I was a woman and I didn’t get a role, it’s up to me to speak out and find out why”.

Case 4 - Male Executive Director in Manufacturing organisation

- Interview date: 26-Jun-14
- Interview length: 58 minutes 56 seconds
- Years in senior management: 15 years
- No. of employees: 38,373
- Turnover: €8 billion

1. Gender board diversity

Male leader 4 (ML4) had only heard the issue in the media but knew it was an issue in his organisation. ML4 thought it was an issue at middle management as well as senior management and he claimed it was down to the nature of your organisation's industry. In his experience he never witnessed discrimination against women in the work place and claimed he thought women just do not want the "hassle" and responsibility that came with senior roles. Gender board diversity had not improved in his company, it is never mentioned and he said it had gotten worse in the last five years.

2. Leadership and Gender

ML4 claimed leadership styles in men and women are the very same in his experience. "What a woman may lack, a man may gain". He said leadership comes down to the individual and gender does not come into it.

3. Work-life balance

ML4 stated the work-life balance combination at senior management level was extremely tough and in his organisation it meant a lot of travel was involved. He claimed "women couldn't do that with kids". He said there were no strict rules on being present in the office or keeping up with a long-hour culture; it was merely a case of that is the time it takes to do everything needed in your role at that level. He thought it was unnecessary to be in the office for long hours but the work needed to

be completed. He continued that there certainly was an expectation from more senior leaders in the organisation that long hours were required and this filtered from top-down. He said men mostly worked in his organisation and they did not have work-life balance policies or flexible work patterns. He said men should avail of them more and become role models to other men provided their work was being completed effectively. "Once the work is being completed, flexible work patterns would be great for men to take advantage of". When ML4 was asked about men taking three months maternity leave in Ireland he said it would not work. "He would be risking his job straight away".

He continued that traditionally in Ireland the man was the main breadwinner and "men don't do that here". He continued "we're not family focused here - we don't have the work-life balance culture in Ireland like that". Overall he thought if this was implemented in Ireland it would be a good idea for the female to return to work and avail of more opportunities in her career but it would have a negative impact on every male's career.

4. Balance in the board room

Gender quotas

ML4 insisted implementing quotas was only a good idea if everything else failed – "in general they are not a good idea". He said women should get jobs on merit not merely to make up numbers and that if this was the case some women could get the job and not give it everything because they may realize they do not want to be there at all.

To achieve a better balance in the board room ML4 thought organisations needed a more family focused culture and better work-life balance policies. He said it would set good example if more females were on boards for younger females but ultimately if there were ten females on there and one man he would still be able to work effectively with that mix. He claimed men in power should take responsibility in implementing change to increase the number of women on boards.

Case 5 - Male Commercial Director in Energy Organisation

- Interview date: 27-Jun-14
- Interview length: 74 minutes 17 seconds
- Years in senior management: 17 years
- No. of employees: 9,153
- Turnover: €13 billion

1. Gender board diversity

ML5 said he had heard the topic on the radio that day and about Ireland having the worst gender diversity in Europe. He admitted “it is not a topic I have given a lot of thought to”. He claimed the imbalance on boards can be because of some industries being gender driven. He mentioned the gender balance in Information Technology, Human Resource management and Accountancy and how they are largely studied by one gender over the other. He felt the lack of female representation on boards was not merely women not being promoted or women not being good enough; there were multiple factors – “the industry you chose being one of them”.

He continued that there was a cultural influence and while there were capable women in Ireland, some choose to sacrifice their career for their family. He noticed that women that stay on in work and juggle their work-life balance can lead to issues such as “watching the clock”. He said this was inevitably down to the female still having majority of the responsibilities in the home. ML5 had five senior managers reporting to him - three female and two male.

He referred to female leaders and said the successful female leaders he worked with “had a back-bone”. ML5 claimed men only hire men all the time in his organisation. If a male and female accountant were going for the same job, “I would say the male accountant would get it over the female to be honest”. “While it’s not right, this is what has always been done”.

Gender diversity was not a priority in his organisation. He said “it isn’t even thought of” and argued “I’m not sure it should be thought of”. “If you’re highlighting it then it becomes an issue or a problem – there shouldn’t be a problem to begin with”.

2. Leadership and Gender

When asked about the relationship between leadership and gender he said people’s early career influences how they behave and how to lead. He explained he reported to a female director in his early career and while she had a cold personality, she was not afraid to make difficult decisions and stand by them. “She was a tough cookie in a male dominated world”. He claimed leaders had to have a collaborative but tough approach. He claimed he did not think there was a male-female bias on leadership. He said females by nature tended to be more organized and more collaborative and bring people together. He continued the more effective style of management is collaborative and in his experience the dominant trait in female leaders would have been a collaborative style of management.

3. Work-life balance

ML5 explained the work-life balance as a senior leader working in his organisation was “awful”. ‘Presenteeism’ and the long-hour culture were evident and while it may not always be necessary, if he needed staff to put in an extra effort, he needed to be seen putting in the extra effort himself. He said he believed people should have a healthy work-life balance and he encourages it amongst his managers. He said he rarely worked less than 60 hours a week and this is the choice he makes. “Sometimes I am here longer than I should be or need to be – I share an office with my boss – sometime I do stay here just because he stays here”. He thought there was a culture of ‘presenteeism’ in all organisations he worked in In Ireland.

He said while it would be nice to have more time off it would be unacceptable to ask to work from home or to take three months maternity leave to allow his wife go back to work. He said “I think it would be career suicide”. He said if he took three months

shared maternity leave he would be putting his career in jeopardy but if it was legally required he would do it - currently it is out of the norm to do such a thing. He said it would be great but he didn't think Ireland as a culture was ready for it yet.

He continued that there was a female on his team who did three days a week part-time work. While she was an extremely capable employee ML5 was not prepared to make her a manager. "I can't have somebody in a managerial role that's not there to manage".

4. Balance in the board room

When ML5 was asked how he would achieve a better gender balance on boards he referred to his time as a student going for college elections. In 1995, he was asked by the Gay and Lesbian community when going for student elections what he would do specifically for their community. He replied "absolutely nothing". He qualified this by saying "that is exactly what they wanted me to do – treat them no differently than any other student – I would represent them like every other student –I would integrate them into everything I would do and I would treat them the very same".

He said when filling a role at his organisation he looks at the skill-set for the role and not if the candidate is male or female or if she is of child bearing years – "I don't think like that but lots of managers do". He said there needs to be a change in mindset and organizational culture for more females to progress not only across management or male leaders but with females working in Ireland too as some women simply do not want to step up. He said there is a continuous attitude with men that we are all 'well able' to put the hours in here but it would be nice to be able to change that and do less hours without putting our career in jeopardy. When ML5 was asked about the benefits of a mixed board he said women should be on there because men and women think differently and different perspectives are needed. He claimed the responsibility lay with strong women on boards to bring about change.

Gender quotas

ML5 claimed he was against quotas. He said positions should be based on merit and the skillset required at any board level. He explained the structure of his direct reports was three females and two males and this had happened naturally and inherently. His direct reports all had their jobs because they were the best people to do their job. He insisted in an ideal world we should have a good gender balance and it shouldn't have to be thought of unlike now where a conscious effort has to be made to gain a good gender balance. He said quotas were not good for females that were appointed to board level as suddenly there would be a view that "here is our quota gender token female". He thought it did not serve the board or the individual any justice.

He said there should absolutely be appropriate representation of females on boards but it should be a natural progression step not something that is driven by quotas. He explained his colleague - a powerful female director - was a 'shrewd operator', an incredibly good and strong leader, however it was still in her psyche that she was "the token female" on the board as she referred to it all the time in meetings.

Case 6 - Male Managing Director in Energy organisation

- Interview date: 7-Jul-14
- Interview length: 22 minutes 35 seconds
- Years in senior management: 20 years
- No. of employees: 9,153
- Turnover: €13 billion

1. Gender board diversity

ML6 said this topic is not something that would pass his consciousness at all. He said it was an issue that was in the media and it is only then or in an instance like this interview that he would give the issue any thought at all. When asked about the current statistics in Ireland and female representation on boards he claimed it was not a high thought issue for him and there was nothing in his experience that would suggest that it is an issue either way. He said he would be absolutely blind to a person's gender when looking at their suitability for a promotion or a management role.

ML5 said the only potential barrier he may have seen at play that may be the reason why there is underrepresentation of women in boardrooms would have to be the 'having children break'. He claimed this had resulted in women's careers taking different directions. He explained he had seen this in the case of his own family, where female family members that had children, took a step back from their conventional career for a period of time that resulted in two or three years later and ultimately they then took a completely different direction in terms of their career and work time.

ML5 stated the percentage of women on his board was zero and the level of priority given to getting a diverse balance on management structures or boards was none.

2. Leadership and Gender

When asked about the relationship between gender and leadership he claimed in his experience leadership styles were not different between men and women. There was a wide range of leadership styles that exist and in his experience he had seen men and women display characteristics of both.

When asked about the competencies a good leader should have ML5 said their ability to galvanize a team and to bring a whole bunch of people with them to steer the organisation in the right direction

3. Work-life balance

ML6 said there was not a culture of 'presenteeism' in his organisation. Instead they had a culture of flexibility in their senior management structure but people would not feel inhibited in making calls to people outside of hours. When asked if a flexible maternity leave pattern was brought into Ireland and men could take three months leave to allow their female partner go back to work, would it work he stated "I don't see why not". When asked would this male be jeopardising his career he claimed he would certainly think so as it is unusual and does not happen in Ireland.

4. Balance in the board room

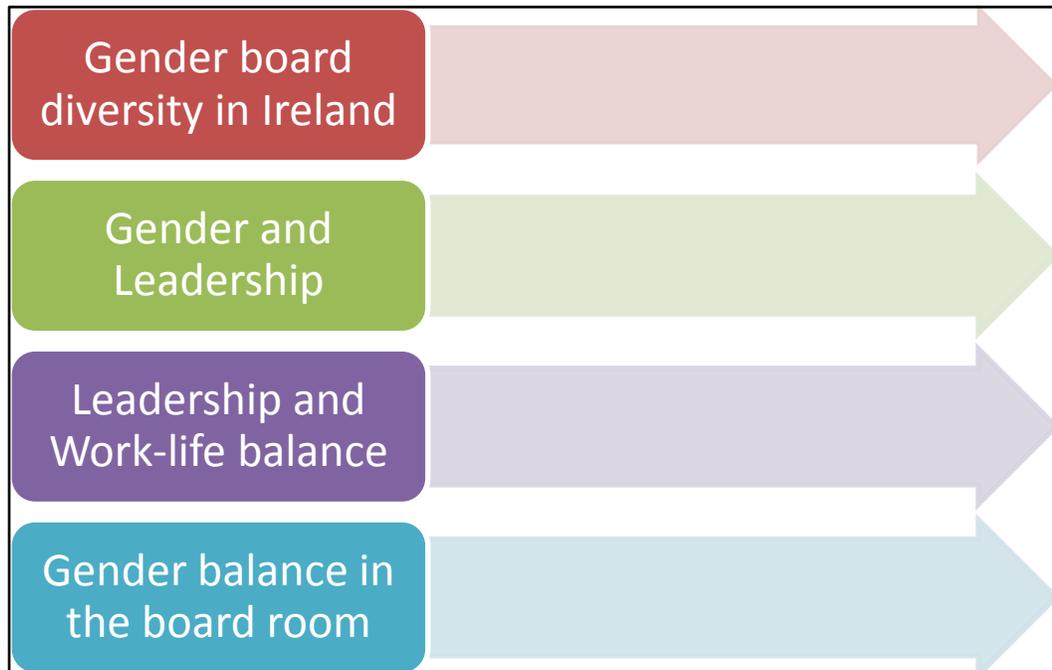
When asked what he thought would achieve a better balance on boards in Ireland he said "that question presumes that I think it is important that there should be a balance which I don't necessarily think there should". He explained that by answering that question he would be saying we have an issue and he didn't think we did. He finished by saying he didn't know how to achieve a balance anyway. He said the benefits of a mixed board where there are both men and women meant a wider more diverse range of views but gender did not matter and women should not necessarily be on there. In his experience women on boards were of no benefit.

Gender quotas

ML6 insisted gender quotas were not a good idea. "I think quotas in general end up distorting your workforce". He claimed as a result of quotas a lot of 'unintended consequences' come with them. He explained issues would arise where women who reach management positions on their own merit, would suddenly have an unnecessary question mark over their ability and their right to be in that management position. He claimed men should not take responsibility for the lack of women at the top and that women needed to take responsibility and to step up. He claimed because he didn't see the issue as a major issue in the first place, if others do and if women do then it is primarily up to them to take the initiative to change it. He claimed that while making men more aware of it is important, the performance of a board or a management team is a far bigger priority in his opinion.

5.2 Cross-case analysis

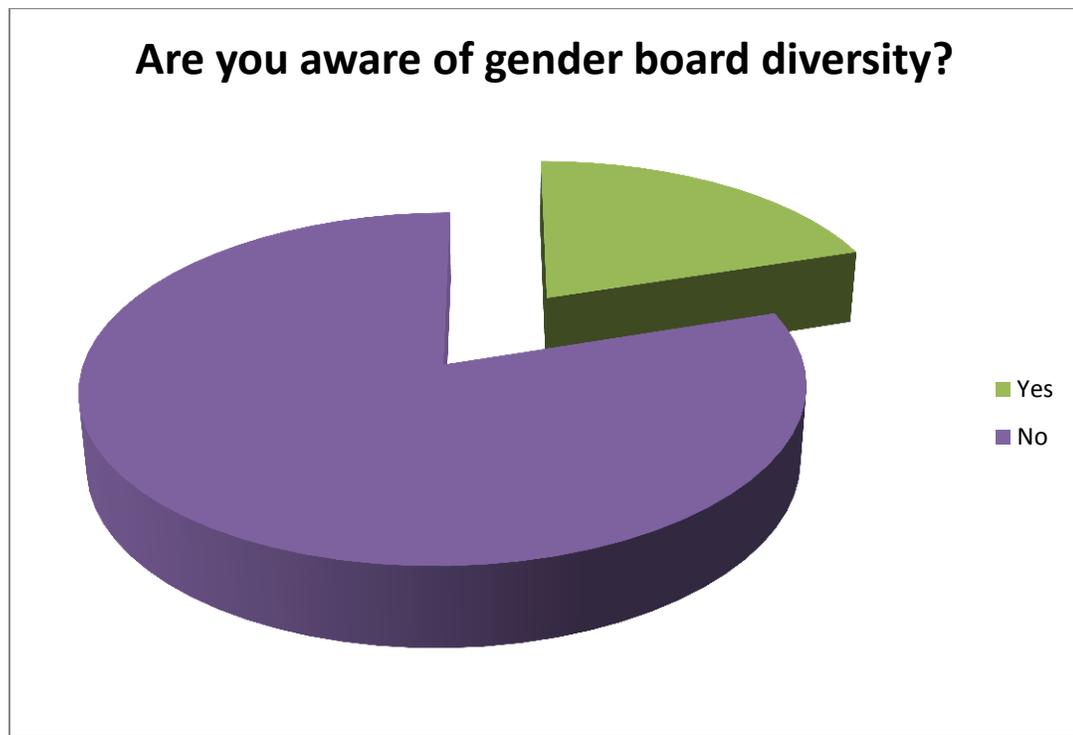
Figure 8: Main themes in cross-case analysis.



1. Gender board diversity in Ireland

Perceptions/views on the topic (Figure 8): Two male leaders out of six claimed gender board diversity and gender diversity as a whole were currently huge talking points in organisations in Ireland. The same two male leaders are very aware of the issue as it is a priority in their organisation and is monitored by their leaders. The remaining four male leaders did not know much about the topic overall; only what they had heard in the media on the topic recently. All male leaders accepted there was an imbalance in boards in Ireland.

Figure 8: Results on male leaders' awareness of gender board diversity.



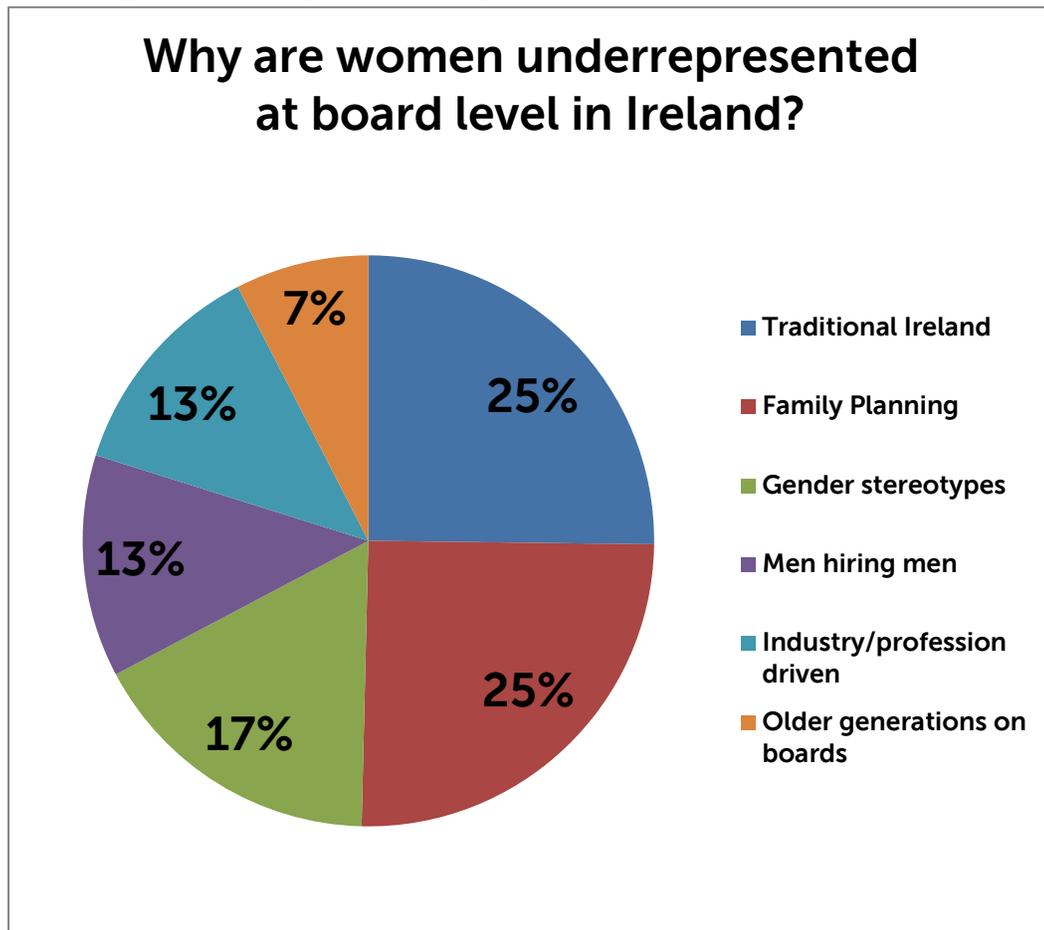
Why is there an imbalance? The male leaders in this study claimed there were two main reasons as to why there was a gender imbalance on boards in Ireland and four other reasons (Figure 9):

1. **Traditional Ireland** – Ireland historically had a more male dominated workforce and the six cases in this study all referred to this. The findings suggest male leaders thought the culture in Ireland played a huge part in the composition of boards as in most households the female of the house stayed at home and the male being the bread-winner went to work. The male leaders thought this tradition encouraged a lot of women to want to remain in the household and raise their children.
2. **Family planning** –Taking time out to have children was mentioned by all male leaders in this research piece and how it impacts female's careers. In Ireland maternity leave can be up to ten months out of work and all male leaders felt

this was a long period of time where women could ultimately miss out on career opportunities. All male leaders claimed that women do have most of the responsibility in the house whether they work or not. This can also deter women from going back to work they felt.

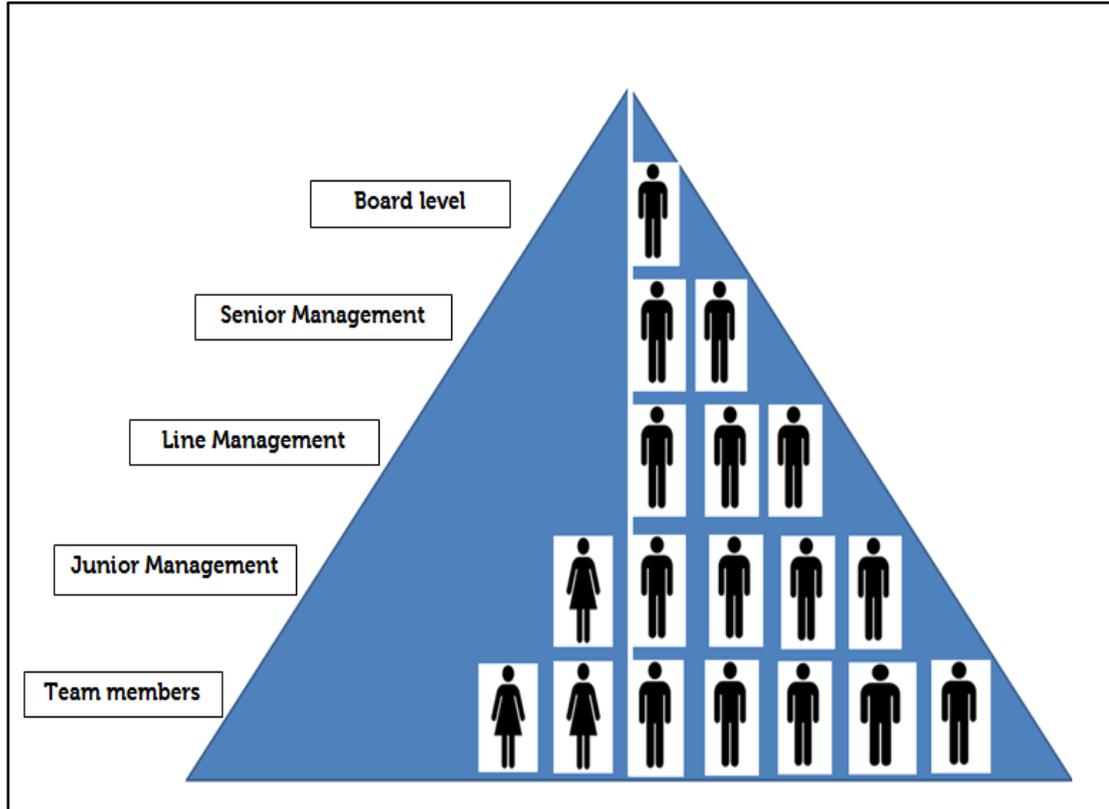
3. **Men hiring men** – few male leaders referred to this as the reason why women were not getting into promotional positions but three said they had witnessed it. One male leader said people hiring “like me” means if more men are hiring, more men are being hired. Hiring managers are not being appreciative of diversity as a whole and looking at people’s competencies and backgrounds as opposed to if candidates are “like me” or they “take the route I took”.
4. **Older generations on boards**– two male leaders referred to their senior management structure as being from “an older generation” with old-school thinking and mindsets. In these management structures the view is still that women have a ‘soft approach’ and are not suitable for the board room.
5. **Industries or professions that are gender driven** – three male leaders referred to the nature of their industry and how it attracts more males e.g. Manufacturing, IT, Accountancy. Male leaders felt that certain industries or professions will always lack female representation due to the nature of that field.
6. **Tough decision-makers** – four male leaders’ gender stereotyped by claiming the person to make the cut throat decisions is usually a male. Whether it is letting people go or cutting cost, women are perceived to be unable to make difficult decisions on a daily basis.

Figure 9: Results on why women are underrepresented at board level in Ireland according to this multiple-case study.



Perception/views on current statistics: While four male leaders claimed the current statistics in Ireland on the lack of female representation on boards was “alarming” and “shocking”, two male leaders did not see it as serious. The poor representation of females in boardrooms in Ireland was deemed not good for organisations in terms of diverse thinking, not positive for women, men or Ireland. On the contrary one managing director claimed “it was not a high thought issue for him”. He claimed there was nothing in his experience that would suggest that this topic is “an issue” at all. He said he would be absolutely blind to a person’s gender when looking at their suitability for a promotion or a management role.

Figure 10: How many women are on your board?



Is achieving gender board diversity a priority in your organisation?

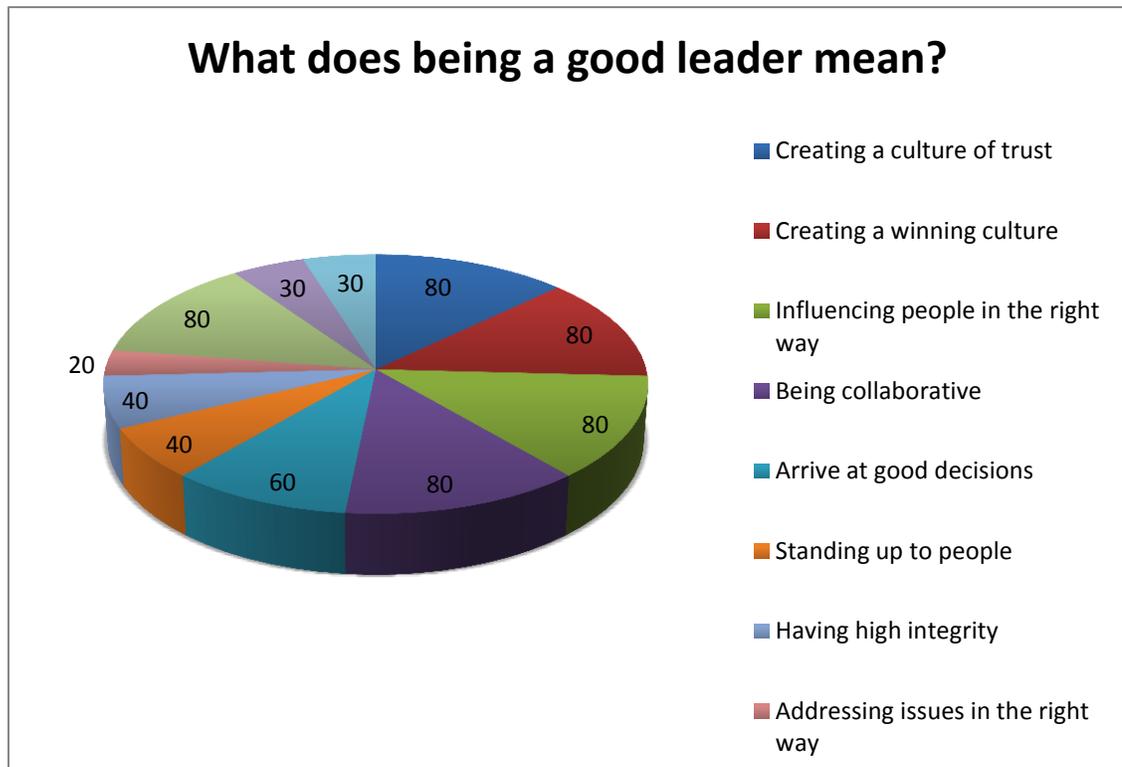
ML1 and ML2 claimed gender diversity had certainly increased in their organisations over the past 5 years and it was a huge priority to get the balance right going forward and in the last 12 months it was becoming a focus at a significant acceleration. ML3, ML4, ML5 and ML6 all said gender board diversity had not improved, changed or altered in their organisations in the last 5 years; it was not a priority at all and “it isn’t even thought of”. While all male leaders claimed there were women in their teams, overall there were few women in senior management, and more women in junior management (Figure 10). All six case studies revealed there was not one woman on any of the six boards.

2. Gender and Leadership

Creating a culture of trust, creating a winning culture, influencing people in the right way and being collaborative were seen as the four most important qualities in a good leader according to this work (Figure 11). Other competencies were mentioned throughout each case with the “ability to arrive at good decisions” taking fifth place (Figure 11).

With regard to the relationship between gender and leadership ML1 claimed he associated “softer skills” with a lot of the women leaders he knew. In his experience women approached things differently and had a more in-depth and intuitive appreciation for a diverse input when arriving at a suggested solution. ML1 thought leadership styles depended on the individual but women could bring a different way of thinking which was invaluable.

Figure 11: Results for ‘What does being a good leader mean?’



ML2 claimed leadership styles may vary slightly between men and women but in his experience “a good leader is a good leader”. He claimed leaders need to be able to stand up to people and suggested it could be thought that women may not exercise this effectively. ML3 claimed in his experience it was interesting that any female who ever made it “high up” was always considered a “tough cookie”. It seemed that that was what it took to make it to the top. ML3 said there was definitely a difference in leadership styles – “women are naturally more aware of people’s feelings and better at empathizing”. ML4 claimed leadership styles in men and women are the very same in his experience - leadership comes down to the individual and not gender. ML5 said people’s early career influences them in how to behave and lead. He did not think there was a male-female bias on leadership. He said females by nature tend to be more organized and collaborative which was the more effective style of management in his experience. ML6 claimed there was a wide range of leadership styles that existed and in his experience he had seen men and women display characteristics of both.

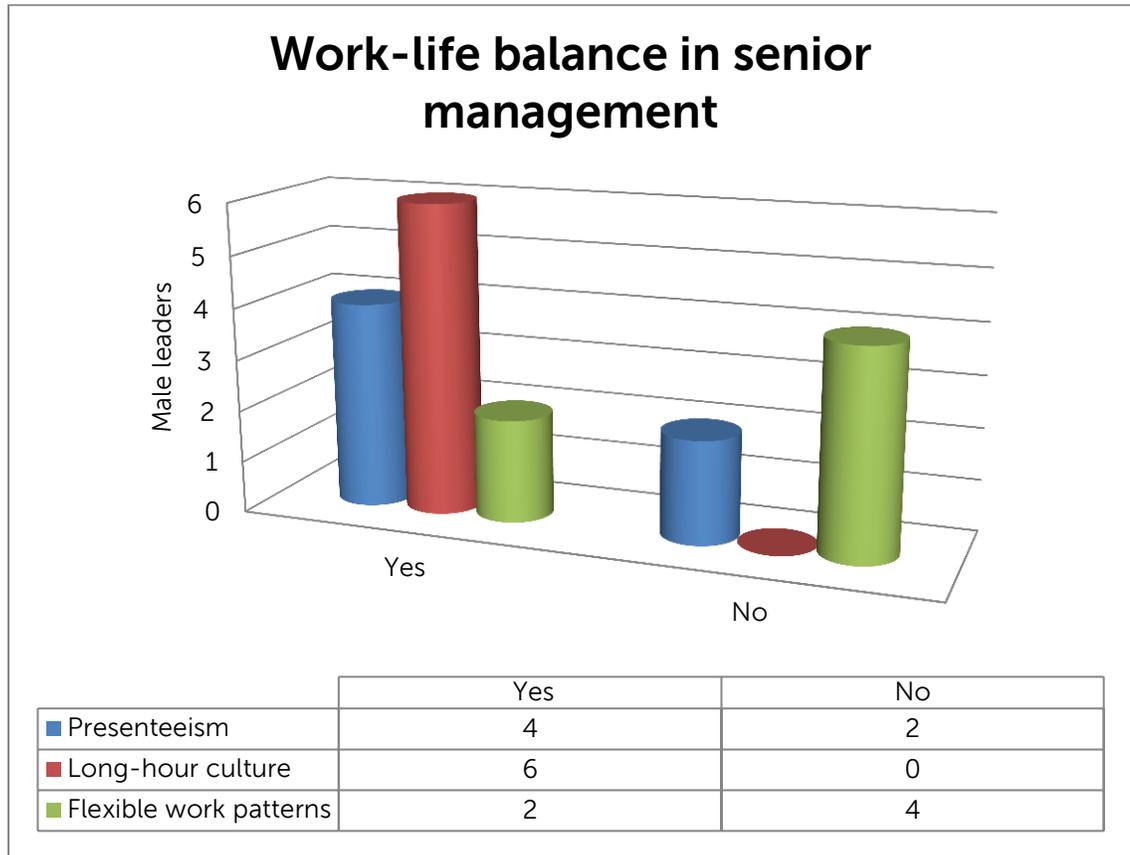
3 Leadership and Work-life balance

Two male leaders had genuine work-life balance policies in their organisations that meant they had the opportunity to work from home. The remaining four male leaders worked in cultures where there was an acceptance or at the very least the expectation that senior roles meant longer hours in the office. All male leaders agreed there was no denying the more senior the role in any organisation, the more demanding and complex responsibilities became which resulted in longer hours (Figure 12).

ML3, ML4, ML5 AND ML6 all admitted staying in the office longer than they needed to, while ML1 and ML2 claimed they were only present in the office when they needed to be and flexible work patterns are utilized even at senior management levels. They both referred to the acceptance in their organisation’s culture that people could work from home. “At senior level no one feels in any way obliged to stay in the office for

the sake of it - There is a culture there that accepts you know what you need to do and when you need to do it”.

Figure 12: Results of presenteeism, long-hour culture and flexible work patterns in senior management according to sample.



ML4 stated the work-life balance combination at senior management level was incredibly tough and in his organisation it meant a lot of travel was involved. He claimed “women couldn’t do that with kids”. ML5 explained the work-life balance as a senior leader working in his organisation was “awful”. ‘Presenteeism’ and the long-hour culture were evident and he said he rarely worked less than 60 hours a week but “this is the choice he makes”. “Sometimes I am here longer than I should be or need to be –I share an office with my boss – sometime I do stay here just because he stays here”.

ML3, ML4, ML5 and ML6 were all unaware of any work-life balance policy in their organisation and men did not avail of flexible work patterns. ML5 said it would be nice to have more time off it with his two younger children but it would be “unacceptable” to work from home two days a week.

When asked if men should act as role models and avail of more flexible work patterns ML1 said this is not a problem in his organisation as both men and women avail of flexible patterns equally. ML3, ML4, ML5 and M6 said men should act as role models and avail of more flexible patterns provided their work was being completed.

If a senior *male* member of your team requested three months off for maternity leave would *he* be putting his career in jeopardy?

Negative responses:

- ML2 thought most men would not take three months off work as they would fear their job being put into jeopardy.
- ML3 claimed bringing more flexible leave policies to Ireland such as men taking maternity leave for their partner “would never wash”. He said managers would not want to do this as they would fear it would go against them in the workplace.
- ML4 said he didn’t think it would work and that men would be “risking their jobs straight away” as “men don’t do that here”.
- ML5 said it would be unacceptable and “career suicide”.
- ML6 claimed people and teams would certainly think it is unusual.

More positive responses:

- ML1 said he would “hope not” and that this flexible option would be positive and women would appreciate it too.
- ML2 said if more men did this and it became accepted all men would “jump at the idea”.

- ML3 claimed sharing maternity leave would be a fantastic option for couples and women that would like children. He claimed the industry people are in and the type of job they do would have a huge part to play.
- ML4 thought if this did come into Ireland it would be a good idea for the female to return to work and avail of more opportunities in her career.
- ML5 felt if it was legally required he could and certainly would take the opportunity but currently “it is out of the norm to do such a thing”.
- ML6 said he didn’t see why this wouldn’t work but as it does not happen here but to say men would be jeopardizing their careers would be an overstatement.

4 Gender balance in the board room

Why should we achieve a better gender balance in the boardroom?

- “The appreciation of different backgrounds, what people come with, where people come from, different competencies, different ways of thinking and ultimately the realization or the appreciation that a variety of thinking can only be positive for a team”.
- “If you have a board room with the same type of people, then you are not getting the team right - the team is so much stronger than individuals”
- “If we have the diversity of thinking and the diversity of competencies and the diversity of backgrounds from a team perspective then, ultimately we will arrive at better decisions”.
- “A mixed board is a better board all round”.
- “The benefits of a gender balanced board room is that it is a balanced”
- “It is only natural the broader the range and spectrum of people you have on any one board and any one team will give different ideas and ways of working together which can ultimately create better solutions”.

- “It would set good example if more females were on boards to younger females”.
- “Women should be on there because the ego tripping would be calmed down a bit”.
- “Men and women think differently and different perspectives are needed”.

How should we achieve a better gender balance in boardrooms?

More male leaders in this work were against gender quotas than for them (Figure 13). ML1 said there were complexities that needed to be called out and that while some spaces like the technology space, can be genuinely hard to find female representation this does not mean women are not “out there”.

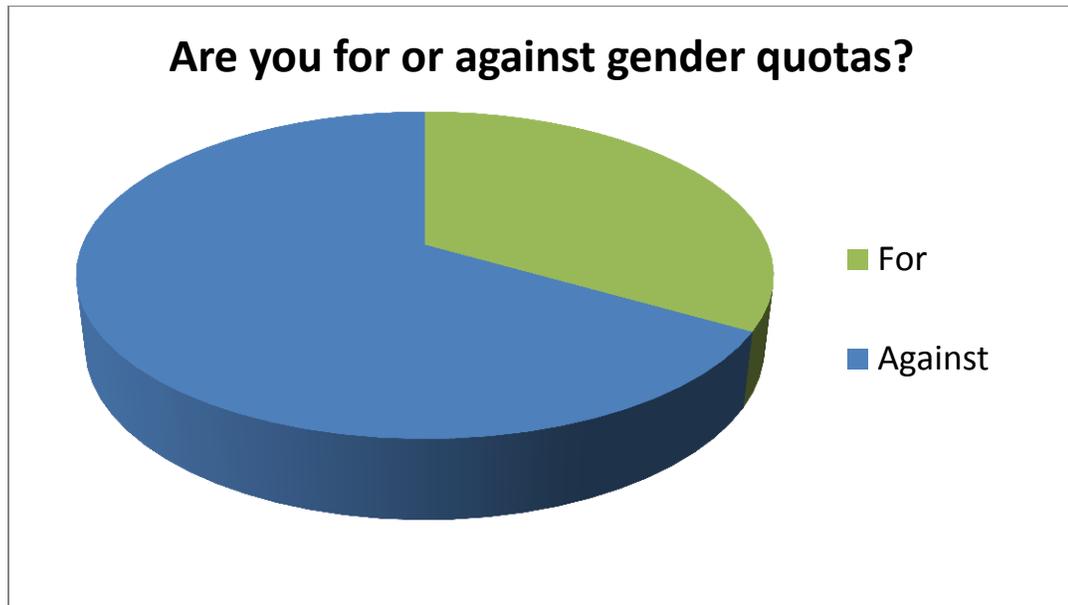
He said some areas where there were niche complexities it would be impossible to reach quotas based on what is available in the market and that this needed to be appreciated. He claimed it was critical to call out the niche areas where there might be a particular shortage of women and if not he worried people would start trying to potentially fill roles with candidates who were not qualified to do the role.

ML2 agreed with ML1 in his response and said he would encourage gender quotas as they will get women in the door of organisations but people needed to be sure they were not hiring for “the sake of hiring”. He also claimed it could be challenging in certain industries but while it was not ideal it was a measure Ireland clearly needed to implement.

On the contrary, ML3 insisted gender quotas were “completely ridiculous”. He claimed women should be “disgusted and ashamed if they are ‘pro-quotas’”. He explained how we often see on TV “the token black” male or “the token gay” male and he felt the notion that Ireland needs to have a certain amount of women on the boards was almost akin to being racists. He went on to say any person regardless of their colour,

religion, creed, sexuality, and gender should get to the top because of their abilities and not because of any other reason.

Figure 13: Results on gender quotas according to the sample



ML4 insisted “they are not a good idea”. He said women should get jobs on merit not merely to make up numbers and that if this was the case some women could get the job and not give it 100 per cent because they may realize they do not want to be there at all.

ML5 also claimed he was not for quotas. He said they were not good and that positions should be based on merit and the skillset required at any board level. He explained the structure of his direct reports was three females and two males and this had happened “naturally and inherently” – they all had their jobs because they were the best people to do that job. He insisted in an ideal world we should have a good gender balance and it should not need to be thought of unlike now where a conscious effort has to be made to gain a good gender balance. He said suddenly there will be a view that “here is our quota gender token female”.

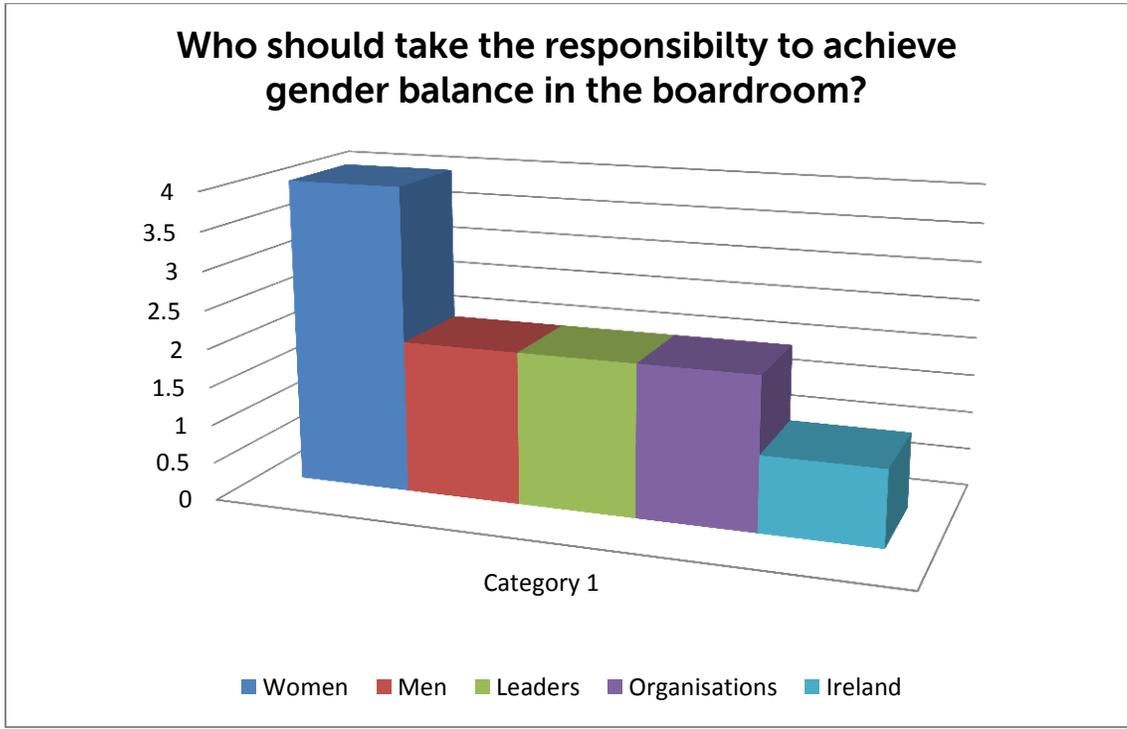
ML6 claimed “quotas in general end up distorting your workforce”. He explained issues would arise where women who reach management positions on their own merit, would now have an unnecessary question mark over their ability and their right to be in that position should legislation enforce quotas.

Who should take the responsibility to achieve gender balance in the boardroom?

(Figure 14)

- Women – “Women need to want to be treated equally and step up to the challenge”.
- Women – “Women need to be in a position of senior management to make it to board level in order to achieve a balance in the board room”.
- Women – “Women need to be more vocal”
- Men – “Men in power should take the initiative to change board composition”
- Both men and women – “Both men and women should take responsibility and give women more opportunities and encouragement”
- Leaders – “the message needs to come from the leader down through the organisation”.
- Leaders – “Male and female leaders need to put this on their agenda”.
- Organisational cultures – “There needs to be a change in mindset in organizational cultures for more females to progress”.
- Organizational cultures – “organisations need a more family focused culture and better work-life balance policies”.
- Ireland – “Ireland as a nation must take responsibility and work together on this”

Figure 14: Results on who should take the responsibility to achieve a better gender balance in boardrooms?



Chapter 6 - Discussions

In this Chapter the researcher aligns the findings of this multiple-case study with previous literature from Chapter 2 and the main objectives of this work from Chapter 3. The researcher comments on the findings in light of previous research which was explored in the beginning of this work and highlights the similarities and contradictions compared with previous literature. Alternate explanations are considered, and results that run contrary to the themes that emerge are accounted for.

6.1 Gender board diversity in Ireland

The researcher aimed to gain an insight into male leaders' understanding and perceptions on this topic. While some male leaders were more aware of the topic gender board diversity than others, all male leaders were aware that there was a significant imbalance in their organisations and in organisations in Ireland in general. It was evident through each interview that the male leaders in this study were all certainly given 'food for thought' on the topic of gender board diversity. However, on hearing the statistic that 89 per cent of CEO managing director roles in Ireland were currently men and 11 per cent were women all male leaders were unaware of the sheer scale of gender imbalance in organisations in Ireland, assuming the ratio to be far more balanced. This supports the argument that more studies need to be undertaken on multiple stakeholders accountable for women's leadership experiences, particularly those in position of power and privilege such as current male leaders and chairmen (Atewologun and Doldor, 2013). These positions of power need to be educated more on the current imbalance on boards today and by making leaders and men more aware of the harsh reality of female representation in the boardroom change may be driven at a faster pace.

The researcher's aim was also to gain an insight into why these male leaders thought women were failing to get to top positions at comparable rates to their male counterparts. The male leaders in this study claimed the two main reasons for the

underrepresentation of women on boards in Ireland was mainly due to the traditional culture in Ireland and family planning. Other reasons included older generations' ruling boards and certain industries and professions being gender driven as well as men hiring men and gender stereotyping existing in companies. Interestingly some male leaders admitted they witnessed 'men hiring men' and females being looked upon as 'not tough enough' to make difficult decisions which they claimed could contribute to the reasons for few women on boards. These theories can be aligned to the literature around the 'old boy's network' (Cross, 2010) and women's biological make-up being focused on rather than their ability (Flanders, 1994). These results offer insight into how the traditional gender stereotypes in Ireland continue to exist and clearly play a part in women not progressing in their careers. From these findings it can be concluded organisational cultures need to enforce open-minded thinking and become more diverse, male managers need to appreciate candidates competencies and not their gender and women need to not allow these issues deter them from senior positions.

The researcher aimed to understand the current statistics with regard to female representation on boards of the male leaders' organisations. While most gave a fair percentage of female representation in their organisation, it can be concluded they were all on *boards* that had *no* female representation. This strengthens the fact that there is a huge need for more awareness around the topic. Furthermore there were higher percentages of females in junior management than in senior management in each case which is encouraging and conveys women are capable of managing but need to continue to up-skill to seek higher positions.

Overall in this work more male leaders claimed gender board diversity was not even thought of in their organisation compared to those that said it was a priority. This is extremely disappointing for women in leadership and for organisations in Ireland but supports the researcher's objective to understand if the topic was a priority in organisations in Ireland today and the suggestion that far more work needs to be done in this area for it to gain a priority objective on organization's agendas. Rectifying

gender board diversity only seemed to be a priority for two male leaders out of six. Both of these male leaders spoke about their leaders highlighting the topic at a top level of management which influenced the organisation to implement measures to gain a gender balance.

6.2 Gender and Leadership

Within this theme the researcher sought to gain an understanding on the male leaders' view on the relationship between gender and leadership. The underlying objectives here were to see if male leaders thought leadership styles were different between men and women; if they felt women were capable leaders; what they thought being a good leader entailed and if they held conventional stereotypical ideals that all managerial positions were 'male'?

Overall these male leaders claimed being a leader was the ability to create a culture of trust and a winning culture, to influence people in the right way and to be collaborative. Interestingly, all male leaders interviewed claimed leadership was down to the individual and not gender related. They claimed "a good leader was a good leader" and a lot depended on individuals early career influences. Findings conveyed these male leaders all had experience working with different leadership styles; but none of these were gender specific and all cases portrayed the view that women are and can be extremely capable leaders.

Furthermore, it was found from their experience they thought women tended to be more collaborative, they were more aware of people's feelings, they were better at empathising than men, and at having the 'softer' leadership skills. These findings are supported by previous literature on management structures becoming more feminine and qualities associated with women now being associated with effective management (Duehr and Bono, 2006). With all this positive feedback on women's leadership skills there came some negative responses too; all six male leaders referred to a female leader they knew of or had worked with. While it was positive to hear they

had all worked with a female lead, each case conveyed every female leader referred to was subsequently described as “tough as nuts”, “steely”, “a tough-cookie” having “back-bone” or “you wouldn’t mess with her” and it seems that some leaders continue to think this is what it takes to make it to the top. This finding further supports the literature around the theory that all managers need to possess stereotypical masculine and aggressive qualities to succeed (Gartzia et al, 2012). It emphasises that clearly leaders do continue to hold conventional understandings that all managerial positions are “male” and that this is “the norm” (Billing, 2011) which loses the appreciation of women, their skills and their experiences that can be used for leadership roles.

Findings suggest the call for new valid instruments to measure gender roles in leadership would be extremely beneficial in facilitating women’s progression to senior roles where areas such as personality and self-efficacy would be focused on more to produce better leaders (Coder and Spiller, 2013) and highlight women’s leadership qualities.

6.3 Leadership and work-life balance

In this area the researcher sought to assess the perceptions of male leaders in Ireland on work-life balance in their current role in senior management. The researcher’s objective was to gain an insight into male leaders’ thoughts on having a healthy work-life balance while holding a senior position; to see if the long-hour culture and ‘presenteeism’ continues to exist in senior roles and to identify if these are issues that deter women in the progression to seats in the boardroom. The researcher also aimed to assess if male leaders thought men should act as role models and take on more flexible work patterns like shared maternity leave and if they felt this would work in Ireland or if it would be thought men were putting their careers in jeopardy.

All male leaders agreed there was no denying the more senior the role in any organisation the more demanding and complex responsibilities became which resulted in longer working hours. While the long-hour culture was in all six cases,

'presenteeism' was only evident in four cases. This proves the long-hour culture in senior roles is prevalent and supports the literature around people needing to stop spending longer hours at work than contractually required (Murphy et al, 2011; Cross, 2010).

It also proves that organisations with flexible work patterns such as working from home eliminate the 'presenteeism' culture. These same cases claimed flexible work patterns were available to men and women in their organisations and more importantly to both junior and senior levels of management alike. It was clear, these organisational cultures were built on trust and open-mindedness and by having flexible work patterns the entire workforce had a better work-life balance.

Findings proved 'presenteeism' continues to exist in organisations in Ireland and some male leaders felt obliged to stay present in the office longer than was needed, merely to prove to staff and senior colleagues that they were worthy of their role. This supports the literature on what is and is not compatible with holding a senior position in organisations today and how working long-hours is expected (Drew et al, 2009; Murphy et al, 2011). Interestingly it was these same cases that did not have work-life balance policies in their organisations nor could they avail of working from home certain days a week. These findings support the research that shows Ireland is the lowest-ranked EU country on flexible work patterns with 53 per cent of companies offering family-friendly working solutions compared to the EU average of 74 per cent (European Commission, 2014). The cultural of 'presenteeism' not only is known for causing occupational stress (Murphey et al, 2011; Sirajunisa & Panchanatham, 2010) and further discourages women from senior roles (Murphy et al, 2011) particularly when they are still recognised as the sole carer and the burden of responsibility still lies with them in the home (Cross, 2010).

The male leaders with flexible work patterns in this study are proof that people do not need to be present in the office every day after 6.00pm to achieve and sustain an important role in organisations. Why is it that by doing longer hours in organisations in

Ireland or by being present in the office, instantly means you are better at your job? Surely leaving at 5.30pm can be seen as positive as people get their work done within a balanced and specific time-frame? Surely the team members that leave at 5.30pm are not looked upon as poor at their role but that they are merely super-efficient?

Should men act as role models?

Most male leaders in this work agreed that men should avail of more flexible work patterns to aid women in returning to work and to strengthen their position in organisations which supports the literature that claims without flexible work-patterns, such as working from home or outside the normal working hours, women have little chance in excelling to senior roles (Cross, 2010). However, overall findings conveyed male leaders thought they were putting their career in jeopardy by sharing their partner's maternity leave and taking three months leave from work. Cases convey that while the male leader were aware of the benefits of flexible work patterns such as sharing maternity leave they would not take such leave because they feared their job security too much, it would be unacceptable in their organisations as "men don't do that in Ireland", "it would be career suicide" and Ireland as a culture was not ready for this flexibility yet. It can be concluded all cases produced these findings as a result of this flexibility being "unusual" and "out of the norm". However all male leaders agreed it would be fantastic to have this flexible option in Ireland which corresponds with the theory that this flexibility not only strengthens the woman's position in the workplace but the man's position in the family (Brandth & Kvande, 2003; Naz, 2010; Bratberg & Naz, 2009). It seems if this leave policy was introduced it would need to be in the form of legislation from the government in Ireland, to encourage more men to take on flexible patterns of work, as findings suggest only through legal implementation would taking such leave become 'normal' for men. This effort would further facilitate the representation of women in boards in Ireland and would also break the mind-set in 'traditional Ireland' that the male is the main bread-winner and females are responsible for majority of the work in the home.

Previously it was found that male leaders saw family planning as a barrier for women to gain senior positions and while there is no denying women face different work-life choices with regard to deciding to have children, or wanting to be at home to care for their children, it can be concluded that more flexible work patterns for both men and women can help get women back to work earlier and put some responsibility on men when it comes to family-life. The researcher's objective was to ascertain male leaders' views on men taking more flexible work patterns and if they thought this would put their career in jeopardy; the findings proved this objective to be true. So the question must be posed is it fair for women to put their career in jeopardy to facilitate their family planning? Why not introduce more flexible work patterns and leave policies to facilitate female's career progression for the better of all parties.

6.4 Gender balance in the board room

The researcher sought to gain an insight into *why* male leaders thought gender balance matters in the boardroom.

Overall, the piece on the benefits of a mixed board in this work found male leaders think better decisions are made and better teams are built when there is a balance of not just gender but ethnic backgrounds and expertise which make for better decisions made by boards. This supports the literature on the benefits of a mixed board in terms of better decision-making and diverse thinking (Institute of Director in Ireland, 2013). A more diverse way of thinking was mentioned in all cases where different perspectives were seen as valuable to the success of a board. Also different ways of working together was mentioned which creates better solutions and women on boards was also viewed as setting good example for younger women in Ireland which corresponds with previous literature (O'Connor, 2012). Interestingly not one male leader called out how essential it was to have female representation on boards to maintain competitive advantage (Berkery et al, 2013) or in adhering to the principals of equality and gender discrimination (O'Connor, 2012) or to send a powerful signal within the organisation (Daily & Dalton, 2003).

The researcher sought to ascertain an understanding of *how* male leaders thought gender balance in the boardroom should be achieved and what their views on gender quotas were. Surprisingly majority of the male leaders in this study were *against* gender quotas. While literature has conveyed it is a controversial area within this field, the researcher was not expecting the level of discontent it brought to the male leaders in this study. Four male leaders claimed they were against quotas, claiming they were “completely ridiculous”, “a bad idea”, “not good” and not only was it stated that quotas “distort” your workforce, it was said that “women should be disgusted and ashamed” if they were for quotas. These findings supported previous literature that argued women should gain positions on boards, based on merit and not merely to “make up numbers” (Dezso and Ross, 2012). Contradicting literature claims board composition has been transformed as a result of quotas (Katividad, 2012) and the two male leaders in this study that agreed explained there were “niche complexities” but overall they believed quotas would address the gender imbalance in senior management structures in Ireland. While the researcher is aware those against quotas could simply not want the pressure of meeting another target, it was encouraging that these male leaders did not want female representation to merely become a case of “here is our quota gender token female”.

The researcher sought to gain an insight into *who* male leaders think should take responsibility for the lack of diversity at the top. Male leaders in this work overall, felt balance in the boardroom needed be achieved by women and in their willingness to step up, which corresponds with the 81 per cent of female directors who thought they themselves needed to take responsibility for the low level of women on boards in Ireland (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013). It was thought women needed to get in position to be offered opportunities, organisations needed to become more family-focused and having better work-life balance policies, and male leaders needed to change their mind-set towards women’s capabilities. Men were not thought of as the bearer of responsibility despite the research on them being held accountable for women’s leadership experiences (Atewologun and Doldor, 2013). Mentoring was not

mentioned in the findings of this case study but was evident in the previous literature (Vinnicombe, 2011) nor was the idea that women lacked confidence or self-belief (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013).

Chapter 7 – Conclusions and Recommendations

In this chapter the researcher outlines the main conclusions based on the analysis of within-case data for each case and the cross-case analyses in Chapter 5 and the discussions in Chapter 6. The researcher also concludes if the findings from this study support the current literature surrounding this topic, if this work can contribute to previous literature and if the main objectives of this thesis were met.

7.1 Gender board diversity in Ireland – Overall conclusions

From the findings in this work, it can be concluded that more work needs to be done on gender board diversity in organisations in Ireland. Overall the male leaders in this study were not aware of gender board diversity and while they were given ‘food for thought’ by taking part in this study, this is simply not enough. This work conveys male leaders in Ireland and indeed around the globe need to be educated more on this topic and the damage it does for their organisations, for women and for men. The researcher can conclude by gaining an insight into male leaders’ perceptions on gender board diversity it became apparent the two main reasons according to them for female underrepresentation on boards in Ireland, were a) the traditional gender roles that continue to exist in Ireland’s culture and b) family planning. The male leaders in this case-study claimed they witnessed ‘men hiring men’ and gender stereotyping and both can contribute to the reason there are few females on boards in Ireland. From this it can be concluded the ‘old boy’s network’ remains firmly intact at the top of organisations in Ireland and as a result deters women from going for senior positions and/or from receiving positions in senior roles.

While most leaders were shocked by the current statistics in Ireland and just how underrepresented women are on boards in Ireland, more male leaders claimed gender board diversity was not even thought of in their organisation than those that said it was a priority. This portrays how little some organisations know about this topic and these findings support previous literature on the need for more studies to be

undertaken on multiple stakeholders accountable for women's leadership experiences, particularly those in positions of power and privilege (Atewologun and Doldor, 2013).

7.2 Gender and leadership – Overall conclusions

The researcher sought to gain an understanding into male leader's perceptions on the relationship between gender and leadership. It was found that the top four leadership qualities were; the ability to create a culture of trust; the ability to create a winning culture; the ability to influence people in the right way and lead in a collaborative way. These were all similar to findings on women's leadership traits; being more collaborative, empathising and making good decisions. Each case study in this work depicted that male leaders had full faith in women's leadership capabilities and did not refer to one style of leadership that was gender specific – "a good leader, was a good leader". However, all male leaders in this multiple case-study described a female leader they knew as possessing stereotypical masculine and aggressive qualities and it seemed these were the qualities women needed to succeed (Gartzia et al, 2012). From these findings leadership *styles* don't seem to vary between men and women according to male leaders, however it can be argued that certain male leaders still hold conventional stereotypical ideals that all managerial positions are 'male' and women need to have the stereotypical male attributes to get to the top.

7.3 Leadership and Work-life balance - Overall conclusions

According to this multiple case study male leaders thought women were capable of being leaders however they thought the work-life balance when being a senior leader is overall quite challenging to successfully obtain. This corresponds with previous literature on how it is much more difficult for managers to achieve a desirable work-life balance at this level due to the amount of hours required for their role (Straub, 2007).

Findings suggest that taking on flexible working patterns is not seen as compatible with holding a senior position in organisations today and working long hours is

expected (Drew et al, 2009; Murphy et al, 2011). With the long-hour culture being unavoidable and 'presenteeism' persisting in organisations today, literature suggests flexible work patterns are becoming increasingly suggested as a means to eliminate the pressure of both. However, this flexibility is scarce in most organisations in Ireland according to this study, despite the literature on how flexible work patterns are key to the successful balance of work and home-life for working people and in particular people in senior management. The findings in this work correspond with the literature around women continuing to take on more responsibility in the home. As a result this supports the fact that flexible work patterns are so important in facilitating female representation on boards in Ireland – not merely to balance the responsibility of the home and a senior role for women, but in strengthening the position in the family of men; not to mention the fact that they also aid the prevention of occupational stress. This study also conveyed if flexible work patterns and leave policies such as shared maternity leave became a statutory requirement "everybody would do it". It seems not only do we need the cooperation of male leaders, women and leadership structures but government intervention is also required in an effort to increase gender board diversity in Ireland as this will allow men act as role models in the uptake of flexible work patterns. This supports to change the argument that sharing maternity leave is out of 'the norm' in Ireland and would "never wash".

Findings also conveyed male leaders thought men would be "risking their jobs" if they took three months leave, which clearly suggests male leaders view women taking maternity leave as almost putting their careers in jeopardy. While it can be concluded that overall male leaders in this work thought shared maternity leave would be a good and flexible option that would impact positively on women's progression to senior roles, they failed to think this change would come about anytime in the near future claiming "Ireland was not ready for this yet". It can be concluded that organisational culture and how organisations do or do not support flexible work patterns and accommodating employees to promote a healthy work-life balance has an impact on the lack of female representation on boards in Ireland.

7.4 Gender balance in the boardroom – Overall conclusions

Overall this work concludes male leaders do see the benefits in a gender balanced board. Most think it allows for more diverse thinking and makes for better solutions, better teams and ultimately better boards. The researcher successfully gained an understanding into their perceptions as to *why* gender matters however the research did not gain specific perceptions on *how* to achieve better gender board diversity. From the findings in this multiple-case study it was found more male leaders were against gender quotas than for them. This does not compare with results from female directors in Ireland where it was found 43 per cent said targets rather than quotas were preferable and 25 per cent said that quotas were the wrong approach and roles should be given on merit and not gender (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013). While the researcher was aware quotas could simply be seen as another target male leaders need to hit, it was found that male leaders did not want female representation to merely become a case of “here is our quota gender token female” which was hugely encouraging.

The researcher sought to ascertain perceptions on *who* male leaders thought were responsible for implementing change to achieve better balance on boards. Findings conveyed male leaders for the large part felt the onus was on women to step up and gain positions in the boardroom which supports the literature on female directors in Ireland who also thought they themselves needed to take responsibility for the low level of women on boards in Ireland (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2013).

7.5 Final thoughts

According to this study male leaders think traditional Ireland and family planning are the reasons why women are not on boards in Ireland. These reasons need be addressed and while addressing traditional Ireland is beyond the scope of this paper, family planning can potentially be resolved through flexible work patterns and legislation being introduced in Ireland around leave policies for fathers; in particular the option of shared maternity leave. The need for such efforts is further

strengthened by the fact that overall male leaders admitted in this work if they took three months maternity leave they would be jeopardizing their careers. From this it can be concluded every effort needs to be made to give women the option to return to work as soon as they want to, to avoid missing out on opportunities in the workplace. From this work the researcher saw how shared maternity leave would take time to become “the norm” but according to male leaders would significantly strengthen women’s position in the workplace and men’s position in the home.

It can be concluded that male leaders do think women are capable leaders however the long-hour culture that comes with senior roles and the issue of presenteeism are effectively barriers in enabling women progress to senior positions. Again this suggests organisations in Ireland need to introduce flexible work-patterns to achieve a healthy work-life balance in all areas of their organisations.

Senior management and male senior leaders in particular need to be open to the implementation of change for gender balance in the boardroom to rise; organisation cultures in Ireland need to adopt a willingness to change and create environments where women are included and encouraged more and finally greater commitment and endorsement by leaders and government are needed to achieve a better balance in the boardroom.

Overall the researcher found the findings from this study support the current literature surrounding this topic, and can contribute to previous and current literature in this field. Overall the objectives of this study were met as the gap in literature was highlighted with regard to male leaders’ perceptions on the underrepresentation of women on boards and with regard to the scarce literature on male leaders specifically in Ireland. Finally this work highlights the need for more research to be conducted on the very positions of power that influence board composition and women’s leadership experiences.

7.6 Recommendations

Following on from this work the researcher recommends further research on the impacts new government legislation in Ireland on leave policies for fathers would have on women's careers in Ireland.

The researcher recommends further research on the positive impacts flexible work patterns can have on women in Ireland and indeed on organisations in Ireland.

The researcher recommends further research on the *population* of male leaders in Ireland regarding their perceptions on gender diversity as this would offer greater insight into this field and would further ensure male leaders become more aware of the topic.

If the researcher was to begin this work again and had less time constraints, a mixed method approach would be used. This would combine both quantitative and qualitative methods of research so the weaknesses in one method could balance the weaknesses in the other, making for an even stronger analysis of the underrepresentation of women on boards in Ireland.

Appendix 1: Interview Questions:

1. Gender board diversity – what are your thoughts or perceptions of this topic in Ireland today?
2. The fact that 89% of CEO managing director roles in Ireland are men in 2014 and 11% are women – why do you think that is? What are your thoughts on this as a male senior leader?
3. Do you think men or women should take responsibility for the lack of women at the top?
4. What do you think the main obstacles are that women face (if any) in being appointed to boards in Ireland?
5. What is your perception on leadership styles? Do they vary between men and women?
6. In your experience what does being a leader mean?
7. What is the percentage of women on the board in your company or do you know?
8. What level of priority is gender diversity given to the leadership structure you are part of? Has gender diversity improved in your company do you think in the last 5 years?
9. What do you consider to be the most important competencies to look for when appointing directors to boards or managers to senior management?
10. What is your view of gender quotas as a means of increasing the number of women on boards in Ireland?
11. What is the work-life balance combination like in senior management? Is there a culture of presenteeism or long-hours in senior management in your opinion?
12. Does your organisation proactively promote work-life balance? Should men act as role models in this regard by availing of more flexible work patterns?
13. Would initiatives like shared maternity leave for couples work in Ireland? Do you think men would be putting their careers in jeopardy?
14. What would achieve a better gender balance in the boardroom in your opinion?

15. What are your perceptions on the benefits of a mixed board? Why should women be on there? Why does gender balance matter?

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