

Professional women in higher education management – Practices, career strategies and approaches to leadership

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Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Finally, I would like to quote Audre Lorde who in her 'Sister Outsider' (1984:382) wrote: *"For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support"*. And I quote it in order to support the awareness, as a woman working in the field of HE management and research, that we can change values and practices in the sector. I believe that by learning how to take action collectively

and how to support each other appropriately in the workplace - with no fear of sharing our humanity, female values, and knowledge - we can make it happen sooner or later.

Abstract

The study aims to investigate the problem of the under-representation of women as leaders in Higher Education institutions in three European countries, England, Italy and Sweden. In doing so, it focusses on a group of women and their career experiences in becoming institutional leaders. Specifically, the women in this study are those with a professional career, having started off in an administrative or management role, in HE, in another sector, or in a profession. Their leadership roles include head of administration, academic registrar, and deputy or pro-vice-chancellor.

The decision to choose professional women as leaders resulted from gaps of knowledge in the literature but also from my experience as a woman and senior manager in the sector. Methodologically, the study uses Giddens' interrelated concepts of structure and agency to look at the factors influencing women's careers. In doing so, it focusses on how these women have used personal agency as a response to structural barriers encountered in their career, and also how they positioned themselves once they became leaders. Empirically, a total of fifteen interviews were conducted in the three countries with accounts thematically analysed.

The findings report four categories of practices that women opt for to succeed in career, these being identification, moral duty, super-confidence, and dedication to professional development in the field of practice. Further findings shed light on eight areas of influence where it is more likely to find key factors personally and professionally; these refer to the sector and its institutions, career routes, age and leadership, academic credibility, among others. The conclusions and the original contribution to the field show that women have gained a fair understanding of themselves as players within the sector, while they understand that men are still more likely to rule the most important choices affecting their careers as leaders.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	3
Abstract	4
Table of contents	5
List of tables	8
List of figures	8
The EdD as a reflective and intimate journey	9
Chapter 1 – Introduction and research questions	16
1.1 Introduction – The under-representation of women as leaders in HEM	16
1.2 Rationale for the study	17
1.3 Three systems of higher education	20
1.4 Leadership roles and women in a professional career	22
1.5 The under-representation of women as leaders	25
1.6 The research questions	26
1.7 Brief overview of thesis structure	27
Chapter 2 – Contextualising the study	30
2.1 Introduction	30
2.2 Defining the conceptual framework	31
2.3 Introducing the problem	34
2.3.1 Under-representation of women as leaders in cross-national contexts	35
2.3.2 Under-representation of women as leaders in higher education	38
2.4 The feminist standpoint	40
2.5 Using the concepts of structure and agency	44
2.6 On the concept of structure	49
2.6.1 Cross-national structures for women to share	50
2.7 The First Domain – The welfare state	52
2.8 The Second Domain – The higher education sector	53
2.9 The Third Domain – Single higher education institutions	56
2.10 The Fourth Domain – Leadership in higher education management	59
2.10.1 Conceptualising leadership in a male world or re-conceptualising leadership for women	61
2.11 Understanding the problem	63
2.12 On the concept of agency	69

2.12.1 Women's use of social capital for career purposes	71
2.12.2 Women's circles and peer support as leaders	72
2.12.3 Women's empowerment through mentorship and sponsorship – Agency through others	73
2.12.4 The attitude of women as the problem	74
2.12.5 Professional women as blended leaders	76
2.13 The implications of this literature review	78
2.14 Conclusion	80
Chapter 3 – Research design and operation of the study	81
3.1 Introduction	81
3.2 From the theoretical perspective to the choice of methods	81
3.3 Research method - Qualitative research and narrative interviews.....	84
3.3.1 Using narrative interviews in HE management research	84
3.3.2 Three European countries: form of welfare and system of higher education	85
3.3.3 Women in a leadership post - How to select participants	93
3.4 On limitations	94
3.5 Data collection	95
3.5.1 Why life history and semi-structured interviews	97
3.5.2 Recording and transcribing interviews	99
3.5.3 The interview guide	100
3.6 On ethics	102
3.6.1 Informed consent	104
3.6.2 Data management	105
3.7 Further ethical considerations: distinguishing between academic and professional literature	105
3.7.1 Issues arising from being an insider or a practitioner researcher	107
3.8 Data analysis	112
3.8.1 The sample of respondents: professional women as leaders in higher education management	114
3.9 Conclusion	120
Chapter Four – Presentation and analysis of the data	122
4.1 Introduction	122
4.2 Exploring codes: descriptive, interpretive and pattern codes	122
4.3 Pattern codes - Practices of women constructing their career as leaders	128

4.3.1 Primary and secondary practice of women as leaders	135
4.3.2 Identifying career strategies of women leaders	138
4.4 From practices to approaches to leadership	141
4.5 Conclusion	146
Chapter Five - Professional women as leaders in England, Italy and Sweden	148
5.1 Introduction	148
5.2 Factors most affecting the construction of women’s career in England, Italy, and Sweden	148
5.3 Looking at practices and approaches of women leaders in England, Italy, and Sweden – Locating ‘women’s place’ in leadership in HE	157
5.4 Conclusion	160
Chapter Six – Conclusion and recommendations	162
6.1 Introduction	162
6.2 Synthesis and discussion	162
6.2.1 Summarising women’s construction of career as leaders in HEM	164
6.2.2 Professional versus academic careers of women as leaders	171
6.2.3 Intertwining the academic and the professional domain – Blended women as leaders	175
6.3 Conclusions	176
6.4 Post-reflection on my feminist journey	178
6.5 Implications for the professional domain	180
6.6 Recommendations	181
6.7 Conclusion	183
References	184
Appendix 1 - Interview guide	209
Appendix 2 - Participant information and consent (ICF)	210
Appendix 3 - Initial codes	215
Appendix 4 - Codes matching themes	219
Appendix 5 - Short excerpts from interviews	223

List of tables

Table 1 - The career paths of senior positions in institutional leadership in the three European countries of this study	25
Table 2 - From research questions to methods	83
Table 3 - Women in leadership posts in several sectors and in HE	88
Table 4 - Mapping out the main characteristics of the higher education system in each of the three countries - HEM and leadership	92
Table 5 - List of respondents	117
Table 6 - First categorisation of initial codes	119
Table 7 - Primary and secondary practice of professional women as leaders	137
Table 8 - Practices and approaches of professional women in their construction of career as leaders in the light of context-specific features	158

List of figures

Figure 1 - The conceptual framework showing the two lenses of investigation And four sub-components	33
Figure 2 - An advanced representation of the conceptual framework	49
Figure 3 – First thematic network visualising women’s career in HE management	120
Figure 4 - Summarising research questions and key findings from this study	163
Figure 5 - Final thematic network describing women’s career as leaders in the sector	163

The EdD as a reflective and intimate journey

Introduction

And she [the woman] is nothing other than what man decides ... she is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her ... He is the Subject ... She is the Other (De Beauvoir, 2010:6)

In this quotation, the aim is to capture the essence of this thesis and its primary findings. Whilst the reflection that follows aims to connect this quotation with the overall journey that this 5-year doctorate has been in its key phases: from the outset in September 2011, when this journey began, to the moment when I became passionate about doing research into women's and leadership issues. In addition, this reflection passes all through the EdD journey, from research modules to the Institutional Focussed Study (IFS) and finally to the understanding of what it means being a practitioner researcher (Eraut, 1994; Smith, 2009; Costley and Lester, 2012). In doing so, this reflection aligns my personal and professional life with these EdD phases, including relocating to England and shedding light on my native culture (Poli, 2017a). Finally, this quotation aims to raise the awareness among women working in the field of HE management that only by acting collectively we can become source of support for each other and, not rhetorically, contribute to make the world a better place for all.

The first stage of the EdD: this type of doctorate and research methods – How to feel like a blended professional in the field of HE management

The first reason for doing a professional doctorate dates back to 2008 when I undertook the MBA in HE management (HEM) at the IOE. That was when a critical incident (Cunningham, 2008) occurred and made me aware of the world

surrounding the field of HEM. On reflection, critical incidents seem those memorable turning points that are likely to occur following a period of reflection in which we acknowledge that something has changed in our professional life (Cunningham, 2008). I have however tried to explain what HE management is for in Chapter Two of this thesis and what it can do for all those working in universities. Overall, all throughout this study I have located myself in the shifting terrain of HE research (Hancock et al., 2015) as one of the contributors along with other researchers and administrators to research on the subject (Harland, 2012).

However, doing a professional doctorate was not consciously in my plans at the time of doing the MBA in 2008 and it was September 2011 when this EdD journey began. For a long time I have reflected on the reasons behind the choice of doing this type of doctorate, aware that these reasons go from vocational improvement to wish to help my professional community (Leonard, 2001). In this latter point I have identified my primary reason, so associated with the wish to investigate my workplace and to pioneer the field of HE management myself (Eraut, 1994; Smith, 2009; Harland, 2012; Costley and Lester, 2012). Furthermore, backed by the wish to possibly bring my understanding of this field back to my University in Bologna one day in the future. This wish is also to confirm what my friend Catia is still used to repeating: 'you have always been a pioneer, this is your mode'. You are right, I can only be a pioneer in this life, even if it is more likely that others see me as a maverick doing things in unconventional ways (Whitchurch, 2008d). Because this is how blended professionals are described by Whitchurch within their institution by peers and academics. This is to show that the concept of being a blended professional was already with me when the doctorate began to lead my

interest in research. In fact, in an early stage, being blended was about understanding my professional identity and building my expertise in the field of HEM up.

However, there is perhaps one more blurred reason behind this choice, unconsciously inspired by the challenge to undertake doctoral research myself. That reason being the curiosity to explore cultures and tribes in use in academia (Becher and Trowler, 2001), and overall academic spaces so often regarded as overlapping my professional domain at work, as 'third spaces of collaboration' seem to do (Whitchurch, 2008a; Whitchurch and Law, 2010d). Thus, exploring the academic side of my profession in HEM became that reason, this including the search for reflexivity, for gaining more critical insight into every-day issues and finally for creating more 'effective real-world maps of situations' (Costley and Lester, 2012:259).

In addition, I felt keen to see if I could become a blended professional myself, well aware that the concept still calls for being clearly defined, so it is rather loose and captures a variety of professional profiles with no specification of any in particular. Next in my EdD, being blended became more about understanding how institutions in HE work, including the variety of individuals and identities moving within these institutions; and about understanding how the field of HE management is interwoven, including exploring how issues of power and micropolitics may affect people's career and identity (Morley, 1999, 2008). At a deeper stage, being blended became about exploring the great deal of cultures populating this field. It was about interaction and effective communication with a range of actors both within the institution and across different institutions (Poli, 2017a). Thus, the first part of the EdD put me to the test on issues of blended professionals in the two modules covering research methods, and it also led me

to present my research findings at academic and professional conferences (SRHE, EARMA, ARMA, among others). Finally, this meant to begin having my voice heard in the academic scene.

The second stage of the EdD: the IFS - How to use social capital and hear my voice through others

After the period of the doctorate when we attended several compulsory modules, in September 2012 the fieldwork for the IFS began. That period was when I experienced the unfamiliar terrains of academic work and when I got lost for a long while since not accustomed to reflexivity and intimate investigation (Schon, 1991). However, the struggles of those modules, coupled with discussions with Safa and other classmates in the EdD, brought me a revelation: module after module, I saw myself become more capable to hear my voice first, and then to speak out my thoughts as never before. This revelation was likely to result from the investigation in the IFS of the benefits that individuals gain in networking within professional associations; so about how social capital can benefit one's self-confidence and one's collective knowledge of individuals working together (Poli, IFS, 2013).

Thus, I came to associate this fear to make my voice heard to cultural features but also to the fact that I was a woman doing a doctorate in the male-dominated field of HE (Leonard, 2001). Thus, the second part of the EdD was the time when I relocated to England to commit myself to this EdD and then when my thesis began. And it was also when I realised how being a pioneer at home working in your native culture (with its micropolitics and 'rules of the game') is certainly different from being a pioneer surrounded by a new culture not just for

you but for all those who see you as reproducing peculiarities from each of the two cultures altogether.

The third stage of the EdD: the thesis - How to deal with issues of women in leadership

On reflection, a second critical incident occurred when I moved from the IFS to the thesis proposal. At that time I was not seeking inspiration for the thesis since engaged with pieces of research into blended professionals, their career paths and choices for recognition and professional development (Poli and Toom, 2013; Poli et al, 2014; Poli et al, 2017b forthcoming). However, and this was the essence of the critical incident, my interest in research came to light after reading Morley's report (2013a) on 'Women and higher education leadership: Absences and aspirations'. This report made me understand that I had been fortunate in my career, but it also made me look backward and see why certain situations might not have been as successful as expected, including how this may have turned my career into one direction and not enabled me to follow others. Consequently, this made me see that this might be caused by [me] being an 'incidental being' (De Beauvoir, 2010:5) or a woman in the male field of HE. Thus, the third part of the EdD was when I came to see myself as a woman who does research in the field of HE (Leonard, 2001) but also when I became able to have my say in the field. This included being aware that, as woman in the field, my say might be affected by where I find myself and by where I socially construct my gender identity (Butler, 1998, 2011a; Morley, 2013b).

The fourth stage of the EdD: the thesis – How practicing reflection in action and reflection-on-reflection in action

Thus, after gaining enough self-confidence myself but also knowledge of the field of HE and of my topics of interest in research, the part of my doctorate began when I understood the importance of doing research into the professional setting coupled with asking peers to do the same (Eraut, 1994; Scott et al, 2004; Smith, 2009), so to become a proactive research practitioner. This has led me to present a number of research findings at academic and professional conferences and also at the Institute of Education Doctoral conferences. Within these conferences, I have pointed to the importance of identifying problems found in the workplace; this was then expected to go coupled with doing research ourselves or in collaboration with researchers, so to become able to create multi-perspective forms of knowledge (Eraut, 1994; Gibbons et al., 1994). As a result, through this EdD I have gained the understanding that we need to use our reflective practice to make the workplace a better place for all; but also that the same workplace cannot be restructured with no prior research showing how to do it.

In conclusion, I am overall grateful to have been given the opportunity to do this doctorate. Undertaking this journey has meant to me the discovery of an intimate and reflective practice that was only waiting to come up from under the surface. Not to say how in this EdD I have repeatedly challenged my understanding of the sector as a professional as well as a practitioner researcher (Schon, 1991; Smith, 2009; Costley and Lester, 2012).

Consequently, the EdD has been an identity journey allowing me to better express myself but also to share my knowledge of the field of HEM. It has been what Shon (1991) calls 'reflection in action' (in relation to applying reflexivity and

critical insight into every-day issues) and 'reflection-on-reflection in action' (meaning here sharing these critical insights with peers in the same workplace or profession). But it would also be what Eraut suggests it should be done by any practitioner researcher in order to benefit from the bulk of knowledge arising from every-day practice (1994).

Finally, the doctoral journey has been a cultural journey, so that I have investigated why the choice to deal with my native country, and its HE sector in this thesis, was a tricky one. Italy is not just my native country but the place of my 'native' university where I not only graduated but where I have worked for several years, something so common in Italy but uncommon elsewhere. This is to say that my professional experience confirms how Italy is still regarded as the 'triumph of particularism' described by Burton Clark (1983) in his lucid insight into the HE system in Italy. This description brings to surface an array of particularisms, which seem to go beyond what we mean for 'culture' or why cultures differ.

Thus, the EdD journey seems to point to the importance of continuing to do research into issues in the field of HE, especially at times when we are going to restructure the workplace or the university. This because restructuring the university without relying on research investigating how to do it may only lead to an idea of a university (Newman, 1996) that is likely to run much faster than all our efforts to catch or fix it. This is where sound research, gender-aware, multi-perspective carried out by practitioner researchers can find a place in HE research (Eraut, 1994). And this is where professional women sitting between professional and academic domains and comfortably locating themselves as managers and practitioner researchers – or as the new higher education and research professionals – can make their voice heard.

Chapter One – Introduction and research questions

1.1 Introduction – The under-representation of women as leaders in higher education management

Despite the significant advances of women over the past 30 years, and despite the number of talented women available to fulfil leadership positions, there continue to be issues associated with gender under-representation in all sectors and organisations. These issues are not just about family responsibilities, gender typing or occupational segregation (which relates to women only holding lower status positions in organisations), or about women being paid less than men for doing the same kind of job. There are further issues describing the prevailing male dominant culture in the workplace, such as depicting women's attitudes as problematic, for instance their being low profile risk takers or poor in career planning.

Nowadays, therefore, in the overall workforce, a higher level of attention is on the extent of the under-representation of women as leaders in a majority of sectors and organisations. As a result, the investigation of factors that lie behind this under-representation has received substantial consideration, primarily in relation to the specific barriers preventing them from securing leadership posts. Research in the existing body of literature (O'Connor, 2014; Morley, 2013a, 2013b, 2014) suggests that these barriers are located in society, in the specific sector or organisation where these women operate, or are individually-driven and associated with, for instance, women's lack of self-confidence.

Consequently, the amount of literature which investigates these impeding factors has grown not only in relation to women holding a leadership post in different organisations, but also in relation to those who hold these posts in

Higher Education (HE) institutions. The latter is the focus of my research interest in this study.

However, the under-representation of women in leadership should not be surprising in HE *per se*, especially in light of the dominant organisational culture, which is still regarded as male-driven both in managerial and in academic domains (O'Connor, 2011; Morley, 2013a, 2013b; Leonard, 2000; Ali and Coate, 2012). This is associated with the sector that has been pictured as 'man-centred' (David and Woodward, 1998), the 'men's room' (Oakley, 2000), and also as 'one of the last bastions against the recognition of women's worth' (Stanley, 1997).

Women are, therefore, under-represented in the most senior roles in HE institutions, regardless of their being the majority of the employees in the whole sector. Figures collected from a range of European countries (She Figures, 2009, 2012, 2015; Morley, 2013a) confirm this tendency and also show how women are absent as leaders from boards and from a range of posts in institutional leadership, including the most senior roles as vice-chancellor, dean, or head of administration.

1.2 Rationale for the study

The under-representation of women in HE became the topic of my research in 2013 after reading the report published by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. This study by Morley (2013a) described absences and aspirations of women in HE leadership and used international studies to show the extent of under-representation by highlighting the increase in the number of women in middle and penultimate leadership positions. However, women in her study were those with academic contracts or in posts known as 'academic leadership'

such as vice-chancellor or dean. In its conclusion, the study called for further research to be done into the experiences of women who had been able to achieve leadership positions. Thus, in response to that call, I began my own doctoral research with the aim of investigating the career experiences and related strategies of a group of successful women based in three European countries, each with a managerial rather than an academic background, now holding a leadership role.

In addition to Morley's call, I have looked at the gaps found in the literature in which primarily academic women have been investigated in the field of HE management in relation to their career paths towards posts in leadership (O'Connor and Goransson, 2014; Read and Kehm, 2016; Ali and Coate, 2012). Furthermore, my rationale to focus on women in a professional career is to bring an insider perspective, which comes from my background as woman who, after spending a number of years in senior management, would like to add her own insight into the field. This expertise is based on an understanding of the field of practice and a grasp of its 'rules of the game' (Clegg & Stevenson, 2013); and this is why the essential part of being an insider researcher (or a practitioner-researcher) is probably the enrichment that comes from researching within one's own environment, as part of a conversation with others in the same field (Smith, 2009).

In addition, I suggest that these career paths of academic and professional staff in HE have progressively become less differentiated; this is going to be further explained in the section 1.4 of this chapter which describes the career routes of each group. This similarity of career routes may be the result of the rise in the blend of academic and professional credentials that staff working in the sector are nowadays more likely to have, as the blended profiles described by

Whitchurch (2008a; 2008b; 2009; 2013). Lastly, this rationale is aligned with my feminist stance in which careers of professional women are explored through my re-shaped awareness of the existing differences between men and women in the labour market, to be explained in detail in the section 2.4.

However, although Morley's report inspired this study, my aim is to deal with issues of under-representation experienced by women who started off in a professional career. This includes women who have become leaders after a career path in administration or in management, who have experience in HE, or who have come from another sector or even from a different profession. Among the leadership roles that are more likely for women in a professional career to hold are those such as head of administration and academic registrar, but also as deputy or pro vice-chancellor (as appropriate, given career routes to these roles vary in different countries). In addition, the choice to study women in professional employment arises from my prior career course in university management: indeed, I was in a middle leadership position when I enrolled in the doctorate in 2011. As a consequence, I relocated to England with the aim of moving my career laterally to fully commit myself to research. The choice then of investigating women's careers in three countries (not only in the native Italy and in the adoptive England) has been taken in order to widen the representativeness and the relevance of the study to more countries across Europe. In doing so, I have included a country where women are expected to have better work prospects and welfare provision. As a result, this purposive sample now consists of participants in England, Italy, and Sweden.

Hence, my overall aim is to shed light on the under-representation of women in leadership posts in the sector by investigating their career construction in three countries in the light of how they have used their personal agency within their

social and organisational domains. Concerning individual agency specifically, I am aware that this is likely to vary depending on the structures in which women find themselves. In relation to structural domains, I look at the social structure (the form of welfare supporting women with childcare provision) and the organisational structure (the HE sector and HEIs in it). I also examine the further domain of knowledge linked with the senior role held by these women, namely leadership in the field of HE management. Thus, the investigation is informed by accounts of women's career construction in each of the three countries, analysed in terms of structural domains and of individual agency.

My contribution to the professional domain is to have a significant rise in awareness resulting from a deeper understanding of the existing practices in HE management, since these may have an impact on women's careers once they aspire to become prospective leaders. Furthermore, the study might help inform institutional policies and bring in a social policy dimension. It could also inform the design of mentoring and leadership programmes targeted at women, while supporting women in middle and penultimate leadership positions to fulfil their aspirations to become the next-generation of leaders. One further aim is to show that career routes in higher education management vary in different countries. For instance, careers which started off in administration can turn into academic careers in some countries, with this intersecting career path more likely to happen in England. But even the other way round is nowadays more likely to happen in HE institutions throughout Europe with academic careers turned into managerial positions.

1.3 Three systems of higher education

This section briefly examines the distinctive features of the systems of HE in each of the three countries in order to show that these might be associated with characteristics of the sector, of its institutions, or even of both.

Specifically, the HE system in England distinguishes between pre and post-1992 institutions (also re-named old, new and also 'new, new' universities according to Temple, 2014) with the former group being universities that already existed before 1992 and the latter consisting of former polytechnics that had been transformed into universities following the Further and Higher Education Act. Within this system, the status accorded to professional staff in these two types of institutions varies, with those employed in pre-1992 institutions tending to derive their status from a public administration tradition, and those in a post-1992 institution from a local government tradition (Whitchurch, doctoral thesis 2004).

Regarding the Italian system, the sector, primarily state-funded, can be divided between 'mega-atenei' - with this definition including 11 universities with over 40,000 students, each having their students located in a number of regional campuses - and all the other universities. Within this context, the majority of professional staff hold the status of civil servant, but this does not include those in leadership posts (e.g. head of administration) or those that hold academic contracts.

Lastly, in the HE system in Sweden, the sector is overall considered to be 'women-friendly', with figures on gender balance in all types of organisation showing the highest rate internationally. Within this system, there are no major distinctions among institutions; in addition, professional staff are employed by the public sector as in the other two countries but they do not hold the status of civil servants.

1.4 Leadership roles and women in a professional career

In order to identify the key concepts used in this study, this section explores the range of institutional leadership posts in the sector, from vice-chancellor to dean, from head of department to pro-vice-chancellor, and also considers the role of head of administration. I make this clarification as several of these roles may appear unclear to an external reader and perhaps even blurred in today's context of HE, and the roles may also become more confusing when considered in different countries and systems of HE. This happens primarily because the boundaries between professional and academic staff in senior leadership roles have progressively become less clear-cut and so, for instance, the role as head of administration may be re-titled to become pro-vice-chancellor (administration) in some institutions (Whitchurch, 2006). This title demonstrates that those in professional services can hold what was formerly an academic title.

Further key concepts to be clarified refer to distinctions within this broad range of leadership roles with the main one referring to the distinction between academic-managers -- or academic-leaders¹ -- and senior managers with a professional background. More specifically, academic-management roles include Vice-Chancellor (VC), Rector, Pro and Deputy VC or Pro or Vice Rector, Dean and Head of Department; senior management roles include, for instance, head of administration, general director, academic registrar (and university secretary), director of administration, or president, depending on the country. However, when talking about leadership roles in HE management, we are more likely to be referring to the former group of academic-management roles, although we might also wish to refer to the latter group. This list of titles is

¹ Academic leadership is one more definition in use in HE to indicate those with an academic background holding the most senior roles. For further definitions and sources of these definitions, refer to Chapter Three.

however not exhaustive: further roles might be found in other European countries and even in different institutions within the same country.

After considering the range of roles set out above, the contextualisation of the role that these women hold becomes the core of this study. This is just as important as providing a clear definition of the specific group of women under investigation, namely those women in a professional career now holding the role of head of administration or equivalent, depending on the country in which they are. I do not intend to consider the career experiences of women with a prior and first-choice academic career, because it is acknowledged in the literature that there might be differences, for instance in career trajectories between individuals who started off in administration and those with an academic career (Locke and Whitchurch, 2016; Manfredi et al., 2014; Becher and Trowler, 2001; Bargh, 2000). Indeed, I have seen how most academics of both genders are likely to have had a “typical linear academic career which started with moving from a PhD to a postdoctoral position and then to their first academic job” (Manfredi et al., 2014:16). This view contrasts though with that previously highlighted by Becher and Trowler (2001) and confirmed by Locke *et al.* (2016) in a more recent investigation who have noted how the academic workforce has followed a range of routes into academia with only a minority pursuing a career in higher education following the traditional trajectory. Indeed, “in the case of the majority, career trajectories were less linear and many had worked outside the higher education sector” (Locke *et al.*, 2016:22). Thus, looking primarily at women in a professional career, the aim of this study is also to check the existence of a common career trajectory in HE management (HEM) mirroring those in academic and in professional careers.

Lastly, continuing with this clarification of the leadership roles in HEM, account has been taken of the rise in the number of individuals populating today's HE who have mixed portfolios of expertise or credentials, coming from academia or from professional settings - described as 'blended' by Whitchurch (2008a; 2008b; 2009; 2013). This has been done primarily to distinguish between women with a managerial or a professional or with an academic background holding institutional leadership roles so that only women in a professional career path are the group under investigation here. This further clarification is required because this blend of mixed profile-holders is widespread in some countries (e.g. the UK) but is much less common in others (e.g. Italy).

Thus, Table 1 gives an overview of the potential career paths of the most senior roles in each of the three countries. For instance, the range of roles and career paths is potentially wider in England, because the number of cross-boundary career paths is wider than in Italy and Sweden. I refer to this phenomenon as a 'intersecting career path', meaning that individuals from academic or professional careers may switch roles from professional to academic management roles, or the other way round.

	Professional or managerial career path – including those from other sectors -- can take the role of	Academic career path can take the role of
Italy	Head of Administration, General Director	Rector
England	Academic Registrar (and University Secretary) But also: Vice-Chancellor, Pro VC, Deputy VC	Vice-Chancellor, Pro VC, Deputy VC But also: Academic Registrar (and university secretary)

Examples include:	In the report 'Gender and higher education leadership: researching the careers of top management programme alumni' (2014) we read that "our sample included both a man and a woman with a previous career in professional services who are now respectively in a VC and PVC role" (Manfredi et al, 2014)	'The Michael Shattock's way', meaning here the period at Warwick University when he staffed the Registry with people with academic credentials equivalent to those of academic colleagues. For this reason, Shattock was seen as a pioneer with regard to this practice.
Sweden	Director of Administration, Head of Administration, University Director	Vice-Chancellor, President

Table 1 – The career paths of senior positions in institutional leadership in the three European countries of this study

1.5 The under-representation of women as leaders

As suggested earlier, so far a number of studies have sought the causes of women's under-representation in a variety of ways, with regards to the form of society and family-supportive policies, but also to issues affecting most of the sectors. More specifically, these causes have been sought within the family, looking at women who deliberately choose not to have children since they may be regarded as obstacles which prevent women from aspiring to ambitious careers (Ledwith and Manfredi, 2000). But also looking at their partners as not supportive enough to maintain women's career ambitions on the right track. Further causes have been sought within the HE sector, seen as a gendered organisation (O'Connor, 2014; Leonard, 2000). Others have focussed on women's lack of confidence, on internal barriers, such as the impostor

syndrome or fraud syndrome² (Clance and Imes, 1978) and also on collective ones, such as women's unfruitful use of social capital for career purposes, or women's poor ability to market themselves (Nanton and Alfred, 2009; Alfred, 2009; Wang, 2009; O'Connor, 2011, 2014; O'Connor and Goransson, 2014).

Other studies have focussed on a number of metaphors spanning from the 'glass ceiling' to the 'glass cliff', since these as well as stereotypes may become obstacles for women (Morley, 2013a; Eagly and Carli, 2008). Indeed, these metaphors help describe women's struggle to reaching the most senior posts in leadership, but also their suitability to these posts at times of turbulence and when highly problematic situations occur.

1.6 The research questions

Overall, I know that research questions are not straightforward to articulate at the beginning; and I am also aware that their formation in a set of specific questions would help in planning and guiding the research process (Light et al, 1990; Nygaard, 2008).

Thus, this study investigates the under-representation of women as leaders considering the career construction of a group of women in three countries and systems of higher education. In so doing, it includes the challenging factors that these women may have experienced but also what has enabled them to secure a post as institutional leaders. Therefore, this investigation was undertaken by addressing the following research questions:

² This syndrome describes high-achieving individuals who are unable to internalise their accomplishments and who suffer a persistent fear of being exposed as a "fraud". Indeed, these individuals believe to be frauds and consequently that they do not deserve the success they have achieved, this despite showing evidence of their competence. The term "impostor syndrome" first appeared in an article written by Pauline R. Clance and Suzanne A. Imes: this article focussed on high-achieving women to highlight how these tended to believe they were not intelligent, and that they were over-evaluated by others (Clance and Imes, 1978).

1. What are the challenging factors experienced by women in a professional career in becoming leaders in three systems of HE in Europe?
2. How do these women overcome these factors and develop their career strategies?
3. And, once become leaders, how do these women position themselves as leaders in the HE sector?

1.7 Brief overview of thesis structure

The structure of this study consists of six chapters, including this introductory chapter.

In Chapter Two, I provide a contextualisation of the study in relation to the problem of women's under-representation as leaders in the sector. This has been done by drawing together references to the literature on structure and agency, the former relating to where women find themselves at the time of constructing their career to become leaders, and the latter to their motivation taken to action. My post-structuralist feminist stance is defended in that chapter.

The structural domains considered in this study are the welfare state -- which includes different forms of family arrangements, for instance, who is the breadwinner in the family, and also varied levels of provision of childcare support -- and the higher education sector with its institutions in each of the three countries. I also consider the field of HE management -- meaning "the knowledge and skills associated with academic administration" (Whitchurch, 2006:163). Within this field, I specifically consider the concept of leadership, which is nowadays acknowledged by several qualifications, such as those offered by the Leadership Foundations for HE in the UK. This leadership

domain in the field of HE management has therefore to be regarded as the additional structural property associated with knowledge of the field and with the senior role that the women in this study hold.

I then examine the nature and the degree of personal agency, and how this has enabled these women to navigate their role, even by reproducing or transforming their given structures. Examples of this agency refer to the women's usage of social capital and to circles of peers, to mentors and sponsors, but also to the women's attitude and how this may be regarded as a problem in the HE sector.

The third chapter focusses on the design of the research: the research methodology adopted for this study is further contextualised and is followed by an explanation of the method in use. The chapter also provides a description of phases of data collection and analysis, with information concerning the qualitative design of enquiry based on life history interviews. After considering the limitations arising from the study, I tackle ethical requirements, which include issues of confidentiality and data management, but also I address reflections on my position as an insider or as a practitioner researcher. Separately, I discuss the distinction between the academic and the practitioner perspective within the body of literature, since this helps to make my contribution to the field clearer. This distinction also helps explain why the academic perspective alone cannot be sufficient to explain the dynamics of a professional sphere, especially when these dynamics may currently be found in between the academic and the professional domain(s). Lastly, I give an account of the data analysis which subsumes a thematic coding method and explained how this analysis was carried out.

The final three chapters present the results of interviews and the analysis of the data collated; next, through the definition of this group of women's attitudes or (reproduced) practices, a typology of approaches to leadership resulting from these women's use of agency is provided. Specifically, the fifth chapter provides the findings of this research explained in relation to each of the three countries. Chapter Six is structured around a synthesis of the whole analysis and includes a discussion on eight spheres where it is more likely to find key factors personally and professionally. A set of reflections on women gaining a fair understanding of themselves as players within the sector as well as of other women more or less cooperative follows.

Finally, women assert their style of leadership shown to be more inclusive of other women and to strengthen the insight into HE management. Later on, the chapter sheds light on the implications for my professional domain and provides practical recommendations aimed at supporting those women who still wish to aspire to senior leadership posts in HE institutions in Europe.

Final recommendations suggest that we can only be losers when we play on our own without aiming for sharing a collective sense of direction.

Chapter Two – Contextualising the study

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide the broad academic context of this study in order to gain an understanding of how professional women have coped with the challenging factors encountered in their career and have succeeded in becoming institutional leaders in the HE sector.

Conceptually, this understanding is sought by using a two-fold lens of investigation based on the concepts of structure and agency (Giddens, 1979, 1984, 1991; Archer, 2000). These concepts permit an exploration of women's career construction considering the structural domains in which this group of women find themselves, and also encourage thought on their personal agency. Therefore, I examine the structures in which women operate, since these might have been enabling or impeding factors during their career path. In addition, I consider the level of personal agency that these women have adopted during their careers in order to reach a senior post.

Specifically, the structural domains considered are living/working spaces and conditions, so what may provide this group of women with, for instance, different levels of childcare and flexibility in the workplace. More specifically, these structural domains are informed by the welfare state in each country, associated with the HE sector and with the home institutions in which these women are based. Additionally, the domain most closely associated with the group of women in this study is that of leadership in the field of HE management.

In relation to this latter domain, this not only refers to the knowledge of the field of HE management but also to the additional knowledge of leadership in the field, namely a mixture of contents which include leadership communication,

motivation of self and others, team culture, empowerment, but also understanding of leadership styles and of distributive leadership, among others. Such information can be found currently in courses providing a range of qualifications, such as those targeted at men and women in HE leadership (the Top Management Programme - TMP) or those for women-only, such as Aurora and Leadership Matters, with all these programmes run by the Leadership Foundations for HE within a UK context. This is therefore the rationale for including this domain as an additional structural property associated with the senior role held by the group of women under investigation in this study in the three countries.

2.2 Defining the conceptual framework

In this section, the structure of the whole chapter is explained in summary and, thus, a first representation of the conceptual framework is developed.

The chapter begins by providing an insight into societal issues that may have impacted on the course of women's careers that are more culture specific. These issues are associated with the form of welfare state in each country, which includes family-friendly policies, the division of labour between men and women, and the implications arising from holding a specific role in the family. The aim is to understand how these social structures have impacted on the construction of women's careers, through a number of factors including the gender order (i.e. how many areas of collective life, such as jobs or tasks, are gendered) and the division of labour, but also in consideration of intergenerational dynamics and how women from different generations can choose to prioritise their career and family arrangements.

Later in the chapter, I offer an investigation into context specific organisational structures, which consist of the HE sector and its institutions, that are regarded as the working spaces where these women have developed their career as leaders. The aim is to discover how the sector is regarded in each of the three countries (as part of the public sector), and consequently to consider the status granted to women working in the sector (whether that of civil servant or employee of the institution). In doing so, I examine how the HE sector within each country has been described in research.

Furthermore, I provide an overview of the core elements of the HE sector to show why this is regarded as a male dominant territory, primarily in consideration of its culture and practice. Among these core elements, the following are considered: the pressure of exhausting working hours; the shortage of institutional flexibility (resulting, for instance, in scheduling late meetings); and also, the lack of female role models both in academic disciplines and in the most senior management positions. In addition, I analyse the practices that contribute towards constructing gender inequality in the workplace, including a range of forms of protectionism that men use for career purposes, such as homosociality, co-option of peers, and so-called 'old-boy' networks.

The chapter continues to consider the further domain of leadership in HE management. In doing so, the chapter clarifies what the HE management field includes, and how the focus on leadership is specifically associated with the roles held by women in this study.

Lastly, as the final component of the conceptual framework, women's actions, behaviours or practices (using the latter from Giddens' terms) are included. Concerning the definition of agency, I investigate the reason underlying the

absence of peer support (Morley, 1999, 2013b; Harrison, 2013; Maddock, 1999; O'Connor, 2011, 2014; Fitzgerald, 2013) or how women use social capital (Nanton and Alfred, 2009; Kumra and Vinnicombe, 2010; Alfred, 2009), since these are recurrent topics found in previous studies exploring the under-representation of women in leadership posts. In addition, the chapter explores how women use their circles of peers - if they do so and the extent and the ways in which they do so – for career progression, how they benefit from mentors or even from sponsors, and how women’s attitudes may come to be regarded as problematic in the sector.

After this overview of the two main concepts underpinning this study, Figure 1 provides a first representation of the conceptual framework in use, which is to be intended as the lens of investigation to engage with the under-representation of professional women as leaders.

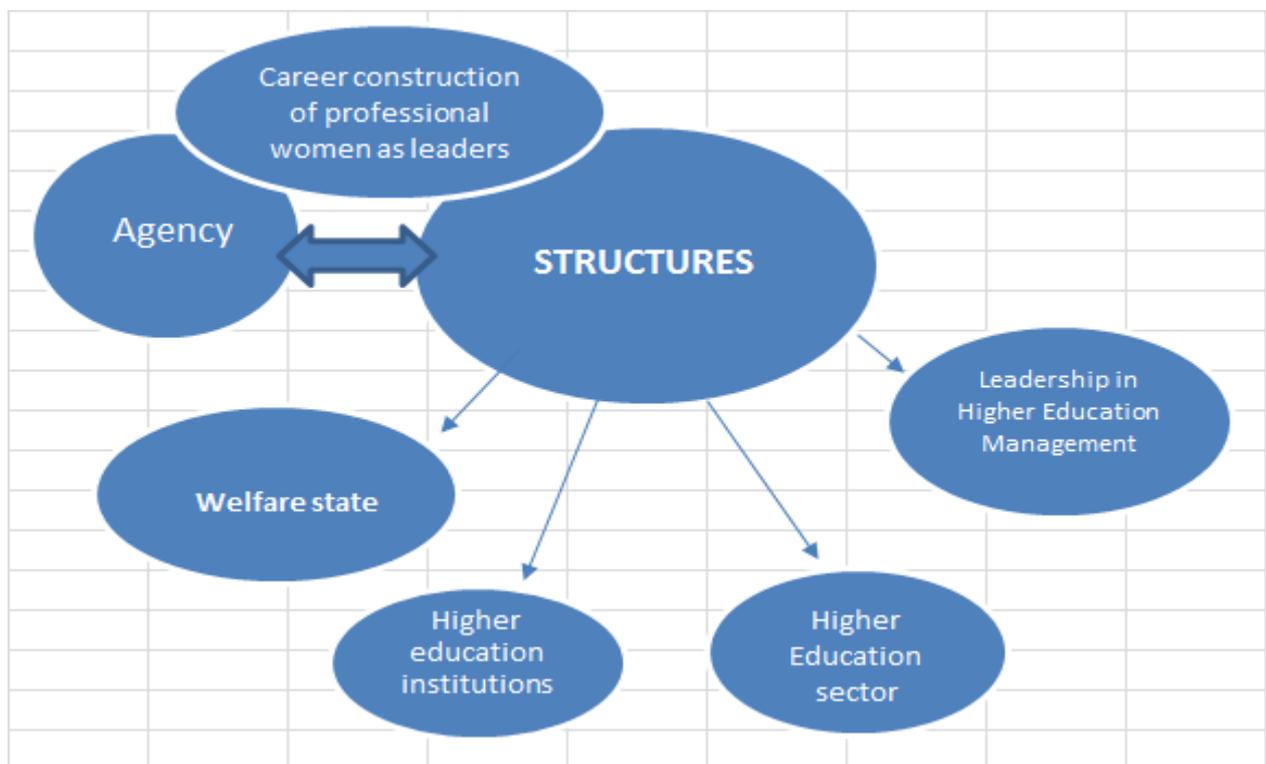


Figure 1 – The conceptual framework showing the two lenses of investigation (structures and agency) and four sub-components

The following will introduce the problem by providing an overall view of women under-representation as leaders in cross-national contexts, first, and in the HE sector, next.

2.3 Introducing the problem

In the following two sub-sections of the chapter, I consider a number of studies showing examples of the under-representation of women in leadership in a range of organisations, both in Europe and internationally.

But before looking at these studies, the aim is to make clear how these were selected, so my inclusion criteria and search terms (Hart, 1998; Robson, 2002; Denscombe, 2010). Overall, I used search engines and specifically Google Scholar. In addition, I followed what Mackay (2007) defines qualitative searching, 'as searching strategies that take into account the complexity of the literature by searching in-depth a fewer number of sources and identifying implicit ideas' (Mackay, 2007:237). This qualitative searching began with considering advantages and disadvantages arising from qualitative and quantitative searching approaches, for instance being slow and labour intensive the qualitative searching strategies; and, on the contrary, being quick and covering a wider range of books and journals the quantitative strategies.

Thus, in using quantitative searching strategies, I focussed on the under-representation of women, this including the description of the most common barriers to career advancement found by women: several sectors were generally considered, from the educational sector to the HE sector. This searching was primarily carried out to answer the first research question. Whilst, in using qualitative searching strategies, I followed some implicit ideas found in the earlier stage of quantitative searching and this included 'spending the time

systematically going through hard copy books and journals, taking them off the shelves one by one and reading' (Mackay, 2007:236). In doing so, I focussed on women as leaders in all sectors, before narrowing down to investigating women in the HE sector, both academic-managers and senior managers. Lastly, I looked at women's attitude in HE, since this may be regarded as problematic, and at the blended profiles that women in the sector may have. This searching was intended to answer the further two research questions.

After explaining my choice of searching strategies, I continue with examples of the under-representation of women in leadership in a range of organisations; more specifically, in the first sub-section these show how under-representation may come as the result of common barriers that women encounter in the workplace (Ruijs and Leather, 1993; Ozga, 1993; Ouston, 1993; Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Shakeshaft, 2006; Eagly and Carli, 2008; Lumby and Azaola, 2014; Cook and Glass, 2014; Gupton and Slick, 1996). Then, in the second sub-section, cases of women's under-representation in senior management roles in the higher education sector will be explored.

2.3.1 Under-representation of women as leaders in cross-national contexts

To shed light on how women experience leadership, several studies have demonstrated the variety of perspectives that we may adopt when dealing with women's experiences of leadership. The first study is by Lumby and Azaola (2014), whose research involved 54 interviews with female head teachers in two provinces of South Africa. The project explored the construction and development of a mothering style of leadership and how this is then mirrored in their subjects' daily practice as head teachers. One of the most interesting findings was the combination of women claiming their identities as women and

mothers, and therefore mothering was regarded in this study as a vital attribute of women's leadership style.

Another earlier study, looking at the obstacles that women face in leadership positions, was carried out by Eagly and Carli (2008). This research highlights, for example, the significance of stereotypes which hold potential women leaders back, since they affect not only perceptions of others but perceptions of women themselves and thus act as barriers. This point was stressed by Morley in relation to the power that metaphors can play in acting as internal barriers for women (2013a). However, the study above (Eagly and Carli, 2008) seems to fail to show opportunities that women might leverage to become leaders and, wherever provided, such examples are individualistic rather than collective: women are merely encouraged to network with other women to share advice, yet there remains no suggestion of any collective action. Furthermore, in this instance only men are considered as mentors in women's careers.

Another study examining women in leadership posts and considering a number of factors underlying under-representation within the context of educational institutions was conducted by Cubillo and Brown (2003). The perspective they chose was cross-national and the aim was to identify commonalities and differences in a range of cultures and societies. An insightful angle of their study was their focus on the influence of familial history on women's career progression, including the influence of family networks whenever they existed. A further study undertaken by Shakeshaft (2006) documented several reasons underlying this under-representation: specifically, her study confirmed that "access of positions of power transcend national borders ... theories that explain women's lack of progress of the managerial ladder have been surprisingly similar across countries and cultures" (Shakeshaft, 2006:500).

Among the main obstacles were: the devaluation of women; a lack of support systems (which include the female way of networking more with other women than with men); a lack of peer support in the workplace, particularly from the men; family responsibilities, and a lack of interest in the job.

Looking at this latter study, therefore, it seems to suggest that the context is hardly significant in the accounts of women in leadership and that the barriers that these women face are cross-national. However, the cases above specifically refer to the educational sector, but other cases in the private sector equally show the extent of this under-representation and seek its causes. This is for instance demonstrated in the major study conducted by McKinsey in their 2013 'Women Matter' report, which examines a sample made up of more than 1,400 managers from a wide range of companies worldwide. The report underlined how the corporate culture played a key role in gender diversity in the top roles of any corporations, with not only individual but also corporate benefits to be expected wherever gender equality has been promoted. The report then reveals that mentors can provide women with advice, but that they need sponsors to reach the top roles: for this reason, sponsors were pictured as career enablers under a variety of lenses (e.g. they can recommend women for promotion or enable women to enter the most appropriate networks) (McKinsey, 2013).

After contextualising cases of under-representation in the private sector, we see how several reports published by the European Commission have investigated women's under-representation as board members and as heads of higher-education institutions in the twenty-seven member states (She Figures, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015). Among their conclusions, the reports recognised how the under-representation of women in these posts seemed to reflect 'their difficulty

to influence the design and implementation of the research agenda' (She Figures, 2012). This seems to show how women are more likely to act individually rather than collectively, and even how they might tend to refuse any form of collaboration when placed in the same working environment with other women. There are similarities in this study to the research carried out by Eagly and Carli (2008) described earlier.

In conclusion, after investigating individual and institutional-level impeding factors (Hall, 1996; Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Cook and Glass, 2014; Gupton and Slick, 1996), the studies above provide evidence that several of the impeding factors that keep women far from the most senior roles are likely to be shared across sectors. In addition, these factors are likely to transcend national borders and to be similar across cultures, even dissimilar ones.

2.3.2 Under-representation of women as leaders in higher education

After looking at women's under-representation in different countries and sectors, and making the point that context is barely significant for women and leadership, this section specifically focusses on the under-representation of women as leaders in the HE sector.

First, however, this section aims to provide clarification, as suggested by Evans (2002), by considering definitions of these most senior roles as found in the literature in addition to those anticipated in Chapter One. Thus, a first definition, which distinguishes between academic-managers and senior management, draws from Deem who terms academics holding senior management posts 'manager-academics' to distinguish them from senior administrators (Deem et al., 2007). Other authors term the two groups differently, for instance Whitchurch refers to academic managers in relation to vice-chancellors and

deans (2008b). O'Connor refers to senior management as those at dean level and above who are currently in the post or who had been in the post in public universities in the past five years (O'Connor and Goransson, 2014) or alternatively those "at the top three levels, i.e. at presidential, vice-presidential, dean or executive director level" (O'Connor, 2014:4). In addition, Rhoades (2010) refers to 'non-academic professionals' in relation to senior management posts held by individuals coming from a professional career path. Other definitions include institutional leadership or leadership roles in HE management and these tend to be viewed in relation to manager-academic roles. However, I am aware that most of the studies above have investigated issues in relation to both the roles together, with no specification, or in relation to academic-managers more than to senior management roles.

However, after making an attempt to clarify the terminology in use in this study with regards to the categorisation of senior roles, this section begins with locating 'women's place' in the HE sector and with considering that this is likely to be defined by men. This is not surprising as such, given the male domination in HE over history. This place is likely to be a subordinate one in the sector (Leathwood and Read, 2009; O'Connor, 2011; Morley, 1999; Alvesson and Billing, 1997; Deem, 2003) and there are implicit suggestions about the range of roles that women are expected to hold. Consequently, this section situates this 'women's place' in the sector in the traditional roles of teacher or in clerical roles, or also in certain particular fields of practice and disciplines. In addition, when holding senior management posts in HE, women are more likely to hold these senior posts in low-reputation institutions (O'Connor, 2014; Morley, 2014). In addition, women are more likely to take on tasks that men turn down in order to focus on higher status or even on more clearly career-linked jobs or tasks

(Deem, 2003). However, when talking about 'women's places' I am aware that feminist theories do not see these definitions as right even if these are common terms in use. Having said that, I use these terms in this study provokingly and however this search for definition becomes the reason for introducing my feminist standpoint in the section that follows.

2.4 The feminist standpoint

Having focussed on the problem under investigation as found in cross-national contexts, in this section I explain the journey undertaken during the time of this EdD to gain an understanding of my feminist perspective, not only to be applied to this study but to go beyond it. In addition, this section of the chapter focusses on definitions of intersectionality, since these can apply to this study; but also on the interplay between feminist methodology and what we intend when we talk about feminist research, all in light of my choice to position myself in a particular feminist stance.

Concerning, therefore, the feminist perspective in this instance, this has moved from liberal feminism when I began the EdD journey to post-structuralism when I looked at my data and began to draw the conclusions of this study. Thus, I moved from an idealistic stance that was focussed, amongst other things, on men and women having equal opportunities to a more conscious understanding that men and women seldom have the same range of opportunities in the labour market particularly in the HE sector.

More specifically, a view of gender as socially constructed is the expression of post-structuralist theory. This theory is also concerned with how masculinity and femininity is constructed, including effects of this construction on gender/power

relations. Consequently, gender is not fixed but something that is performed (Butler, 2011a).

On reflection, when the EdD journey began, I did not see myself as a person interested in women's and gender studies. These women's issues were far from my interest in research and personally not thought to be 'real life' problems. Personally, I had not perceived myself as penalised in life or in career because of my belonging to the category of the 'Other' (De Beauvoir, 2010). However, after reading Morley's report and gaining a fair understanding of these women's issues through Oakley (1972), De Beauvoir (1972, 2010), Butler (1988, 2004, 2011b), I have reconsidered my career path and have seen that dynamics might have been different if I had not been an 'incomplete man' or an 'incidental being' (De Beauvoir, 2010:5). Consequently, this revelation has been one more reason for me to bring the EdD journey and this thesis to its completion.

Thus although I was aware that liberal feminism is an approach that investigates the lack of access to the full range of opportunities and that sheds light on forms of imbalance met by women in the labour market, I purposively choose to adhere to a post-structuralist view of women's issues. Thus, I choose to see gender as something that is performed and not to be taken for granted in relation to individuals' sexes. However, I am also aware that the performance we are talking about is seldom free for any individuals, not only for women; and also that this performance is probably affected or even restrained not only by the social structures under investigation but also by issues interwoven with gender behaviours (Butler, 2011a).

Therefore, having clarified the journey undertaken to gain the understanding of my feminist stance, I make the point that, differently from men who are not in need of "positioning themselves as individuals of a certain sex" (De Beauvoir,

2010:5), women may feel this need, as I do now. In fact, “man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without man” and for this reason “she is nothing other than what man decides” (De Beauvoir, 2010:6), namely the ‘Other’ earlier mentioned. This is, therefore, one more reason to investigate women’s career in the HE sector since these are the careers that should be investigated and better understood. Therefore, even if it is probably true as De Beauvoir wrote in 1972 that “this world still belongs to men; men have no doubt about this, and women barely doubt it” (De Beauvoir, 2010:10), in this study I choose to give space to these women’s voices and raise awareness of what we should learn to do by acting collectively.

Regarding issues of intersectionality, this refers to the way in which gender interacts with other forms of inequality, generating new and diverse forms of inequality. This concept of intersectionality further suggests that women’s issues cannot be generalised into single categories, for instance when we talk about ‘women’s places’ in HE or in any other setting. The concept also sheds light on the spectrum of inequalities that can be structural and political; the point to be made here is that when we promote gender equality we may discriminate against somebody else, such as minority women, or migrants, or even elderly persons, among others. I am however aware that a number of factors (as features of one’s identity) such as race, social class, ethnicity, nationality, religion, age, among others, regularly interplay and in doing so they are likely to create a renewed subjectivity that is different from the sum of its components. It is important to recognise the concept of intersectionality in this study, where women come from different countries, cultures, social classes, and backgrounds. And I do so to gain an understanding of a greater number of

female identities and their career construction that may come to be differently enriched because of this variety.

Concerning then what should be regarded as feminist methodology, the first consideration is that there is no consensus on defining it (Marshall and Young, 2006; Oakley, 1981; Ramazanoglu, 1989; De Vault, 1999; Leonard, 2001), since there is not one feminist theory but several. Therefore, we begin with the consideration that since a methodology combines a particular ontology with a particular epistemology, then the two conjunctively make the framework through which valid knowledge of the social reality under investigation can be produced. Here the aim is to demonstrate my awareness of the different ontological beliefs that feminist researchers have about the nature of reality and the objects of research while recognising also that feminists can draw on different epistemologies in their research. However, since there is neither one ontological or one epistemological position regarded as distinctively feminist but many, nor a specifically feminist methodology distinguished by female researchers studying women (or a preferable research technique), feminist methods should be regarded as the broad category which includes any approach that uses feminist insights into women's lives (Nielsen, 1990; Reinharz and Davidman, 1992; Leonard, 2001; Marshall and Young, 2006; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Morley, 1999).

Because of the point made above, concerning a feminist insight and thereby what feminist research entails, research is regarded as feminist when the core of research primarily refers to the position of women in society, but also when research is based on a theoretical framework that puts women's voices and their lived experiences first. Feminist and post-structuralist research, therefore, sees "gender as the categorical centre of inquiry" (Hesse-Biber, 2014:3), which

is confirmed by Stanley and Wise's earliest definitions of what we mean by feminist social research as "on, by and for women" (2002:17).

This claim shows that once the topic of investigation focusses on the lives of women, then the most appropriate methods for collecting and analysing data are assumed to be influenced by feminist methods and theories. The authors also claim that what is essential to carry out this kind of research is the possession of a 'feminist consciousness'; this is regarded as expressed by "the concrete, practical and everyday experiences of being, and being treated as a woman" (Stanley and Wise, 2002:17). For this reason, I consider that how this research is undertaken, by women looking at other women's lives and for the sake of other women, as was explained earlier in Chapter One, could contribute to my professional domain.

A final point to make is the choice of using the first person, 'I', not only in this section of the chapter but overall in the chapters that follow: this is done as the expression of my 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1988), which reveals the awareness of any search of knowledge undertaken in this study as subjective.

After explaining my feminist lens to look at women's career construction in the HE sector, in the section that follows the theoretical framework associated with the concept of structures and agency is developed. More specifically, four structural domains in which women find themselves are identified. These domains are then regarded as the places where a set of constraints for women aspiring to leadership posts are expected to be encountered and overcome in their career and lifetime.

2.5 Using the concepts of structure and agency

After introducing the problem and making clear my feminist standpoint, in this section of the chapter I introduce and then discuss the theories of structure and agency (Giddens, 1979, 1984, 1991; Archer, 2000) as the two main, interrelated components of the conceptual model for this study. Despite being aware that the concept of agency may be differently used for women and for men, in this study I choose to use it in general terms.

One reason for considering Giddens' theory is that he first related structure and agency. Therefore, by looking at structure and agency conjunctly, the research questions of this study can be investigated collectively – for instance by focusing on the form of the welfare state in each country and then of the HE sector where these women live and operate as a group and individually, to show the contribution of personal agency to the construction of their career as leaders.

A further reason for using these two concepts of structure and agency results from Giddens being regarded as the first author to introduce a theory of action in social sciences and the first to show “an active constitution of structure by practice” (Connell, 1987:94). Hence, in relation to the definition of practice, this means that “structure is over time emergent from practice and is constituted by it ... Neither is conceivable without the other” (Connell, 1987:94). In addition, we know that this concept of practice can be found in both the work of Bourdieu as well as Giddens, with practice meaning the response to a situation and transformation of that situation in a specific direction (Giddens, 1979; Connell, 1987; Swartz, 2012). However, both Giddens and Bourdieu focussing on the interconnections between structure and practice, for Bourdieu structure and practice are tied together as a result of unintended consequences of the strategies that social actors pursue (Connell, 1987; Giddens, 1979; Swartz,

2012). In contrast, Giddens' view, where 'practical consciousness' is a core element underlying individuals' actions, referred to the "tacit stock of knowledge which actors draw upon in the constitution of social actions" (ibid, 1979:5). This is, therefore, the body of knowledge that social actors share about the conditions of reproduction of the society. And this is also why these actors are expected to have some degree of understanding of the social systems, for instance how these systems are created or work. Thus, when we talk about 'practical consciousness' in Giddens' terms we refer to the determinant of the distinction between intended and unintended consequences considering how this has been explained by the one or by the other author.

Consequently, since women in this study are those who do not just aspire to a senior role but have also taken action and then moved this action in a desired direction, Giddens' theory is appropriate to underpin the research questions. In addition, these are women who may wish to go further and so transform some of their structures through their practice, for instance by tackling issues of gender inequality in the workplace and by taking action to make this happen. Therefore, coupled with the concept of practical consciousness, we see how integral to Giddens' theory are the further concepts of intended actions, behaviours, and practice taken by social actors.

After having explained why I use the two concepts of structure and agency for this study, I engage with the definition of the duality of structure, which means a combined entity which works as a mixture of rules and resources, or of constraints and enabling qualities, in Giddens' terms. This set of rules and resources is involved in the construction of institutional articulation but also in the reproduction of any social system (Giddens, 1984). This is also the reason why structures are regarded as constituted of enabling and constraining

elements, since they consist of rules, which constrain actors within these social structures, but also of resources, which enable their actions and allow them to reproduce or transform these structures. Both rules and resources are deeply engrained in the structure and so they represent its main components in terms of impediments or of opportunities. Thus, this theory enables the researcher to look at these structures as generators of constraints – primarily in relation to the barriers that women under investigation have encountered in the construction of their career, but also as generators of opportunities for career progression, depending on women’s degree of individual agency.

However, we know that these structures have their distinctive features, depending on the context-specific situations under scrutiny, and they will be explained in detail in the section that follows. More specifically, these entities consisting of rules and resources are the structural domains of the welfare state, the HE sector, and of its institutions. There is also the additional domain of leadership in the field of HE management to complement the understanding of the context-specific structure under investigation. Therefore, on the one hand, they are the living and working places of these women, with their aggregate of constraints and enabling qualities. On the other hand, there is the knowledge associated with leadership practice and so with what leaders in the field -- academic-managers and senior managers -- are expected to master. Further description of the field of HE management follows in Chapter Three.

After dealing with the concept of the duality of structure, the notion of agency is introduced and it is shown how it refers “not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place (which is why agency always contains a certain degree of power)” (Giddens, 1984:9). As we can understand, the concept of agency as it stands in Giddens’ view

implies power to do things, which is what women in this study are expected to express in relation to their senior role. This level of agency comes to be expressed through the earlier mentioned concepts of actions, practices or even of behaviours.

Furthermore, arising from the definition of agency set above, the conceptualisation of the role in these social structures becomes a key element (Giddens, 1986), since “roles can only be analysed in relation to rules and resources” (Giddens, 1979:115). According to this view, we cannot take role-prescriptions as given or consensual, since “role-prescriptions may incorporate contradictions ... that express broad structural features of society” (Giddens, 1979:115). In this study, the concept of role is central, since it represents the element that all these women have in common and the reason to select this sample of women and not include others. However, moving from roles to practices, we see that are these (reproduced) practices that constitute our social systems. This is therefore to assert that “it is practices, not roles, which (via the duality of structure) have to be regarded as the ‘points of articulation’ between actors and structures” (Giddens, 1979:117).

This is the reason why, following Giddens’ view, an understanding of role prescriptions can only be derived from consideration of context-specific rules and resources, and also through (repeated) practices, with the latter to be considered the points of articulation between structures and agents in social systems.

Thus, after discussing the interrelated concepts of structure and agency, and how these interplay with the duality of structure and with roles and practices, Figure 2 further develops the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1.

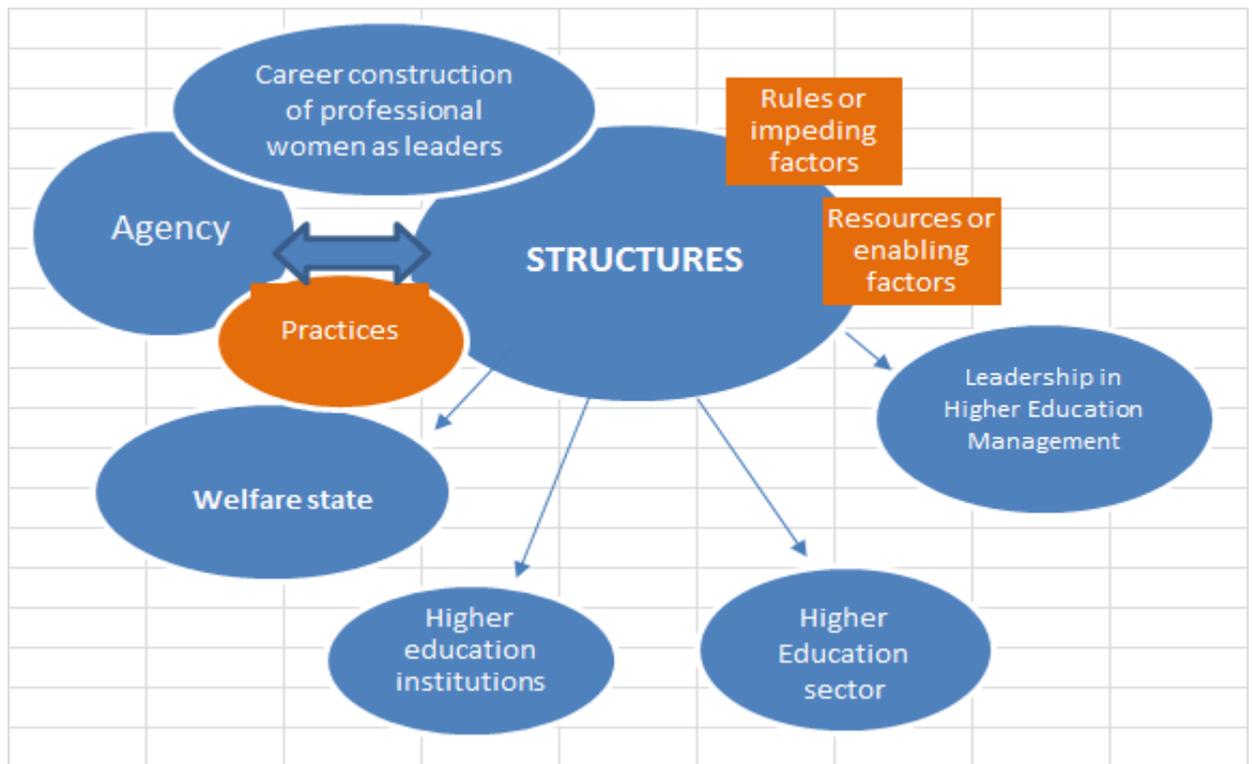


Figure 2 – An advanced representation of the conceptual framework

In conclusion, after explaining the reasons underlying the choice of the components of this conceptual framework, the concept of structure is considered in the section that follows.

2.6 On the concept of structure

The first part of this section explores the societal features that are more likely to transcend national borders prior to focussing on the first level of the conceptual framework in this study, which explores the form of welfare in each country. The second part aims to uncover the features characterising each of the three HE sectors, by focussing first on the widely accepted non-gender-neutral nature of the sector, and then on its gendered organisations and ‘rules of the game’ (Morley, 1999, 2013a, 2013b; Brooks, 2001; Deem et al, 2008; O’Connor, 2011;

Leonard, 2001; Ali and Coate, 2013). The further domain of leadership in HE management follows.

2.6.1 Cross-national structures for women to share

Here the societal features that transcend national borders and that are less country-specific are considered. Thus, several studies have shown how there are a number of issues that occur or that can be found across all the countries. Among others, there is the lack of role models in certain jobs and in leadership posts, or forms of gender labelling in jobs and in tasks (Alvesson and Billing, 1997; Billing, 2011; O'Connor and Goransson, 2014; O'Connor, 2014). These latter features refer to jobs and tasks not gender neutral in their description but culturally regarded as feminine and for this reason primarily targeted at women, such as secretary or clerical jobs (Billing, 2011). Furthermore, also present are cultural stereotypes and metaphors, since these may have a negative influence on women's careers, for instance by weakening their degree of confidence, or by eroding their aspirations towards the attainment of these most senior posts (Morley, 2013a; O'Connor and Goransson, 2014; O'Connor, 2014).

In addition to cross-cultural features several metaphors found in the body of literature help explain these common cross-national structures because they indicate the extent of women's struggle to compete with men equally and reach the most senior positions in any organisation. These metaphors include the concept of the 'glass ceiling' (Hymowitz and Schellhardt, 1986), which is one of the most common barrier faced by women who aspire to attain senior positions. This barrier is frequently regarded as real from a lower perspective but invisible from the top, and this is a view from the perspective of men who cannot

understand why women cannot get to the top.³ In addition, the metaphor of the 'jungle gym' describes creative ups and downs in women's careers and also takes into account the horizontal steps of their career (Sandberg, 2013). In Morley's view, all these metaphors, which label women's incapability to get to senior positions, reinforce gendered stereotypes and therefore act as impediments for women (ibid, 2013a). Again, in Morley's view the definition of the 'glass ceiling' is primarily targeted at 'devaluing' women, and is not intended to refer to men. For this reason, this metaphor has gender connotations, differently from others, such as 'climb the ladder' but also 'the board room', which fit both male and female candidates without conveying a gendered message (Morley, 2013a). Eagly and Carli (2008) have replaced the metaphor of the glass ceiling with the idea of the labyrinth, which should represent the complexity of the journey that women more often undertake in their career: this stands for several challenges, but also for the variety of goals for which is worth striving. According to a different perspective, there is not one glass ceiling but a leaky pipeline that prevents women from reaching the top roles and that decreases the number of women at every transitional point (McKinsey & C., 2013; House of Commons - Science and Technology Committee, 2014). One more metaphor, recently come into use, is that of the 'glass cliff' (Peterson, 2015; Cook and Glass, 2014), which describes when women in senior academic positions are recruited to handle situations of turbulence and so take precarious and highly problematic leadership roles. Lastly, by contrast, there is also a 'glass escalator' that acts as a facilitator for male academics and

³ The term, which first appeared in the Wall Street Journal report on corporate women by Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986), primarily refers to ethnic minorities, but it can be used to describe men who experience barriers to advancement, or it can also include the set of difficulties met by expatriate women.

managers and enables them move up faster (Blackmore, 2002). However, overall these metaphors should only be considered as perspectives describing features of the journey that women may have to undertake in their career. Some women can easily identify themselves and their careers with these metaphors, whilst others cannot find themselves in any of them.

However, after considering the cross-national structures that women are more likely to share, the sections that follow explore the structural domains where these women find themselves and operate, namely the form of welfare available and the HE sector.

2.7 The First Domain – The welfare state

After considering common structures that women are more likely to share in cross-national contexts, in this section four context-specific structures are explored in detail. The reason underlying the choice of these four structural domains for this study is that are in my view those more likely to be associated with women's aspiration and construction of career as leaders. In fact, looking at the welfare state, this helps shed light on different forms of family arrangements, so to show, for instance, who is the breadwinner but also varied levels of provision of childcare support in the family. This domain is therefore expected to gain the understanding of how women have positioned themselves in the labour market in different countries and also how they have been supported all throughout their career by families and partners.

More specifically regarding welfare, firstly, it is suggested that the role of the state is still to be regarded as critical in relation to providing women and family-friendly forms of support. This is, for instance, shown in a cross-national study carried out in Turkey, Portugal, New Zealand, Sweden, the UK, Ireland, and

South Africa, investigating organisational cultures and the 'problems' of women in senior management (O'Connor, 2011). Thus, after considering the existence of patriarchal or of more women-friendly structures in these countries, this study focuses on the different levels of supportive measures to promote gender equality. Among these, it looks at efforts to establish gender agendas nationally and makes the point that these efforts might eventually lose intensity and decrease their effectiveness in terms of impact on society, as seems to have occurred in Sweden (Government Offices of Sweden, 2013). It is, on the contrary, suggested that these policies should be re-confirmed periodically, made more effective, and even re-designed to be tailor-made to women's current needs and their family aspirations (O'Connor, 2011; Government Offices of Sweden, 2013; O'Connor and Goransson, 2014; Deem, 2003).

Secondly, the three countries have different forms of welfare state, in particular three different models of gender division of labour between men and women within the family. Specifically, these models cover both traditional arrangements and roles within the family (the male breadwinner and the female carer in Italy) and less traditional ones (e.g. the dual earner/female part-time career in the UK and the dual earner/state career model in Sweden (Crompton, 1999). In another model that has further categorised forms of arrangements within the family, named Schunter-Kleemanns (Alvesson and Billing, 1997), Italy is placed among the strong male breadwinner countries, while Sweden belongs to the weak bread winner model and England lies in the modified cluster. These forms of welfare will be dealt with further in Chapter Three.

2.8 The Second Domain – The higher education sector

With regards to the sector, this has been described as a feudal system (Clark, 1983; Saunders, 2006; O'Connor, 2014), divided by tensions and by several inner layers in the hierarchy and communities, but also stratified by social classes, ethnicity and gender. In addition, the power relationship between the Rector/Vice-Chancellor or President and the senior management group has been referred to as academic feudalism (Saunders, 2006) and, in consideration of the importance of these personal relations, the HE system has been depicted as a medieval court (O'Connor, 2014). Women working in it are often confined to academic posts in certain disciplines – for instance in the social sciences and humanities - or are confined to universities positioned at the lower end of the league tables (Leathwood and Read, 2009). However, even if some authors have made attempts to disseminate 'the myth of the gender neutrality' of the academy (Leathwood and Read, 2009), it is acknowledged that women in the sector not only perform within certain fields but overall they earn salaries lower than those of their male counterparts (Brooks, 1997; David and Woodward, 1998; Becher and Trowler, 2001; Leathwood and Read, 2009). This therefore demonstrates how issues associated with gender gaps in salary, gender typing and with occupational segregation, are internationally widespread in the sector. Regarding its organisational culture, it is currently accepted that there is a gendered nature characterising the HE sector globally (Heward, 1996; Alvesson and Billing, 1997; Morley, 1999, 2013a, 2013b; Brooks, 2001; Currie and Thiele, 2001; Leathwood and Read, 2009; Deem et al, 2008; O'Connor, 2011; Billing, 2011; O'Connor, 2014; Leonard, 2000, 2001; Coate and Howson, 2016). This nature is overall confirmed by several factors that seem to play against women's commitment, for instance the lack of flexibility in work patterns, or at

meetings where the rule imposing a fair level of 'anytime-anywhere commitment' is frequently applied (Morley, 2013a, 2013b).

Arising from the characteristics described above, and coupled with the fact that HE institutions have been pictured as men's specific organisations (Morley, 1999, 2013a, 2013b; Hearn, 2001; Brooks, 2001; Blackmore & Sachs, 2001, 2012; Currie and Thiele, 2001), the sector has been termed the 'men's room' in Oakley's work (2000) or also a 'gentleman's club' by O'Connor (2014). Concerning the investigation of further practices in the sector, these refer to men's relationships with other men and to how these are seen as a key factor in perpetuating a culture supporting men in universities. Among these relationships, men's homosociality or homophily are key (Holgersson, 2013; Grummel et al., 2009; Coate and Howson, 2016), since these terms describe men's preference to recruit other men and so are seen as key factors in perpetuating a pro-male culture (O'Connor, 2011; Billing, 2011). Homosociality is then reported to be a key factor in O'Connor's cross-national studies (2011) when respondents from the UK, Australia, Sweden, New Zealand, Ireland, and South Africa confirm how men still prefer to work with other men.

However, there are even further pro-male practices widespread in the sector, and these depict, for instance, practices of co-optation, which tend to preserve the organisational *status quo* and so determine that a man would fit the context better than female candidates (Grummel et al, 2009; Holgersson, 2013; Billing, 2011). It is indeed acknowledged that within these contexts women are more likely to be perceived as risky candidates, and also that they are as not reliable enough for the most senior posts regarded as 'posts of confidence' (Brooks, 2001; Ibarra et al, 2010; Holgersson, 2013; Morley, 2013a; O'Connor, 2014).

This latter point therefore raises the issue of 'local logics' and 'safe candidates' (Grummel et al., 2009), and shows how recruiters and assessors may tend to select those perceived to be the safer candidates and how this is done according to familiar qualities, which can be associated with who fits the context better and is not seen as 'risky' or as provocative within that given context. Consequently, this definition of 'safe candidates' can be associated with the woman in HE management showing characteristics of the 'queen bee', with this approach referring to those women alternatively labelled "company women" or "safe women". These women were those more likely to reference their achievements at top posts as based solely on their own merits, therefore seeing nothing to prevent other women from doing the same (Warner and Palfreyman, 2001). However, these labels also demonstrate how men may tend to choose women that conform to men's rules or that act as men do towards other women (O'Connor, 2011).

In conclusion, I am aware that these issues describing 'posts of confidence' may be relatively contextual, particularly nowadays when recognising the rise in the number of women holding top roles in politics or in international bodies. Nevertheless, when looking at this rise from a different point of view, the situation may seem to recall the metaphor of the 'glass cliff' so to highlight how women might be recruited to handle situations of extreme turbulence.

2.9 The Third Domain – Single higher education institutions

In addition to an overview of the HE sector, this section explores what is likely to characterise single HE institutions. Whitchurch has already described both the sector and the institutional domain in one of her studies and pointed out how the latter "brings together the academic and organisational agendas that shape the

cultures and missions of individual institutions” (2006:164). Therefore, these two domains consider, on the one hand, the teaching and research functions and, on the other hand, the operating structures and systems that support the fulfilment of these primary activities. However, Whitchurch has also made the point that this institutional domain is most likely to show the location where individuals position themselves, for instance by dividing those operating in the centre from those in the periphery of the same institution. This third domain therefore demonstrates how “the opportunity to exercise personal agency and the adoption of cross-boundary roles would appear to depend on the institution in which an individual is located and on their position within its structure, as well as on personal aspirations and abilities” (Whitchurch, 2006:165).

However, several of the impeding factors characterising these institutions for women to cope with have been described by Morley when she refers to HE institutions as ‘greedy organisations’, one of the factors preventing women from securing the most senior posts. Morley’s description refers to the common practice within these HE institutions of an ‘anytime and anywhere commitment’, the pressure of working extra hours or of setting late times for meetings (Morley, 2013a, 2013b).

Overall, in addition to the earlier described pro-male practices of homosociality and of co-option regarded as widespread and even common in the sector, there is a further practice pervading single HEIs, this being male clubs or even networks regarded as common components in HE institutions. Among these, definitions of ‘old boy network’ or ‘boys’ club’ are well-known in the HE sector: these refer to the network operating on debts of loyalty like a cabal (King, 1997; Maddock, 1999) whose members share a public school education, and who empower more other members. Although the old boy network may appear to be

an in-country concept (e.g. in the UK), traces of this network have been found in other places, for instance in Nordic countries. Further 'boys' clubs' are described, by O'Connor (2011) and also by Fitzgerald (2014), who refer to the variety of formal, informal or personal networks that are linked to male privilege. It is explained that, by acting as a form of gatekeeping, these clubs both control and exclude members or distribute resources, information, and opportunities (Fitzgerald, 2014).

Belonging to these boys' clubs, if only women were allowed to join, and also if they wish to do so, would mean understanding, first, and learning, then, how to conform to masculine norms and, in so doing, how to advantage themselves. It would mean, for instance, recognising how to use silence or when to raise their hand to speak, but it would also mean being able to cope with situations of enforced marginality at meetings (Fitzgerald, 2014). This understanding of how male networks work is not meant to confirm that women do not have their own networks or that they should not set up or even join them. However, we know that women's networks are acknowledged to be less powerful than men's ones, a point to be elaborated in the following section 2.12.

Again, regarding networks, we should note that these clubs can take different shapes and so they can be male-dominated or also be based on family of other forms of relationships in some countries, such as in Italy (Rocca, 2006; Perotti, 2008). In addition, they can be male networks able to play a non-neutral role and so to support men in the peer-review process, which is how the 'friendship bonus' works among reviewers in Sweden, as described by Wold and Wenneras (1997).

In conclusion, I began this section with an introduction to the HE sector, before moving to gain an insight into its single institutions and focus on several of the

specific barriers to diversity in the workforce, for instance on male networks. These barriers characterising HE institutions are likely to vary in the three countries being associated with family networks in Italy, or to draw upon the 'friendship bonus' in Sweden, and they are more likely to be associated with the 'old boy network' in England. To conclude, the social groups seen above can be regarded as institutional barriers for women, since they tend to differentiate amongst individuals not only in relation to gender, but also in conjunction with family links, or with one's social status, or even with dominant groups of friends from school to university populating the academic setting.

2.10 The Fourth Domain – Leadership in higher education management

This section begins by considering Evans' (2002) suggestion to clarify key concepts in regard to the field of HE management prior to undertaking any further investigation.

Therefore, regarding Higher Education management this is a rather complex field to define. This because it involves a number of contributors, not only academics but also manager-scholars; and it also encompasses a number of functions and issues that fall into the managerial domain. Whitchurch simply describes it as 'the knowledge and skill base associated with academic administration' (2006:163), meaning the generalist and the more specialised expertise associated with these roles.

However, looking at contributors, on the one hand, Temple (2014) points out that we need the contribution made by pragmatic individuals working in the field, this for instance referring to the managers enrolled in the MBA in HEM at the IOE. This is to say that we are in need of relying on those doing things on the ground in order to do investigation into the field. This is also to affirm that we do

not only need authors dealing with the theory in the field, since these authors may not have been in any managerial position in their lifetime (Temple, 2014), so that they cannot catch the essence of managerial life. As a result of this involvement of manager-practitioners, including those enrolled in professional doctorates in HEM, Warner and Palfreyman explain how the study of HEM can be of significant value to managers and administrators as well as to academic managers because they are involved in running their home institutions, or want to understand how the sector functions.

On the other hand, among main issues in the field, we may begin with listing the comprehensive picture of what HEM is about, and with providing definitions of what the administration and management are (Lockwood and Davies, 1985; Warner and Palfreyman, 1996; Barnett, 2000; Whitchurch, 2004, 2006, 2013). We can look at staff populating the field, by distinguishing between academics and administrators or even by going beyond this straightforward definition and so engaging with those that hold 'blended' profiles or identities (Whitchurch, 2004, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c). Specifically on functions within the field, definitions found in the literature primarily distinguish between handling academic or service departments (Warner and Palfreyman, 1996; Shattock, 2003). Further definitions focus on strategy and organisational structures, governance, or on financial resources, human resources or estates, branding and marketing, and on methods to carry out research into the field (Watson, 2000, 2009, 2014; Shattock, 2003; Temple, 2014; Tight, 2003, 2012; Scott, 2000).

Finally, looking at HEM as a more or less contextualised field of investigation, Temple highlights how 'for the present at least, [the field] has to be studied mainly in its various national manifestations' (2014:XV). This is going to be

confirmed by Middlehurst (1997, 2008) in the section that follows specifically in relation to issues of leadership in the sector.

2.10.1 Conceptualising leadership in a male world or re-conceptualizing leadership for women

After the overview of the field of HE management, overall the concept of leadership is considered. In this section I discuss the importance of context for leadership in the sector and I also provide an overview of the different styles of leadership that women can adopt.

Firstly, primary consideration is given to the field of leadership practice and what leadership in HE management is. This consists of a mixture of entities which include leadership communications, coaching, motivation of self and others, team culture, empowerment, but also leadership styles and distributive leadership, among others. These contents can nowadays be promoted by a large number of qualifications, such as those targeted at men and women in HE leadership, for example the Top Management Programme (TMP). But they can also be women-only programmes, such as Aurora and Leadership Matters, all run by the Leadership Foundations for HE in the UK context. All these programmes are intended to be targeted at individuals in institutional leadership in HE, with no further distinction between academic-managers and senior managers.

In addition, I have considered the importance of context for leadership in HE: this has been acknowledged by Middlehurst for instance (2008). In her study, after highlighting the importance of leadership learning, the author stresses how leadership research 'is clearly associated with its context' (2008:324). This is regarded as true even though "much of the literature, particularly in HE, does

not specifically address or problematise these different aspects of ‘context’” (Middlehurst, 2008:325). It is also acknowledged that leadership in HE is deeply influenced by the wider social and political context (Bolden, Petrov and Gosling, 2008). Thus, the points above all confirm the need to consider the issue of context when dealing with leadership theory and its practice, supporting the choice of having the domain of leadership in HE management considered in this study.

Furthermore, in relation to leadership and its understanding as a male or a female domain, we see that the prevailing leadership model in literature is masculine (Blackmore, 1996, 1999; Grummel et al., 2009), although Morley’s contribution (2013a) seems to contrast with this idea of male leadership. In the views of other authors, for instance King, women bring in a different style of leadership and management (1997). King’s stance was however criticised by Adair in his book ‘Great Leaders’ (King 1997) in which no special characteristics of women leaders were found; similarly, other authors have criticised this view of leadership as a gender neutral perspective (Drake and Owen, 1998). Otherwise, a different view (Lupi *et al*, 2005) shapes two different styles of leadership for men and women: men’s style was called the agentic style, whereas women’s was denoted the *communal*, therefore primarily varying in relation to men’s or women’s broad characteristics, for instance women being more focussed on details than men (Maddock, 1999). However, a further study carried out by Singleton (1993) rejects leadership as masculine and describes the concept of the androgynous leader, able to select the characteristics for her senior role from both the genders that are appropriate for the situation. In relation to this latter typology, we often hear about women who should simply learn the rules in men’s territory (King, 1997; Morley, 2013b); and we see that

this, in line with Singleton's androgynous leader's theory, might even represent a female way to combine strengths from all gender sides and to reach a senior role. However, contrary to the notion that women should simply learn men's rules, it is also acknowledged that more often women want 'to achieve in their own right and through their ability' (Bagilhole and Goode, 2001:169), so that they demonstrate reliance upon their high-quality work and proven commitment to obtain recognition and reward. The latter attitude may not be accepted in a man's world and become one of the problematic ones described later in this chapter.

After focussing on why leadership practice, then regarded as a male or female domain, should be contextualised in the sector, in the section that follows this study considers how the literature has dealt with the under-representation of women in HE leadership.

2.11 Understanding the problem

The following studies exemplify research on the under-representation of women in academic-management leadership. Fitzgerald investigates the everyday experiences of women leaders in universities in Australia and New Zealand and showed how their leadership styles are, among other issues, the result of the perceptions arising from their female colleagues. This study confirms Eagly and Carli's findings (2008) on how gender stereotypes may affect women behaviours and actions but also others' perceptions of women as leaders. Fitzgerald identifies common struggles that women meet in these workplaces, which include among others establishing boundaries around family life and work, but also securing promotion and overall recognition, and balancing career expectations and choices (Fitzgerald, 2014).

Further, Manfredi et al. (ibid, 2014) explores the trajectories of careers of men and women in senior leadership positions in the UK -- both academic-managers and senior managers -- and identified common patterns in career advancement in relation to gender, age, cultural background and ethnicity. A summary of key findings reports that women are more likely than men to consider training and development as key in their career. Furthermore, female respondents “talked of a gendered view of leaders among colleagues and selection panels” (2014:12). In addition to gender-related bias reported by nearly half of the female sample, women felt they had experienced cultural and class bias, for instance regarding their country of origin or their social background. Lastly, respondents without an academic background felt they had been penalised in their career.

Furthermore, Ledwith and Manfredi (2000) explore the experiences of senior women throughout Europe and then compare them to those of women placed in a newly-established university in the UK. Findings from this study point out how there are intergenerational differences, and therefore different choices among the behaviours of the most experienced and the youngest women. Specifically, on the one hand, these young women are more likely to put their career first with no pressure to anticipate any family burden that will follow even at a later stage in their career. On the other hand, women from an older generation tend to be more oriented to have made the opposite choice, putting family as a first choice.

Among further studies investigating the extent of women’s under-representation in leadership positions in HE institutions, Morley’s report (2013a) shows how, regardless of the high proportion of women working in the sector, only a minority of vice-chancellors or of professors are women in England (17% and 20.50%, respectively). However, the under-representation of women in senior

management teams was firstly raised by Morley as one of the main issues to tackle. Indeed, in another study she examined equality policies in UK HE institutions by conducting interviews with thirty-seven senior managers – these being academic-managers and senior administrators, including VCs. Among its findings, the study stressed how the problem of gender inequality in HE management was close to a solution, but reasons for concern were identified in female representation in senior management teams. In addition, this study pointed out how the reasons underlying this under-representation were difficult to tackle since based on hidden and not obvious social and cultural practices (Morley, 1999). But also on institutional micro-politics (Morley, 1999; 2008), which women cannot easily identify as career influencers and that however may be the most resistant to change. This study, therefore, seems to confirm what was discussed in relation to the domain of HE and hence the fact that there may be hidden cultures and practices all-pervading the sector, playing in favour of the preservation of men's rules and only enabling a few selected women to access the most senior roles, depending on circumstances, more or less favourable, affecting the sector.

Furthermore, Morley (2013a) seeks an understanding of the under-representation of women by using a framework consisting of four lenses of investigation; however, the leadership posts she considered are more related to academic management. Thus, her first lens considers the gendered division of labour and describes family arrangements (to look after children but also the elderly) as women's primary care responsibility, which may have consequences in the workplace on their presumed capability to take on senior posts. However, this lens does not explain why even women with no family responsibilities are absent as leaders in HE management. Secondly, the influence of gender bias

and misrecognition: this lens considers the choice of recruiting safer candidates as well as several forms of prejudice that might play against women who aspire to senior posts (prejudice here in the form of devaluation both of women's potential and performance). Although this lens was discussed earlier in relation to the domain of the HE sector and to women who may be perceived to be 'risky' candidates, in Morley's view this is also associated with women who may be underestimated both for their potential and their achievements at different stages of their career (Morley, 2013a, 2013b). This may lead women to devalue themselves and to perpetrate mechanisms of poor marketing; but it may also lead to women losing opportunities, taking less risks or even dropping their aspirations to higher positions. Thirdly, the link between management and masculinity: this lens highlights that both management and leadership are masculine domains and that women who aspire to be leaders have already challenged the gender stereotype which describes leaders as men. Lastly, the burden to women arising from HE institutions as 'greedy' organisations: this lens points out how today's HEIs are stressful working places, particularly in the most senior posts, and this often does not fit women's family responsibilities, even when considering women from different generations (Morley, 2013a, 2013b).

In contrast, Deem (2000) studies both women and men in leadership posts to see how they fit communities of practice in the HE sector, and how they leverage the gendered community in order to gain a higher role. In fact, in her study on career dynamics in these leadership roles in the UK, Deem explains how gender relations and processes may divide academic-managers and senior managers, specifically in relation to women or men holding these roles. Here, the relations and processes based on gender can divide in terms of practices,

attitudes and values (Deem, 2000). In her study, Deem analyses the relations between men and women through a number of focus groups and her findings show gender as a distinctive feature in the management of universities. More specifically, she discovers that only a small minority viewed gender as irrelevant at any stage of their career, whilst the larger group of interviewees regarded gender as one of the factors capable of making a difference in career dynamics. Overall, findings from her study suggest that communities of practice in universities are more likely to be communities of gender; even though she suggests that women's experiences in HE management should be further explored. However, in relation to these communities of gender in HE management, when considering a range of cross-national contexts, the importance of the 'gender factor' is likely to be denied by individuals in countries such as Turkey and Portugal, where gender balance is simply aspirational. In contrast, it is fully acknowledged as a key factor in countries such as Sweden (O'Connor, 2011), which are famously women friendly.

Lastly, Burkinshaw (2015) sheds light on how female vice-chancellors relate to communities of masculinities in the UK, and even how they interact with men in peer-posts, before discovering the way in which men are more likely to reproduce these communities of practice in the HE sector. More specifically in this study on mechanisms of career construction through communities of practice in HE management, Burkinshaw explores the under-representation of twenty women Vice-Chancellors in the UK and provides a set of data through in-depth interviews. For her research, she adopts Paechter's communities of practice as the conceptual framework for the understanding of the emphasis on masculinities in HE academic leadership circles, since these communities are the sites in which the formation of localised masculinities begin. These

communities of practice of masculinities and femininities help explain why women more often tend to copy masculine behaviour, since these are regarded as the vehicle enabling them to reach the most senior roles. However, these ambitious women may access these senior posts but they can also garner hostility within their home institution, and this may emanate from men as well as from other women (Eggins, 1997; Shakeshaft, 2006; Morley, 2013a).

However, by acknowledging that these communities of gender exist, as affirmed by Deem, we see how, on the one hand, men tend to reproduce their communities while, on the other hand, women tend to replicate men's behaviours' as the vehicle to secure the most senior posts. This, as Burkinshaw pointed out, seems to call for challenging dominant cultural practices as well as gendered conceptualisations of the leader as a male or a female attribute (ibid, 2015). This latter stance is reported in a recent study by Read and Kehm (2016) who look at British and German female Vice Chancellors investigating characteristics of ideal leaders. Among the conclusions, their study points to the importance of providing leadership development programmes to prepare women for these positions, but also notes the mentoring and support received within informal peer networks. In addition, the importance of looking like a leader was frequently raised among British VCs, but not among German ones, highlighting that "physical 'smartness' presumably is valued in order to demonstrate the mental 'smartness' of being in control of one's self as well of others" (Read and Kehm, 2016:823).

In conclusion, this section of the chapter discussed a range of cases that shed light on the impeding factors preventing women from securing leadership roles in HE. Specifically, it highlighted: the importance of training and development more likely to be key in career for women; gendered views of leaders;

intergenerational career choices; hidden cultures and practices pervading the sector; and Morley's four lenses explaining the under-representation of women as leaders. In addition, this section examined: gender as seldom irrelevant at any stage of women's career; communities of practices in HE management which are likely to be communities of gender, and how women tend to replicate male behaviours in order to secure posts in institutional leadership. Lastly, this section highlighted the importance of others' perceptions to show how these are more likely to be the result of the perceptions of other women in the same workplace (Fitzgerald, 2014) or of men assessing women as leaders and peers in the workplace (Deem, 2000; Shakeshaft, 2006).

2.12 On the concept of agency

The second level of the conceptual framework in this study engages with the concept of agency, and therefore with the second inseparable component of the constitution of social practice. As mentioned previously, Giddens' theory consists of these two components, so that the agency-component in this study is seen as expressing the level of motivation and the personal contribution of these women within their given structures. However, the section also deals with their practices and how these may influence the existing structures in which they operate (through reproduction or transformation), for example by demonstrating support for other women's career aspirations.

Hence, we know how individual action is to some extent shaped by social factors that are beyond our control. Indeed, in Giddens' view, individuals express their agency through actions and repeated practices and thus they can act or react in relation to the social forces in which they find themselves in a variety of ways. Consequently, some of these individuals are likely to negotiate

their own path or to accommodate themselves, whilst others are more likely to resist all of them altogether. There are, however, ways that fall in between these two choices, thus intermediate forms of negotiation of individuals within these structures are mediated by their use of personal agency.

Furthermore, since structure and agency form a duality that cannot conceive the one without the other, they can be described as indissolubly tied together and consequently they can only be analysed conjunctly. Within this duality, agents are bounded in social structures and are expected to know 'their rules', so that their actions are expected to be informed by the knowledge they have of these rules whenever they act (Giddens, 1984). Thus, the earlier mentioned level of consciousness, known as 'practical consciousness', is coupled with the concept of 'dialectic control', which is built into the very nature of agency, since all actors are expected to know a great deal about the circumstances of their actions and to use this volume of knowledge within their organisations, even in a minimal fashion, to forge social structures.

In the following paragraphs, we see examples of women's agency in order to show how these are likely to be found when they intentionally use social capital for career purposes; but also how these examples can be found in social networks where women engage with other women or even in circles of peers, where members are keen to share their good practices along the lines of communities of practice. Further cases can be seen when women learn through mentors or have men as sponsors. Lastly, examples can be found in women's attitude as players in the sector and further examples can highlight how these women have expressed their blended profile in order to be entitled to posts in institutional leadership.

2.12.1 Women's use of social capital for career purposes

In relation to the benefits of social capital, the literature acknowledges that both men and women are likely to engage in networking for personal gain, so that social capital appears to be an investment in social relationships, with an expectation of a beneficial return (Lin et al., 2001; Kumra and Vinnicombe, 2010). In addition, these social networks are more often seen as agents of influence, mainly on individuals making decisions, so that only the few admitted can benefit from the power inherent in such social interaction. Nowadays, however, women are unlikely to receive the same level of career benefits as men for similar networking behaviours (Heward, 1996; Wang, 2009) and this is due to a range of factors, such as the greater network centrality for men than for women, some of which are reported to be beyond women's control, because of structural barriers (Wang, 2009).

Furthermore, some of the following studies exemplify research on women's leveraging social capital for career advancement in the HE sector, and they also show how women utilise social capital in arenas that are mainly different from those featuring men. Indeed, it is not unusual for women to earn social capital that is later spent by men (O'Neil and Gidengil, 2006; Nanton and Alfred, 2009), or see how men continue accumulating social capital by doing other activities (Connell, 1995; O'Connor and Goransson, 2014). The points above demonstrate the presumed lack of strategy in relation to women's career planning, since although women may plan their career, they then may be losers in social interactions as described above. Further, they lack 'the patriarchal dividend' in terms of honour, prestige and the rights to command (Connell, 1995:82), which men can rely on. Connell also shows how men are privileged in

having this greater cultural advantage, which is reflected in the gendered cultural entitlement (Connell, 1985; O'Connor and Goransson, 2014).

Lastly, again in relation to discrepancies in access and use of social capital, the authors call for women to develop an identity reinforcement, so that they “must ‘develop a sense of ego identity to negotiate life’s course and maintain positive interactions to reap the benefits of social capital resources inherent in communities of support” (Alfred, 2009:7). This again suggests that nowadays maintaining a balance between this career course and social relationships is subject to time pressures, and that men are still in a better position to handle these issues.

2.12.2 Women’s circles and peer support as leaders

It is acknowledged that frequently women lack the same level of peer support as leaders compared to men both in the workplace and within women’s circles (Maddock, 1999; Morley, 1999, 2013b; Sagaria and Rychener, 2004; Shakeshaft, 2006; Harrison, 2014; Tessens et al, 2011; O'Connor, 2011, 2014). In effect, men’s relationships are the common rule and so men are very likely to support each other in the workplace and to reach senior posts. This is achieved through forms of co-optation, but also through homosociality or ‘old boy networks’. Contrary to this, there is a lower level of peer support that women experience in the workplace (She Figures, 2012, 2015) or as members of their own networks, which might result in women being described as non-collaborative with each other, unable to lobby or to network, and use it all for career purposes (O'Connor, 2011). This may also be explained by looking at how women form their own networks: indeed, the literature suggests that there are gender differences in forming these female networks, and that probably because of lack

of access to men's networks, women have established their own networks. However, women's networks are not just more formally constructed and with stronger ties but also more visible (Wang, 2009), this contrasting with informal and private men's networks. This may come as a result of the concept of network which is often understood as a male club in many organisations. However, research suggests that in order to be as effective as men's networks, women's networks should have weaker ties and be larger or just more diverse so to have access to a greater social capital (Wang, 2009; Alfred, 2009). Furthermore, women experience difficulty in joining men's networks, which are more powerful and diverse, and consequently they tend to join less powerful networks and also to have relationships in place with individuals at a lower status (O'Connor, 2014; Morley, 2013b, 2014). This may also come as the result of women occupying lower level positions in organizations, as discussed earlier.

2.12.3 Women's empowerment through mentorship and sponsorship – Agency through others

Along with women's lack of use of social capital, the importance of mentorship and sponsorship for women who aspire to leadership positions is widely acknowledged (Heward, 1996; Leonard, 2001; Sagaria and Rychener, 2004; Wang, 2009; Tessens et al, 2011; McKinsey, 2013; Sandberg, 2013; Holgersson, 2013; Morley, 2013a, 2013b). The literature discussed earlier acknowledges that women face more organizational, interpersonal, and individual barriers than men and consequently they need more mentoring than men for the same level of career benefits. In addition, finding suitable mentors has been a major issue for women for several reasons, which range from male

mentors tending to select men protégées to the limited number of women in high-ranking positions. However, in relation to opportunities for women to use mentorship and sponsorship, Gander (2010, 2013) has investigated the gender gap in relation to management positions, not necessarily at the senior or most senior level; and she has then highlighted the positive effects of mentorship on women's careers. In addition, she concluded that women in male-dominated organizations should be mentored by high-ranking male staff in order to have access to professional development opportunities and to be introduced to their networks (Gander, 2013). As discussed earlier, this conclusion was confirmed by O'Connor (2014) who sees women's career advancement in universities frequently associated with men at presidential level as sponsors.

2.12.4 The attitude of women as the problem

Again on women's agency, O'Connor describes how women in senior management are likely to experience leadership in multi-cultural contexts, in this case in relation to Irish and Portuguese universities. In her findings, indeed, after explaining why the current models of leadership are not fully inclusive of women (O'Connor, 2014), O'Connor points out that little is still known about the impact of societal and organisational contexts on women's construction of leadership careers in senior management in HE. She also highlights that similarities in gendered patterns of impeding factors are even more noticeable than the differences (O'Connor, 2011), which reaffirms the argument discussed in previous sections of this chapter.

However, among findings from this latter study (O'Connor, 2011), women's attitudes, as the expression of women-only way of doing things, come to be regarded as the problem, as previously highlighted by Morley (2005). Therefore

this study, building on Sinclair's four typologies of organisational culture in universities, confirms that one of these problems is women including both their attitudes and priorities, and how this problem is likely to occur across all of the countries (O'Connor, 2011). Among these 'wrong' attitudes depicted as highly problematic, are the following: women are not able to lobby as men do; they have a 'misguided faith in the idea that high quality work and demonstrated commitment would be recognised and rewarded', and they want 'to achieve in their own right and through their ability' (Bagilhole and Goode, 2001:169). They cannot keep their 'emotions under wraps', which is seen as important in a male world (Deem, 1999). More often women see themselves, and consequently act, as guests in a male world (Gherardi, 1996); women are also depicted as those who do not want to be rejected in selection processes, so they are low risk takers, including deliberately choosing 'safer professional strategies', and for this reason they may often show a lack of career planning.

In addition, it is argued that women are traditionally poor at marketing themselves and taking credit for their achievements, including not being strategic about their personal branding. However, this lack of self-marketing skills may be different between generations of women. Few studies look at how women brand themselves in HE management (Gander, 2014), so this may be regarded as a relatively new line of research. Moreover, women in the sector are still seen as 'the Other' both in general terms and in the academy (Acker, 1980; O'Connor and Goransson, 2014), or even as 'guests' (Gherardi, 1996). While those in positions of power remain however outsiders (Moore, 1988) which all provide an explanation of why women are "under considerable pressure to uphold the existing structures and culture and in particular not to support other women" (O'Connor, 2011:17).

As a result, women's attitudes are often depicted as refusal to adapt their behaviours to those in use in a male world, and they are depicted as highly individualistic players: this characteristic, again is likely to be found across all of the countries. This is also true for women who are considered a low risk and so are admitted to the male culture.

2.12.5 Professional women as blended leaders

After examining women's attitudes as the problem, cases of agency are explored through Whitchurch's studies on the concept of 'blended' profiles (2008a; 2008b; 2009; 2013).

Firstly, it is important to clarify the concept of 'blended' as Whitchurch uses the term. This describes those individuals holding mixed credentials, which have been gained and experienced within academic or professional domains or both. Through these credentials, individuals – women in this case – are regarded as those able to experience higher levels of autonomy and control within the sector, and therefore this higher degree of autonomy can be used to move institutional boundaries forward and also to create bridges with other organisations and sectors. In consideration of their high degree of personal agency, these individuals are more likely to move between sectors and to build up their relationships in academic and in professional domains irrespective of their or of others' background. They are therefore those able to use their agency in order to move across sectors with fluidity, but also to establish relationships spanning from professional to academic domains irrespective of roles held or of functions performed.

Therefore, the reason why the concept of 'blended' can help in focussing on women's agency is that the majority of studies investigated so far have covered

women in an academic management roles and therefore focus on women whose careers began in academic fields. However, the motivation for taking into consideration studies dealing with academic women as leaders is that some women who began their career in administration or in management may have now be employed on academic contracts, although this is more likely to occur in some countries, for example in England. It is likely that women currently in academic leadership posts may have been junior administrators at the time when the construction of their career began. Having said that, I am however aware that some individuals working in the HE sector in England are more likely to be in academic types of activity, such as tutoring or learning development, but on non-academic contracts rather than being employed in academic terms. However, considering Whitchurch's use of the concept of 'blended' profiles in HE management, we see how the author has not purposively used this concept to investigate gender-related issues, for instance in relation to professional women's career construction as is carried out in this study. The only point the author made in relation to women categorised as blended concerned the fact that they 'may be attracted, and even perform well, in roles that involve working in ambiguous spaces' (Whitchurch, 2008b:24).

In conclusion, therefore, I use the concept of 'blended' in this study to complement the understanding of women's agency in the construction of careers as leaders. This is done, first in consideration of these women's background and their untraditional or unconventional career routes (Whitchurch, 2008b) frequently moving from professional to academic domains, to demonstrate the intersecting career paths that these women may have experienced in their career. Secondly, this is done to point out the blend of credentials and expertise that a number of individuals populating the sector, and

these women as today's leaders, are likely to have. Lastly, these blended individuals are those who can build up relationships even in ambiguous working spaces and are able to communicate across all the fields and sectors by using a set of multicultural registers fitting situations and interlocutors.

2.13 The implications of this literature review

Thus, after introducing the problem of women's under-representation as leaders in cross-national contexts and in the HE sector, this chapter has discussed how a number of studies have tried to categorise several of the barriers that women frequently face in their career (Hall, 1996; Cubillo and Brown, 2003). These range from gender stereotyping to gender devaluation (which refers to women who need to be trained up to the level of men in order to reach the same position, and who are not valued for their unique contribution). These factors also consider family responsibilities and sex or gender discrimination, or lack of support systems that encourage career advancement (e.g. through networks, sponsors or mentors) and hostility within organisations, especially from men (Shakeshaft, 2006) but also from other women.

Thus, on the one hand, within the lens of structure, the chapter has considered:

- the form of welfare in place in each country to see how this form may have been supportive of women's aspirations to become leader, including the gendered division of labour wherever relevant;
- the HE sector in which these women have found themselves at the time to aspire to become leaders, since this is expected to vary in the three countries to an extent; this even if a number of similarities preventing women from securing the most senior posts have been identified, and these deal, for instance, with practices of co-option, local logics tending to promote safe candidates;

- the home institution or single HE institutions within the sector, since these have their distinctive practices and cultures, so that women may more or less fit them. However, these institutions share a number of similarities, being regarded as 'greedy organisations' or having different types of networks in place;
- leadership knowledge in the field of HE management, which should be adapted to context in order to see if it is significant or not. In addition, the importance of context for leadership could be even more relevant where women come to be the target group under investigation as it is in this study.

On the other hand, within the lens of agency, consideration in the chapter has been given to women's use of social capital, circles of peers, mentors and sponsors, but also women's attitudes have been taken into account. This focus on agency has helped show the degree of motivation resulting in action that these women have been able to activate in careers within given social structures. Indeed, fewer studies have considered the enabling factors in social structures, associated with women's agency, regarded as opportunities that women may have access to and that they may benefit from, e.g. networking and support from mentors or sponsors, among others.

In the light of the exploration of the literature addressing the problem of women's under-representation as leaders, and of the constraints found in it specifically within the HE sector, the contribution expected from this study refers to the understanding of how women in professional careers have responded to these constraining factors, including practices and approaches they have adopted in order to become institutional leaders in HE. This understanding is also sought in the three different contexts of HE where these women work and live, so to prove the importance, or not, of the context where their leadership is performed.

2.14 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has included some of the factors that are likely for women to face in HE institutions. A summary of these factors shows them to be cross-national (stereotyping, gender labelling in jobs and tasks), or classified (regarding the characteristics of a particular society, for instance lack of family-friendly policies or a decrease in effect in these policies in pursuing equality in the labour market). They can also refer to the HE sector or to its institutions (e.g. the 'queen bee' syndrome, the greedy organisation, but also cases of homosociality and of co-option), or even to be the expression of women-only way of doing things, such as their attitude regarded as problematic in management and leadership of the sector.

In addition, the chapter has shown how women have networks different from men, less powerful even if with stronger ties. Furthermore, women find it hard to join men's networks and so to access same amount of connections, opportunities, and also, more simply, information. In addition, it is acknowledged that women tend to use social capital differently from men for career purposes and that they do not take advantage of it. More often they use their social capital to foster men's career opportunities.

Lastly, the chapter has shown that women lack mentoring opportunities compared to men, not just in the same number but also of the same value professionally. They should be sponsored by high-status men in order to be able to access these men's networks and consequently a same range of professional development opportunities.

Chapter Three – Research design and operation of the study

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to illustrate the methodological design used to carry out this study, and to highlight how this is linked with the conceptual framework as developed in the previous chapter.

Firstly, I will begin by showing the philosophical assumptions underlying the study and then I will reflect on how my methodology can fulfil the aims set in the study. Secondly, I describe the qualitative research design in use, based on semi-structured interviews. There are also ethical considerations – on consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and on data management – since their careful preparation can facilitate both the data collection and then the phases of data analysis. Thirdly, I show my awareness of the limitations of the sample, primarily in terms of representativeness and size. Then, I look at authors who have carried out the majority of studies on professional staff in HE management and, hence, I reflect on my position as an insider researcher. Lastly, the account of the data analysis method is provided, this being thematic coding, and the account of how the data analysis was conducted is fully explained.

3.2 From the theoretical perspective to the choice of methods

In this first section of the chapter, looking at philosophical assumptions, it is shown that this study is grounded in social constructivism, chosen as the ontology and the meaning of what social reality is. According to constructivism, social reality does not exist independently of any individual's experience and cannot be simply discovered through our research. On the contrary, this reality is something that individuals constantly produce and reproduce through their everyday actions and that can be discovered only whether individuals continue

to create this evolving social reality through their actions (Denscombe, 2010). This is also to say that this social reality is likely to vary depending on who is producing and looking at it, so different cultures and social groups. Thus, we have different representations of the same reality, for instance depending on a collective or individual lens used to look at that social reality. Moreover, our interpretation of the social world is the epistemology and the way we choose to make sense of the social reality, to come to know it somehow; as a result, social reality is subjective and depends on how individuals first construct, and then interpret, their experience of this reality (Denscombe, 2010; Robson, 2011; Crotty, 1998). Thus, after considering these philosophical assumptions, the methodology for this study is explained. This methodology arises from personal reflection on the research questions as set in Chapter One, which make the research objectives explicit, and which show how these have been combined with the conceptual framework as developed in Chapter Two.

According to Crotty (1998:3), methodology governs our choices of methods, thus “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods to the desired outcomes”. In addition, Crotty describes four elements as the foundations of social research, which are epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods.

As a result, in the table that follows, the development of these four elements of research design are shown in light of my research questions.

Ontology and Epistemology	Theoretical perspective	Methodology	Methods
Constructivism (with a post-	Giddens’ structuration theory	Fifteen women reflecting on the construction of their career to become	Qualitative research

structural feminist insight) and Interpretivism	in the form of structure and agency: 1) Structure - form of welfare state - HE system and single institutions - knowledge of leadership practice in HE management as further structural domain 2) Agency	leaders in three countries. These countries have different welfare arrangements, systems of higher education, and also different approaches to leadership associated with the field of practice of HE management.	based on a set of primary data Individual interview research Narrative or life histories interviews Semi- structured interviews
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Table 2 - From research questions to methods

Dealing with methodology also signifies gaining understanding of how to design the study and “how to proceed from the findings of empirical research to make inferences about the truth of theories” (Perry and Bellamy, 2012:1). Hence, methodology is about the understanding of how to make sense of the things we observe; it is therefore what should enable the researcher not only to design the study appropriately but also to draw its conclusions in linear fashion (ibid, 2012). Therefore, in the light of the definitions above, the choice of methodology is the part of the process of research design that should enable me to elucidate on my research questions, so that these, and the methodology in use, should appear to be a unique framework for the analysis. As a result of this process, this methodology should enable the research to progress from recognising patterns

of facts and accounts of experiences to their interpretation, so including the understanding of what has enabled these women to secure one of the most senior roles in HE leadership. Thus, after dealing with epistemology and constructivism in this study, in the section that follows the research method will be illustrated.

3.3 Research method - Qualitative research and narrative interviews

For this study a qualitative design of enquiry was used based on the narratives of these women who occupy one of the most senior posts in the management of their HE institution (Creswell, 2014). Primary data was collected by conducting individual interviews in each of the three countries; after that, I began hearing the accounts of women's experiences in relation to their career history, with the aim of understanding their career construction (Mishler, 1991; Josselson and Lieblich, 1999; Gillham, 2000; Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). Broadly, these women were not only asked to provide me with an account of their career, but also to reflect on factors - both enabling and constraining - that they have encountered in its construction.

Thus, the research method for this study is a flexible method informed by primary and qualitative data; this latter is because this type of data can make women's voices on experiences easier to hear, including how they have coped with situations, or personal feelings (De Vault, 1999). In addition, the decision to use qualitative data in this research was also made to help emphasise particularity over generalisation, which was one of the aims set in this study.

3.3.1 Using narrative interviews in higher education management research

For this reason, I chose a method featuring life and career histories investigated in the HE sector (Huisman and Tight, 2015), as this approach focuses on particularisation and, specifically, should enable the researcher to look at individual accounts of the experiences of women in the construction of their career as leaders in connection with the factors that have enabled them within their social structures.

However, this study and its research method should not to be confused with the comparative method (Armer, 1973; Green, 1997; Creswell, 2014; Kaiser et al, 2014): in fact, this study is not meant to be comparative in its cross-national understanding of women's career in the three countries. On the contrary, the aim is to shed light on the research questions and show that these careers may vary depending on contexts or structures as well as on a set of factors more likely to be found in each.

3.3.2 Three European countries: form of welfare and system of higher education

In this section it is shown the choice of the three systems for comparison.

Overall, a range of forms of gender inequality and under-representation were explored internationally and, not surprisingly, these forms are not limited to less industrialised countries. For instance, the U.S. is the only one of all the industrialised nations worldwide without a paid maternity leave policy: women are not adequately supported by childcare provision and this seems to be the reason why 74% of professional women re-join the workforce after the initial period of motherhood, and only 40% return to some form of full-time job (Sandberg, 2013). In Asia, allegedly due to a lack of family-friendly policies, the scarcity of women is already significant at the middle and senior management

levels, as proven by Japanese companies having only 1% of women holding top positions (McKinsey, 2013).

In comparison with their US and Asian counterparts, European countries appear to do better as they provide forms of maternity, paternity or parental leave. In countries like Sweden, for instance, the egalitarian welfare state provides equal childcare support for women and men, and the country is endorsed by UNESCO as the most women and family-friendly place to live. Nevertheless, when we consider all the sectors nationally in the country, we see that men hold 76% of all the top positions (Holgersson, 2013). Therefore, forms of homosociality seem to be widespread in Sweden as well as in many other countries. However, Sweden is known to have implemented equality policies rather strongly in practice and these policies are deeply rooted in its public opinion. In addition to equality legislation, the country requires 40 per cent of leading positions of committees in universities management to be held by 'the under-represented gender'. Lastly, in any election, almost all the leaders of political parties have to officially claim to be feminists and so inspired by principles aimed at gender-balance.

However, after the overview described above of the forms of welfare found internationally and in Europe, my first choice was not to have my research confined to one form of welfare or to one HE system, but to widen the representativeness of the present study. In fact, I could have chosen to carry out this study in Italy alone or in England, since these are the two places that I know best. However, in the course of the reflective process during the creation of the methodology for this study, I saw how this would have only helped shed light on one or two countries – with their HE systems -- that I know well, with no

connection with places where women have better work prospects and welfare provision.

Nonetheless, I have chosen to focus on accounts of the experiences of women's career construction in the three countries, since all three are somewhat different for a number of reasons, for example, in terms of the number of women in senior roles, and of their form of welfare state. They are also diverse in terms of their system of HE, the study of which entails considering different perspectives on HE management and leadership (developed and more or less acknowledged as fields of practice and research), and from which to deal with women's styles and practice of leadership in practice. Thus, this level of differentiation (both in the form of welfare and in the HE system with its associated domains) was primarily intended to shed light on different variables impacting on women's career; but also to point to women's response to same patterns of factors and, finally, to show women's approaches to leadership even depending on context. After investigating the welfare and the HE system in Chapter Two, given the findings of the literature review, I will now continue to describe the form of welfare and the HE system as they are in place in each country in the following section of this chapter.

Thus, the following table summarises a preliminary analysis on women holding leadership posts in different sectors, including HE. Specifically, it shows, on the one hand, the number of women in senior posts in different sectors and public bodies in the three countries, and, on the other hand, the last column of the table shows trends of women leaders in the HE sector. The main feature of the HE system in each country will be introduced in the following section.

Women in Society <small>(Source: WIS database - DG Research and Innovation 2013)</small>	Women as board members in public companies (private sector)	Women in EU institutions	Women in national governments	Women in the two most senior management positions (Public sector and national administrations)	Women in the HE sector – Women in the most senior roles in HEM (in a professional career path) <small>Source: 2014</small>
England	18%	32%	23%	14% (L1) 32% (L2)	<10%
Italy	13%	23%	30%	26% (L1) 32% (L2)	15%
Sweden	26%	45%	44%	43% (L1)* 50% (L2)*	45%

Table 3 - Women in leadership posts in several sectors and in higher education (Source: WS database – DG Research and Innovation 2013, where *L1 and *L2 stand for the two most senior levels for staff)

Looking at the table above, on the one hand we see how the overall trend of women in senior positions is almost the same in the three countries in the private sector and in the European Union’s bodies, national, and public organisations. Sweden is shown to be the best performer within the three countries, whilst Italy and England seem more aligned in terms of number of women in these senior posts. Specifically, looking at figures on the HE sector, Sweden is confirmed as the best performer and England as that with the lowest rate of women in these positions. This is somewhat surprising, considering the earlier explanation that it is the only country where what we term ‘intersecting career paths’ are more easily found. This means that, potentially, more women (those that come from academia in addition to those from other sectors and from management) are entering the most senior roles considered in this study. As set out in Chapter Two, when referring to the structural domain of the welfare state in each country, these three countries show a variety of welfare arrangements, which also means that they are expected to have different models of gender division and of labour within the family. According to the Schunter-Kleemann’s model (Alvesson and Billing, 1997), Italy is placed in the

strong male breadwinner countries, Sweden in the weak model, whilst England lies in the modified cluster. These models refer to the role that men and women are more likely to play in that particular form of society, what family arrangements are in place, who is normally the carer of children (or also of the elderly), and who is normally the breadwinner in the family. This framework of models is however not exhaustive and so it is not meant to underestimate the role played by same-sex couples or by single parents. More specifically, the model ranges from a traditional form of arrangements and roles within the family (the male breadwinner and the female carer in Italy) to a less traditional one (e.g. the dual earner/female part-time career in the UK), and to the dual earner/state career model in Sweden (Crompton, 1999).

This prior look at the welfare state in each country should not displace the significance of the focus of this study on the HE sector, as the place where this group of professional women have constructed their career as leaders. Generally, both the HE system and the single institutions have been regarded as inhospitable working places for women, with this misbalance more likely to occur in some disciplines (e.g. the STEM subjects).

However, we have seen that the HE sector has distinctive features in each of the three countries, and these might be associated with characteristics of the sector itself, of its institutions, or even of both. Continuing with what was described in Chapter One, professional staff in pre-1992 HEIs have been described as the 'guardians of the regulations' (Barnett, 2000; Whitchurch, 2004) for their well-defined role in supporting academics in decision-making. On the other hand, professional staff in post-1992 had a tradition of strong corporate management at the senior management team level, with clerical staff supporting them, thus showing the absence of an "administrative" class or what

we would now term "professional managers". Things have changed however since 1992, with the appointment of many more professional staff, particularly in specialist fields (Whitchurch, 2004). As a result, the reputation of staff, both academics and professional staff, working in the public sector is overall high.

Regarding the Italian system, the sector, this still appears as that once described by Burton Clark (1983) in his comparative research on systems of HE internationally as the result of a triangle of forces (professional-collegial, governmental-managerial, and market). Clark's view of Italy describes the system as the "triumph of particularism", which comes as the result of the dominance of national guilds coupled with weak market interactions among all universities within the system (1983:143). As anticipated in Chapter One, the majority of professional staff hold the status of civil servant, but I am aware that the term 'civil servant' may not have the same meaning in all countries, mainly due to different legal frameworks. However, it is used here as representing a group that benefits from a stronger and more protective regulation (Estermann and Nokkala, 2009). As a result, job contracts in the sector are regarded as 'safe', since the majority of professional staff are employed in long-term contracts. Among the negative aspects, the reputation for a number of posts in academia and in the public sector is not always positive, in consideration of mechanisms of nepotism that are likely to lead these careers (Poli and Georgas, 2016), so that meritocracy is aspirational but unlikely to be assured.

In the HE system in Sweden, the sector is notoriously perceived as 'women-friendly', this although a recent report on gender equality in HE calls for speeding up the process aiming to balance numbers of women and men in top roles (Government Offices of Sweden, 2013). It is claimed that the process of aligning the number of men and women in leadership posts in HE is still slow-

paced, and that this alignment has to be attained as soon as possible. Among the strategies laid out to speed up this process, focus is on effective governance, follow-up, and evaluation. A set of measures has been proposed, which include a gender equality bonus, monitoring of recruitment procedures, and a review from a gender perspective of the instructions for agencies that fund research. Interestingly, cases of nepotism can be found in this country too, and this for instance is shown in peer-review processes where men are seen to choose men and to penalise women, so that this ‘bonus friendship’ is regarded as one of the landmarks of the sector (Wold and Wennekeras, 1997). In addition, considering not only HE but all sectors, cases of co-option or of ‘homosociality’ can be found (Holgersson, 2013). Lastly, professional staff are employed by the public sector as in the other two countries but, unlike in Italy, they do not hold the status of civil servants. However, their reputation appears to be overall high, depending more on the job grade of the post holder – and their related qualifications - than on the overall reputation of the sector.

The table that follows aims to summarise some of the main characteristics of the HE system in each of the three countries in order to show elements of particularisation underlying the choice of the three countries:

Country	HE sector/ Key context-specific features	The field of HE Management (and main issues in the field covered by)	Leadership (practice) in the field of HE Management
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England	Market-driven/State funded	MBA in HEM at the UCL IOE but also several other courses on HE management, provided by the LFHE, AUA, AHUA, among others	Training programmes for academic-managers and senior managers altogether, but also those only for women in leadership in HE management, e.g. those offered by the LFHE (AURORA for women in leadership in HE)
Italy	State-funded	Master programme SUM - Master in Higher Education and Research Management offered by the Graduate School of Business at Polytechnic of Milan	Master programme SUM on HEM only for senior managers and also courses offered by CODAU as the professional association of university heads of administration. In addition, leadership programmes only for academic-managers are those provided by the CRUI (Conference of Italian Rectors) and those offered by the Ministry of University and Research.
Sweden	State-funded	Association of Swedish Higher Education and single universities provide this typology of training	“In recent years new networks for women in senior management, courses, mentoring ... have been introduced at Swedish universities” (O’Connor and Goransson, 2014:19), such as those offered by the Association of Swedish Higher Education and also single universities provide this kind of training for senior managers.

Table 4 – Mapping out the main characteristics of the HE system in each of the three countries – Higher education and leadership

While in the following section of the chapter, it is explained how the sample of women for this study was selected.

3.3.3 Women in a leadership post - How to select participants

Regarding the sample of respondents and its representativeness, the description that follows explains how this was purposively driven (Mason, 2002). Firstly, in England, this sample was made up of women holding the most senior role working in different HE institutions, including pre- and post-1992 institutions, and being located differently geographically (South, North, and also the London area were all considered and represented). On the contrary, the size of these institutions was not seen as a reason for concern, as this is considered to matter less in England than in Italy for instance where HE institutions are likely to be distinguished between big-size or 'mega-atenei'⁴ and all the other institutions.

Furthermore, the sample of respondents took into account both teaching and research-oriented universities, wherever this has been possible in terms of women holding the role under investigation. However, attention was also paid to further distinctions of academic ranking in the country, for instance those distinguished as Russell or non-Russell group universities. This was done in order to include institutions with different levels of reputation and to consider their attractiveness in terms of career opportunities for women, since we have seen in Chapter Two how low-reputation institutions are those more likely to see women in leadership posts (O'Connor, 2011).

Secondly, with regards to Italy, the sample of respondents was chosen as geographically representative, but also considered the size of universities, since it is different to hold a leadership role in a so called 'mega ateneo' from the

⁴ 'Mega-Atenei' are those HE institutions that count a high number of students, normally beyond 40,000 with some, for instance the University of Bologna, counting 86,000.

same role held in a small university. Thirdly, concerning Sweden, primarily geographical differentiation has driven the selection.

More specifically regarding the sample, the unit of analysis consists of certain types of leaders, these being women holding posts as head of administration and academic registrar, but also as deputy or pro-vice-chancellor (as appropriate, given that the career routes to these roles vary in different countries). These roles in institutional leadership have been introduced and then detailed in Chapter One in the overview of how these roles can be secured, depending on the background or career path of a post holder in each of the three countries. Lastly, considering the size of the sample, it consists of five women leaders in each country. This appeared to be an appropriate number in consideration of the scale of this study and of the total number of women post holders in the three countries, being 8% in England, 15% in Italy and 45% in Sweden (as earlier shown in Table 3). After explaining how women in a leadership post were selected, the following section deals with a number of limitations of this study.

3.4 On limitations

Regarding limitations in this study, I am however aware of a number of them in this study. Firstly, this study engages with women leaders in a limited number of European countries and thus it only considers women holding these senior posts in certain societal and organisational structures. Secondly, professional women as leaders in this study do not represent such a numerically significant sample, there being five in each country, and this number has been set in consideration of the limited scale of the study. Thirdly, the only data gathered comes from interviews with no other data further collected.

Lastly, I am aware that the three countries vary culturally, so there are anthropological features that should be considered: for instance, in regard to styles of leadership, it is acknowledged that a democratic style of leadership is more likely to be found in Sweden, where decisions are shared and mainly derived from 'bottom-up' decision-making processes. This is more likely to be rather competitive in England and a mixture of democratic and competitive style of leadership as predominant in Italy.

However, I have minimised these limitations by considering three countries differently placed in Europe with their different systems of HE. But also by selecting an average number of women leaders in each of these countries; this has been done after considering the full number of women leaders not only in the countries under investigation but also all throughout Europe. In addition, these women come from different types of HE institutions, so to ensure a blend of styles of leadership and also of organisational cultures.

Another limitation of the study is the fact that the only data collected comes from interviews. On reflection, access to further data, such as institutional documents to be used to complement the understanding of women's career depending on context, would have been possible only in a few cases. However, analysing this amount of data would have required disproportionate knowledge of the context; in addition, access to this further data might have undermined the guarantee of anonymity assured to women in the sample.

Thus, after showing the limitations of this study, in the section that follows the process of data collection is explained, this process moving from introducing myself to participants to issues met in transcribing interviews by myself.

3.5 Data collection

Introducing myself at interviews was straightforward in Italy where I did not need any help from gatekeepers to be introduced to these women leaders. I sent emails to the women in the sample and got confirmation of their acceptance easily. The situation was rather different in England, where I relied on professional contacts in order to introduce myself and to present the core of my research. This happened in most cases, with a few exceptions in which such an introduction was not needed. It was sufficient to present the topic of my research and to mention Morley's report as the source of the inspiration to carry out this research on women in HE. Lastly, networking in professional associations of research managers in Europe was the 'gatekeeper' in Sweden, and therefore the introduction to my data collection was done through professional contacts that I already had in Sweden, through following up contacts suggested from a previous respondent, and following the requirements of representation within the country as set out earlier.

In order to explain the aims and introduce the research questions underlying this study, an introductory letter was sent to each of the interviewees together with the ethics forms after receiving their acceptance to participation; while the interview guide was sent to each respondent only one week prior the interview. In this introductory letter, I presented myself as a university manager now enrolled in a professional doctorate in the field of HE management. I continued to introduce my topic of investigation as well as the rationale underlying the choice of dealing with professional women and their career construction as leaders in the sector. Lastly, I provided an explanation of the reasons why I had chosen to include these three countries in this study, along with information about expected benefits that may arise from using the research method, as this may provide a further insight into the career construction of these women.

Before the interview took place, further information was also given as a sort of 'ice-breaker' that summarised the aims of my research and its theoretical framework as the lens to look at the accounts of these women's career experiences. I recorded all interviews by using a professional voice recorder. I also recorded information from interviews by making handwritten notes. Only at the end of each interview, to minimise any bias, I gave the participants a small present. This was my way to show gratitude for the time they gave to me, which cannot be taken for granted at any level of seniority in leadership in today's universities, but also for the opportunity to learn something strategic resulting from their career and overall from their knowledge of leadership in the field of practice of HEM.

3.5.1 Why life history and semi-structured interviews

Overall, I acquired the data by using the method of life history interviewing (Mishler, 1991; Josselson and Lieblich, 1999; Gillham, 2000; Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). This was thought to be appropriate for this study for the following reasons. Firstly, this method has proven to be suitable for topics about which little is known, and my topic in this study appeared to be one of these. Secondly, the life history method enables the study of lives as a whole and not only periods within them. As I was interested in following the process of career construction of these women as leaders, the whole methodology in use was expected to reveal the consequential series of events that could be associated with these women's career construction. Thirdly, life history narratives suggest a focus on the respondents' subjective reconstruction of events that the respondent regards as relevant to the topic being studied.

Specifically, the choice of interviews as method in data collection was backed by the purpose to set my interviews as 'conversations with a purpose', as suggested by Burgess (1984), with no aim to predetermine any answers. This purpose was fulfilled in all the interviews that I conducted. The aim to conduct them as 'conversations with a purpose' was also the reason why semi-structured interviews were preferred for data collection: these, among the different types of interview, have the advantage of allowing respondents to be free to explore issues beyond the questions set in the interview protocol.

More specifically regarding the choice of semi-structured interviews, the socio-biographical approach (Chamberlayne et al., 2002) was adopted for the purpose of my interviews, which involved asking respondents to provide an account of their career history from the point of leaving education through to their current employment as heads of administration or similar posts in their home institution. Therefore, the accounts of the career experiences of these women were at the core of this study, even though I was aware that the nature of these experiences may be rather 'vague, ambiguous, often contradictory', and that experiences may be constructed and told in many different ways (Alvesson and Billing, 1997:35). I considered this point in the data analysis, which was carried out at the point of considering interpretive codes. Here, I pointed out any issues of dissonance in relation to women's accounts that may be valuable, especially for those women recounting their career experiences from the same country.

As a learning outcome from all these interviews, I gained a fair understanding of the practice of interviewing and saw that it requires a careful planning and preparation at all of its stages, including the capability to anticipate events and to prevent problems from occurring. This was also the stage of the research

when I gained the understanding of why interviewing is regarded as a craft, since it calls for the researcher's mixture of skills, sensibility, and knowledge on the theme under investigation, the combination of which can impact on the quality of the data produced. Thus, this was when I understood how research interviewing was really something combining a craft, which requires professional expertise, and an art (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). However, in doing so, I relied on my prior experience as research manager, which has been of great help in the course of this study, and also my inclination to be organised, to try to foresee things before they happen, and to do most of these things far in advance from when they are due to be finalised.

3.5.2 Recording and transcribing interviews

Practically, these research interviews were conducted in the period between July 2014 and May 2015. All the individual interviews lasted between 42 minutes and an hour and a half. As earlier anticipated, all the interviews were conducted by myself, recorded and then personally transcribed. I travelled to most of the HEIs where each of my interviewees worked. The decision to conduct all the interviews in a face-to-face context was taken in consideration of the topic under investigation; in fact, the topic was seen as rather sensitive and therefore called for a deeper form of social interaction. Face-to-face interviews make this interaction possible more than other methods. I only considered and then rejected undertaking computer-assisted interviews in one case, given the difficulty of conducting a face-to-face interview. The advantages of conducting face-to-face interviews, include the fact that they may facilitate recording of different stages of life as they permit follow-up questions to be asked immediately; interviewees are likely to be at ease in their working environment

or wherever they chose to conduct the interview; but also my position as researcher and also as insider in the sector, even if not in the respondents' own workplace. However the latter may be seen both as an advantage and a disadvantage. I acknowledge, though, that there are also disadvantages of undertaking face-to-face interviews, such as the limited amount of time available to conduct interviews when factoring in travel time; but also the need to cover travel expenses and to secure funds prior to the fieldwork. However, I have coped with these advantages and conducted all the interviews in a face-to-face mode.

3.5.3 The interview guide

To carry out the data collection, I used an interview guide (Appendix 1), although this was not intended to constrain the narratives or prevent respondents from raising issues not included in this checklist. Therefore, this interview guide (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009), or interview protocol (Creswell, 2014), helped me focus on a set of questions and also on recording answers, but allowed the respondents to take the story along in their own way.

Empirically, each interview consisted of asking the respondent to summarise their career to date, focusing on significant events in their careers and – as appropriate – in their personal life. In addition to describing their career progression to secure a senior post, including stages of their career in/outside the sector, and any tipping points, they were asked to tell me their understanding of what could have prevented or even enabled them to succeed in their career. Specifically, the interview guide investigated a number of semi-structured issues, which spanned from their first choice career to education and from their career aspirations to their family arrangements. As mentioned

previously, this list of questions was not intended to be exhaustive of all the issues covered during the interview sessions, but simply a guiding framework for myself and for respondents.

As said previously, the interview protocol was kept simple so as not to constrain the narratives. The questions were open and my second questions arose from this first set, in the light of what each interviewee appeared happy to share and to explore further. However, after this first set of questions had been posed to all respondents, follow-up questions were dependent on the respondent and the situation under scrutiny. These questions were likely to shed further light on the whole sequence of events affecting the construction of their career progression and specifically on key transition stages, including decisions to apply for promotion, to change job, to get married (when this came in the course of their career and also if this was postponed for career purposes), to have children, or to take a break from employment. These key stages may also include significant people the respondents met in their career – and whether these were men or women.

It was, however, at this stage that I recognised the importance of my role as an insider researcher: the knowledge of the sector, its roles and functions, including tasks and responsibilities associated with each function, were an asset. Thus, my second questions may have been more insightful as a result of my prior expertise, and of how I decided to use this during the interview. I did not do a pilot test of these interviews, but the revision of a final version of the interview guide was carried out with the support of a couple of critical friends, who acted as people chosen to play the role of “informants for the grouping under surveillance” (De Vaus, 2002: 51). All these “critical friends” were

selected for their knowledge of the field of practice of HEM and not for that of the theoretical framework applied to this study.

After dealing with the process of data collection and explaining main stages and issues met along the way, in the following section the ethics of the study are addressed, these going from carefully considering data preparation to distinguishing between academic and professional literature and giving reasons for it.

3.6 On ethics

Overall, I followed the ethical guidelines issued by the British Educational Research Association (BERA). An interview package was sent to each participant at least one week prior the interview. This interview package included: Informed Consent Form (ICF) and a further document which explained how I had dealt with ethics in compliance with the Code of Practice in use at UCL IOE (which included details on confidentiality, anonymity, data storage and protection, and declarations needed in case of quoting extracts from their statements); and also, a short document describing aims and research questions of my thesis. The ICF clearly specified their rights to withdraw from the interview at any time, as is going to be fully described in section 3.6.1.

Therefore, I paid further attention to issues of limits of confidentiality in order to assure confidentiality not only to women in my sample but to anyone else who may be identified through their narratives (e.g. other women or men within the institution, sponsors or mentors, and 'rivals', or people acting as barriers in these women's careers).

Overall, however, concerning the data preparation, I carried out the interview transcriptions myself. In doing so, I sought to assure a high standard of

confidentiality of the women in the sample, because I was aware that some of the interviews had raised sensitive issues and that the only way to meet ethical requirements would have been to carry out all transcriptions myself. Before making this decision, I relied on professional services concerning two of the interviews conducted in England, since I thought that I would have not been able to exactly transcribe everything, including stalling words as well as spelling words the way they were pronounced. Subsequently, though, issues of confidentiality and anonymity prevailed for all the remaining interviews.

I was, however, aware that there may be different levels of precision in data preparation and management. As a result, this study may lack the precision generated by the same linguistic pattern, the use of English being different (in terms not only of language but also of culture) within the overall sample of respondents. Therefore, there are here three linguistic and cultural groups that use English through their cultural lens of understanding - there being five native English speakers, five Swedish women speaking English as a second language, and five Italian women conducting the interview in Italian, their responses later translated into English. I also point out that, after transcribing the interviews conducted in Italian, these have been translated - mainly by me, and on occasion in collaboration with a native speaker - into English, so adding a new cultural and linguistic blend to the meaning arising from the interviews. However, I am aware that this can be a limitation in the reliability of data, which I have tried to minimise by analysing data twice, firstly in my native language and then in English for all the interviews recorded in Italian, so to triangulate these data analyses.

Again for reasons of confidentiality, the interview settings were carefully agreed together with interviewees: prior to any interviews, I made clear in the

introductory letter that they should feel free to choose any setting, including spaces outside of the university. However, the majority of these interviews were conducted in a university setting.

Lastly, the universities and the venue of the interviews have been anonymised, again for reasons of confidentiality and anonymity, as well as further ethical issues of data labelling and storage. Transcriptions of the interviews have been labelled by using female names for each woman; however, these names do not have any relation with real names of respondents.

3.6.1 Informed consent

After receiving formal ethical approval in 2014 from the Institute of Education (University College London) for this research, I ensured that participants were fully informed (Appendix 2 - Participant information and consent). In doing so, I provided participants with a detailed information sheet and consent form outlining the purpose of the research and how it would be conducted so they could make an informed decision about participation and involvement (Lee, 2009; Robson, 2009). I provided details and assurance regarding the purpose of this research study, how I planned to collect and use the data, how the confidentiality of participants would be respected, and that participants could opt out at any time. To ensure that participants had adequate time to make informed decisions (Lee, 2009), I provided these documents after receiving their response concerning participation. The participant consent form therefore outlined the principles of participation, which included informed consent, my right to record the interview, the right of participants to opt out at any stage, and anonymity and confidentiality.

3.6.2 Data management

Regarding the ethics of data management, field notes and recordings of interviews were transcribed and stored electronically, encrypted for security and stored according to BERA guidelines. Therefore, interview transcripts can only be identified by a unique pseudonym, with the list linking pseudonym to participant stored securely and separately from the research data. All records concerned with the study were encrypted and held in accordance with the application guidelines; however, data will not be used for any other purpose than that agreed with participants and fully detailed in the Participant Information (Appendix 2).

Thus, after dealing with the ethics specifying terms of the informed consent and of data management, the section that follows looks at the distinction between the academic and the professional literature, in this first section. This is done to help show which authors have investigated or only described professional staff and, as a result of this critical overview, the later section moves to state my stance as insider researcher in the field of HE management.

3.7 Further ethical considerations: distinguishing between academic and professional literature

As mentioned in Chapter One, in consideration of the gap of knowledge on professional women found in the literature, I have undertaken this study as woman in a professional career and as insider researcher. Consequently, I have focussed on professional staff as the main group under investigation, aware that the context more often investigated in the literature has been the UK one. Regarding therefore staff on a professional career path, I have seen that they have been labelled in a number of ways, from 'new professionals' (Dearing,

1997; Gornall, 1999), to 'managerial professionals' (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004; Rhoades, 2010), or simply HE professionals (Middlehurst, 2010). They have also been denominated as 'support professionals', 'other professionals' (Gordon, 2010), and 'new higher education professionals', as individuals who bring in an emergent expertise (Kehm, 2006). All the definitions above have been mainly given by academics, with the exception of Gornall and of Whitchurch's early works.

Similarly, in relation to professional staff and the profiles of individuals in administration or management, the majority of studies have been written from an academic perspective and seem to deal with academic-related issues rather than with the investigation of issues associated with professional staff. These studies therefore seem to shed light on professional managers mostly in relation to academics (Rhoades, 2010; Deem, 2008; Gander et al., 2014) and not concerning professional staff as the primary object of investigation. For this reason, they appear context or situation-specific, for instance in relation to what has affected academics at a particular time – e.g. academic capitalism or new managerialism - coupled with the search for its causes (e.g. de-professionalisation of academic staff and the role of professional staff in relation to this issue).

Among studies conducted by practitioners, the perspective of insider researcher adopted by Whitchurch in her early works (2004, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2009) is aligned with my stance in this study, since practitioners can help researchers in identifying the main issues within their working spaces, or also carry out research on their own (Eraut, 1994). In addition, in comparison with other authors, practitioners aim to prioritise the professional dimension of any investigation.

Effectively, Whitchurch's early studies of professional managers have been carried out by a former insider researcher in relation to the knowledge-potential development of practitioners, but also in relation to the contribution arising from reflective research (Eraut, 1994). Eraut explains what is needed from a practitioner's perspective in order to exploit knowledge; *"The knowledge-development potential of practitioners is under-exploited ... further reflection and discussion can enhance the knowledge derived from case experience and organise it in ways that encourage its further development ... the researcher-practitioner team will need to combine the analytic skills of the original researcher with the creative skills of the practical problem-solver"* (Eraut, 1994: 56).

3.7.1 Issues arising from being an insider or a practitioner researcher

In this study, therefore, I consider the advantages of being an insider researcher that primarily lie in the deeper knowledge of the sector under investigation. This means "the sheer immersion of the researcher in the field she is researching. She is a fish in the water ... with a feel for the rules of the game" (Clegg and Stevenson, 2013:7). Practically, this is the person more likely to understand the hidden rules of the game and also to have an understanding of a number of cultural implications that might arise from different societal and institutional contexts.

As anticipated, others define this typology of researcher as 'practitioner' (Punch, 2009:40), since she/he is regarded as "consumer rather than doer" of their own research. In past years, these individuals were regarded as lacking the necessary skills to carry out their own research into their working places. It is, however, Eraut who understood these practitioners as the individuals holding a

repository of practical knowledge, but possibly without the academic credentials to carry out research on their own. Consequently, he suggested an integration of this lack of academic skills by making practitioners work closely with researchers in order to exploit and make their knowledge available (Eraut, 1994).

In addition, Schon (1991) describes what practitioners should do on a daily basis in order to valorise this repository of their field-of-practice-based knowledge: reflection in action and reflection on reflection-in-action, with the former as knowledge in action or alternatively “a manager’s reflection in a context of action” (Schon, 2011:241). In Schon’s view, knowledge and practice should inform each other and reflection-in-action is representative of tackling the (practical) situation in reflective dialogue with the situation itself, including the strategy to cope with unique situations. This strategy will be shaped by the interaction within any particular situation (Schon, 2011). Further developments of reflection in action describe what Schon means by ‘reflection on reflection-in-action’, which conveys sharing one’s own reflection in action, which is what managers seldom do and the reason why managers can rarely help each other. This is even more crucial nowadays within the same organisation or professional community (Schon, 2011), and is also the reason why we rely on support from external consultants who can provide another perspective on the HE sector. However, the point I would like to make here is that this outsider perspective learnt from consultants is rather different from the more insightful perspective that practitioners doing reflection on reflection in action themselves could provide to their institutions.

Therefore, in the past, research within the fields and professions of these practitioners (e.g. health or education) was primarily carried out by trained

researchers and hence the two communities, researchers and practitioners, were separated. Due to the increase in number of individuals dealing with research from more angles (e.g. new categories of professional staff, like research managers, or other blended groups of professionals in the sector, but also those undertaking professional doctorates such as an EdD), there has been a rise in the involvement of practitioners in this practice-based type of research. Overall the perspective of the insider or practitioner researcher seeks to find the causes of the issues affecting the professional community through an investigation from the inside of that same community. For this reason, this perspective is alternatively defined as 'tacit ethnography' (Clegg and Stevenson, 2013). In conclusion, nowadays we recognise that this is possible, not only by setting up mixed groups of practitioners and researchers undertaking research into practice, but also by relying on insider researchers once these practitioners are equipped with the set of analytical skills earlier described by Eraut.

Among negative effects of being an insider researcher I have considered the deep knowledge of the sector under investigation and more specifically that of the 'effective real-world maps of situations' (Costley and Lester, 2012:259), which may lead to misunderepresentation of certain situations but also to an underestimate of the link between these situations.

In regard to respondent validation, I made the choice, first, to clarify the bias I may have brought to the study, particularly in relation to my interpretivist approach and to my role as an insider researcher. And then, the choice was to allow several critical friends representing the three countries of the study, together with two interviewees, to provide feedback on my assumptions and

interpretations. Here are the reasons for these choices on respondent validation.

Generally, on how to offset potential bias, I was aware that qualitative research is more often criticised to be biased by each researcher's individual perceptions and judgments based on what they value to be of better practice (Krauss, 2005; Greenbank, 2007; Anderson, 2010; Creswell, 2014). Thus, I considered how researchers adopting an interpretivist approach are required to have considerable self-awareness, supported by a number of techniques enabling cross-checking with other evidence, including triangulation or respondent validation from a variety of sources (Anderson, 2010; Robson, 2011; Creswell, 2014). This is likely to arise from the close relationship of the researcher and participants in qualitative research so that researchers are encouraged to explicitly record reflections and biases in the research report (Robson, 2011). This point was relevant to my data analysis due to my personal and feminist journeys and to feeling 'othered' in the sector as much as some of my research participants; this point is further explained in my post-reflections in the Conclusion chapter. In addition, I reflected that as my research was undertaken by a woman as an insider researcher looking at other women's careers, with their career experiences as the primary focus of the investigation, it could potentially be biased by my own career circumstances in the same sector.

Specifically, on incorporating validity strategies (Creswell, 2014) and cross-checking preliminary findings with other evidence, I allowed several critical friends and two respondents to provide me with feedback. Their critical feedback challenged my assumptions and interpretations, and I subsequently reconsidered some of my preliminary findings, including an opportunity to re-analyse the categories of practices, the career strategies and also the

approaches to leadership previously elaborated. This phase of peer and participant checking gave me further insight into the accuracy of my qualitative findings (Creswell, 2014).

More specifically on the availability of critical friends (Whitehead & McNiff, 2010), this is regarded as important to offset research bias. Thus, as the final stage of the process of respondent validation, my rationale, my research design, preliminary and final findings were presented to colleagues at research conferences (Whitehead & McNiff, 2011), working groups, and at informal meetings. These critical friends were primarily professional women working in the sector in the three countries represented in the study.

Regarding participant checking, in addition to critical friends, my choice was to ask two research participants to comment on my preliminary findings. This choice was suggested by the accounts of the majority of the respondents who shared their career experience without any desire to be protagonists but only for the sake of understanding. Hence, the choice was not to involve all the respondents once more but to ask only two women from two countries, who had expressed interest in the findings to ensure these accurately reflected their experiences, to provide me with feedback on all interpretations. This stage of the process of respondent validation was conducted through emails and Internet-based conversations on Skype.

Overall, therefore, this shared discussion with critical friends and with these two research participants was an important stage of the analysis to assure accountability and transparency of bias (Robson, 2011; Creswell, 2014).

Thus, after dealing with these further ethical considerations, in the last section of the chapter the process of data analysis is explained, this being thematic coding.

3.8 Data analysis

Thematic coding analysis was used for the purpose of this study. From the outset, aware of the existence of multiple coding methods, I continued with exploring these methods in order to see their advantages and disadvantages and to choose the most appropriate for this study. However, the primary reason for using thematic analysis was that this approach helps in examining experiences and meanings of participants' reality, including how these experiences have arisen in relation to structures under investigation (Robson, 2011). This purpose alone would make the method appropriate for this study, but this was not the only reason to use thematic analysis.

A second reason to apply thematic analysis came from the knowledge that codes were the basic elements of the data: these can refer to behaviours, events, activities, strategies or practices, states, meanings, but also to relationships or interaction, conditions or constraints, consequences and also the researcher's reflexive meanings (Robson, 2011). In this analysis specifically, I felt driven by the search for the understanding of women's practices, since these were expected to inform the understanding of their career construction as leaders, which is at the core of the research questions as well as of the development of the conceptual framework designed in Chapter Two.

After having chosen to use thematic analysis, I continued with an examination of my set of data. Thus, practically, I saw coding as the process of organising the data by highlighting text segments and writing a word representing a category in the margins (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). This involved taking the data gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) into categories, and labelling those categories with a term, often a term based in

the actual language of the participant (called an *in vivo* term). More specifically during this stage of research I looked at Braun and Clarke's (2006:87) six steps of thematic analysis, which are the following: familiarising yourself with your data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; producing the report.

After the initial stage consisting of coding data and organising it into meaningful groups, I grouped the initial codes into a smaller number of themes. In addition, I considered the work of Miles and Huberman (1994) and how they describe this process from initial codes to defined themes as first and second-level coding: the former referring to labelling groups of words, and the latter to moving from these initial codes to the development of a smaller number of themes. These themes can be either data or theory-driven, and they can also be categorised on the basis of repetitions, indigenous categories (terms used by respondents as the *in vivo* terms previously mentioned), metaphors, similarities and differences, and theory-related information (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

Lastly, I was also aware that there would be disadvantages in using one approach instead of the other. From the outset I made no attempt to be in control or to limit the number of issues, and related codes arising from the data analysis. The choice was to look at all these issues through the research questions and to come to a definition of the main themes progressively. One more disadvantage that I considered was the limited use of interpretation that may be an issue in thematic coding analysis, and on the contrary the wider space of descriptive and exploratory types of analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I coped therefore with this potential disadvantage by using interpretation analysis more in depth, especially in relation to some of the themes, including

cases which could appear as contradictory. Thus, the presentation of the data analysis is explained in the following section.

3.8.1 The sample of respondents: professional women as leaders in higher education management

For this study I carried out all stages of thematic coding analysis, and the detailed record of each stage follows in this section. As an initial step, I listened to the fifteen tape recordings that were made of the case interviews and then I began the analysis by marking each with a highlighter pen on paper. I also highlighted in bold issues and statements which came out of these accounts. I listened to parts of these recordings several times, particularly passages of the accounts which seemed to be tricky or more meaningful, and further compared them with the pro-forma notes taken at the time of the interview.

As noted, I personally transcribed all interviews, as this was the best way to familiarise myself with data. After this preparatory stage, a factual profile of the sample was drawn up, and this included the following information about each respondent's profile:

- Age (30-50, 51-59, 60+ meaning women aged 60 and above).
- Description of the most senior positions in HE in the three countries, e.g. head of administration (and all equivalent roles), but also pro-VC or deputy VC depending on the country.
- Personal status of the women in the sample: married/in partnership and number of children.
- Career trajectory of these women in relation to posts in or out of the HE sector, but also concerning the number of HEIs they had experienced.

In order to give a sense of who these women were, this information was then summarised in relation to each respondent, prior job experience or sector if not in HE, and what their family responsibilities were (e.g. married/in a partnership, number of children at different stages of career). The description of this sample of respondents is provided in the table below.

Respondent	Country	Age	Type of institution (Small<20,000 students; Medium>20,000 students and Large >50,000)	Institutional role	Family and children	Career trajectories: same institution, HE or from other sectors, including abroad
Heather	England	51-59	Small size, specialised, research-intensive HEI	Deputy Vice Chancellor	No children, married	Same HE institution
Teresa	England	51-59	Medium size, teaching and research HEI	Now director of division [but former academic registrar at a different HEI]	1 child, married	Multiple institutions, only HEIs
Whitney	England	51-59	Medium size, teaching and local HEI	Academic registrar	Married, 2 children	Other sectors, multiple HEIs
Ashley	England	51-59	Small HEI, teaching-	Registrar and secretary	Married and now	Multiple HEIs including abroad,

			focussed		divorced, with no children	other sectors
Carolyn	England	51- 59	Medium size, teaching and research HEI	Registrar and secretary	Married, 1 daughter	Other sectors, more HEIs
Georgia	Italy	51- 59	Small HEI, teaching and research	Head of university management and administration	3 children, married	Other sectors, one HEI
Angela	Italy	60+	Small, highly specialised HEI	Head of university management and administration	Married, 2 children	Other sectors, one HEI
Emma	Italy	51- 59	Small HEI, teaching and research	Head of university management and administration	Married, 3 children	Other sectors, one HEI
Virginia	Italy	60+	Medium HEI, teaching and research	Head of university management and administration	Married, 1 child	More HEIs
Leslie	Italy	51- 59	Medium HEI, teaching and	Head of university	Married, no	Other sectors, one HEI,

			research	management and administration	children	experience abroad
Stephanie	Sweden	51- 59	Medium, research- intensive HEI	Head of university administration	Married, no children	Other sectors, one HEI
Ingrid	Sweden	60+	Small, specialised, teaching and research HEI	University Director	Married, 3 children	Multiple institutions, only HEIs
Margaret	Sweden	60+	Medium, research- intensive HEI	University Director	Married, 2 children	Multiple institutions, only HEIs
Annika	Sweden	60+	Medium size, teaching and research university	University Director	Married, 2 children	Multiple institutions, only HEIs
Sharon	Sweden	51- 59	Small HEI, teaching and research	Head of University Management and Administration	Married, no children	Other sectors, one HEI

Table 5 – List of respondents

The first stage of analysis required me to familiarise myself with the data. Thus, I read through the data several times, highlighting, and writing memos as initial thoughts about codes. Next, through manual analysis, I first separated data into parts, labelling them in a variety of ways as specified earlier. After this first

stage, I reverted to an intensive re-reading of the notes and transcripts, linking the analysis of the interviews. I did not use N-Vivo, since manual analysis was thought to be more sensitive for the understanding of respondents' voices and, in my view, a more suitable tool to be used for analysis in this study.

Throughout the process, I was aware that coding is core to the analysis, since it calls for organising data into meaningful groups. This awareness came to me as a result of practising it in a prior study, the Institutional Focussed Study (IFS) during my EdD, so I knew that data analysis calls for “selecting, condensing and transforming data; displaying these data in an organised way and drawing and verifying conclusions from the condensed, displayed data” (Miles and Huberman, 1994:299). Thus, after this initial interaction with data, I generated a first framework of initial codes and a larger number of sub-codes, and these helped me visualise the initial structure of thematic coding analysis.

Following this, I made a list of all the emerging codes to remind me of the range of issues and statements arising from the data analysis: these consisted of codes arising from my research questions and of further codes derived from my theoretical framework. Several of these codes were about statements drawn from interviewees, and so were indigenous categories of terms and concepts. Thus, the following table summarises a selection of all the initial codes and sub-codes arising from the analysis:

Initial codes and sub-codes
A job in HE as a temporary workplace
All career lifetime spent in the same HEI
Other women as barriers – Being resentful about the role of women in my career
Men who teach women to do things (as they do), to be accepted in a men's world

Being seen as the role model from my daughters
Looking young: age matters more than gender
Treated as a secretary, but paid as the head of administration

Table 6 – First categorisation of initial codes

Then, after visualising a selection of all codes as shown in the table above (and in full as shown in the Appendix 3), I began refining them. And then, once the sub-codes were categorised within each category of initial codes, I developed the further stage of analysis which aimed at confirming identified themes. The match between codes and themes, shown in full in the Appendix 4, helps shed light on the development of themes arising from women’s accounts.

After doing that, I tried to ascertain whether the identified list of themes was a comprehensive representation of what I had heard in the accounts of interviewees. In so doing, I reviewed all my notes and transcripts once more. Thus, significant aspects of the accounts were critically interrogated, for instance voices reporting ambiguity or dissonance in relation to one or more of these themes and, more specifically, in relation to a specific country of study.

Overall, the process of refining and confirming this cluster of preliminary themes was not an easy task and meant I had to continually question whether all these codes and themes made sense in relation to the full range of accounts. At the same time, I began looking for correlations between themes and codes, even challenging the preliminary lists and considering new issues that may be associated with different themes.

Lastly, after repeating this back and forward between data, themes, and codes, an initial thematic network was constructed as shown below.

Organisational culture in the HE sector and in its HE institutions	Career routes taking into HE management	Men and women in my career
Issues in the family	Framework describing how women construct their career as leaders in HE management	Importance of social capital and networking
Having or building up self-confidence	Being a young/mature woman and the head of administration	Gaining academic credibility in HE

Figure 3 – First thematic network visualising women’s career in HE management

This network was then thought of as a further tool to consider how all codes and the set of initial themes fitted together in a coherent framework of analysis. Again, a concern about having captured all the significance of the data (Robson, 2011) was an issue with which I constantly engaged. Before these eight dynamics were established as the key components describing women’s construction of career in leadership, the framework had to be examined in relation to all my respondents.

3.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has moved from the definition of the theoretical perspective to the methodology before ending to describe the choice of the method for data collection. This method being semi-structured interviews. In addition, the three countries have been described in detail to describe their form of welfare, HE sector and even how much the concept of leadership can vary depending on these countries’ different level of maturity in the field of HE management.

Furthermore, the chapter has explained how the data collection took place, including a range of ethical requirements, for instance on interview setting and

data preparation. One section of the chapter has made the distinction between academic and practitioner literature to show how the latter may help in shedding light on issues falling into the professional sphere or in between the academic and the professional. Lastly, after dealing with the choices underlying respondent validation the chapter introduced thematic coding analysis and explained why this was deemed appropriate for the purposes of the study. In addition, the chapter described the data analysis and defined a first thematic network consisting of the eight lenses regarded as those more likely to affect career paths of women in institutional leadership in the sector.

Chapter Four – Presentation and analysis of the data

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis: the categories of initial codes are introduced before exploring these categories in depth and showing how a thematic network consisting of themes arising from all codes can help in understanding the career construction of this sample of women. Thus, the aim becomes to gain the understanding of women's attitudes or practices, as their response to 'rules and resources' found in their structural domains at the time of constructing their career as leaders. After that, a detailed account of the approaches to leadership that these women have activated in the field of HE management is provided.

4.2 Exploring codes: descriptive, interpretive, and pattern codes

Regarding the choice of presenting data from the interviews, I was aware that reflexivity is acknowledged to be important in data analysis, but also that it requires critical self-reflection of the ways in which the researcher's social background, personality, personal assumptions, position and behavior can impact on the research process, particularly the collection and analysis of the data (Lipson, 1991). Furthermore, in regard to the choice of presenting data, "there is a tendency to simplify the process of representing the 'voices' of respondents as though these voices speak on their own" (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003:418). Thus researchers often omit to explain how they make choices about the interpretation of respondents' voices and how they use transcript extracts to support these selected voices (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003). I selected quotations that were not only 'poignant and/or most representatives of the research findings' (Andersen, 2010:3), but also inclusive

of content explicitly addressed in the research questions. All of the respondents' voices were represented to some extent. However, some of these voices may appear to be weaker than others: and this happened even when my aim was to allow each respondent to make their voice heard in relation to key points. For this reason, the narratives included challenging factors and practices reported by respondents, and also of the accounts of how these practices have contributed to shaping their career strategies. This was intended to enable the reader to follow the interpretation and see how this had been informed by the data.

Thus, after visualising codes and themes in the form of a thematic network in Figure 3, all codes were further explored and lists of codes were compiled in accordance with the procedure recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994:58). Therefore, I used the research questions and the conceptual framework as lenses of investigation. Specifically, descriptive codes gave factual details about key dimensions of the study. Interpretive codes noted, for instance, possible latent meanings arising from discontinuities and ambiguities among respondents, and pattern codes emerged from links or themes across the accounts of different respondents (Miles and Huberman, 1994:57).

Descriptive codes

Among descriptive codes, the eight dynamics shown in Figure 3 as aggregate themes were analysed individually, and therefore the following descriptive codes became the components of data analysis:

- Sense of identification. This represented identification with the home institution, with the leadership role, and with both the role and institution but also with the HE sector.

- Sense of responsibility toward other women. This code arose when respondents' accounts were about issues associated with other women's career progression and including claiming sole responsibility for choosing the heir for their senior post, but also declining any responsibility for choosing men rather than women in recruitment whenever the national context penalised women as unreliable employees (in consideration of their family responsibilities).

- Struggle in managing or accepting their own leadership style. This was more often in relation to family issues, for instance holding multiple roles in leadership, and thus when roles (motherhood and institutional leadership) overlap and clash. This code pointed out how difficult the shift between roles is, particularly when women hold several roles in leadership, both in the family and in the home institution, and so they were frequently asked to switch from one to the other. This point also stressed when women: were regarded as role model within their family (e.g. especially by daughters, and this is the reason why having daughters among children was highlighted in the profile of some respondents); when they saw themselves as the breadwinners in the family; when they had supportive husbands/partners willing to raise their children; but also when these partners/husbands were reported to have sacrificed their own career for the sake of the women's careers; additionally, when children were seen as the career choice (for example choosing not to have children or alternatively waiting to have independent children before aspiring to posts in leadership as a choice in career).

- Understanding the level of legitimacy conferred by the role. This represented how others, mainly academics, saw these women in a post of power. For instance, issues arising from the data reported the feeling of being treated not as the head of administration but as a secretary (however also about the

consolation of being paid as the head of administration). In addition, accounts reported other women saying that men had allowed them to take over as heads of administration and to enter roles in institutional leadership.

- Feeling as if in transition in HE, including moving in and out of the HE sector.

This code reported respondents' understanding of a career in HE management.

Firstly, the sector was hardly regarded as a first career choice - thus confirming

how accidental a career in HE management may be (Lewis, 2014) - and

sometimes it was seen as a temporary workplace from which to leave; this latter

feeling was more likely to be heard in countries like Italy. Furthermore, the code

referred to the age - or to the stage of career - in which women made the

decision to enter HE management, and referred to the choice of moving job

inside and outside the HE sector, including going abroad for career purposes.

- Capability to 'speak the dialect'. This code represents women who are able to

behave and talk like men, in consideration of a prior job experience (more often

the first job experience) in a man's world, or because they are used to 'playing

sport with men', or simply because men were never seen as the problem. It

could also refer to women able or not able to speak as men from the local

community normally do, and therefore with regional connotations as was

evidenced in interviews which took place in Italy.

- Men have allowed women to secure these most senior roles in the sector: this

code means that men are expected to approve women holding this senior role.

- Further issues shed light on a combination of gender and age, on academic

credibility and on how much knowledge is required for a leadership post. A

number of these issues were reported aggregately, for instance the lack of

knowledge was often coupled with the young and with the need to be older (e.g.

too young to be leader), so to look right or to be fit for the role. Academic

credibility was more often reported as a requirement *per se*. Further issues reported concern how to gain academic credibility, but also how this was more likely to be when women came from professions or from other sectors.

After considering this list of descriptive codes and highlighting a number of them, for instance the sense of identification or that of responsibility towards other women, but also the feeling of being in transition in HE, in the following paragraph I move on to consider interpretive codes.

Interpretive codes

After dealing with these descriptive codes, a set of interpretive codes was finalised, namely concerning latent meanings arising from discontinuities and ambiguities among respondents. Those that follow were the issues arising from respondents' accounts:

- On the sense of identification. Interpretively, I expected this code to go beyond its descriptive meaning to an institutionalisation of the role. Implications arising from this meaning were multi-faceted and thus the role may become a constraint for women because others – mainly academics inside or outside the home institution – saw them only in that particular role, so that they felt trapped and institutionalised. In addition, these women might not be considered for higher positions and this would have made applications to other leadership posts even tougher. The role, therefore, appeared to stick with these women to the extent that it became institutionalised in their career route.

Further cases of identification showed how women leaders might tend to identify themselves with a particular area of the institution (the central administration more likely to be this area), but also that they could identify themselves with other communities related to the professional domain inside or

outside of the institution, including professional networks. Lastly, an outcome of these cases was that women may tend to identify themselves with the type of society they operate in to the extent that they apply mechanisms unfair to other women, for instance by purposely recruiting men rather than women.

- Dissonance in relation to legitimising others in leadership roles. This code referred to the understanding of who was the leader in the institution, with some respondents claiming that this higher role holder was to be taken for granted and others stating that this should be challenged repeatedly. This issue was regarded as even more significant when occurring within the same HE system (for instance, in England).

- The level of legitimacy of the role and how much this is legitimised by others. Interpretively, this code meant how others, mainly academics but also administrators, saw these women as leadership post holders. On the one hand, academics may see the head of administration as a secondary institutional role (with a rather low degree of influence) and treat the post holder - when a woman - as the secretary of the vice chancellor or rector, as earlier shown among descriptive codes. On the other hand, these women heads of administration (or equivalent) might in some countries see themselves holding the second most powerful institutional role just below the VC or rector. In addition, this interpretive code pointed out how other administrators considered the figure of the Head of Administration differently, both because a senior post held by a woman might diminish its perception of power, and because administrators may underestimate the role played by others in senior posts, including what these might do for the professional community in terms of visibility or credibility. There is also the possibility that nobody within the institution knew that there were women in these leadership roles. Lastly,

regarding this interpretive code, staff in administrative functions may see women in leadership roles as inadequate because of their style of leadership shaped around male behaviours or also due to stereotyped preconceptions.

- Dissonance in relation to the level of reputation of different contexts in HE.

This point stressed differences in perceived reputations within the sector, so in line with that which was demonstrated in Chapter Three (for instance, how HE professionals or administrators as civil servants are seen in different countries, including the overall professional status and specifically that of leadership role holders).

- Dissonance in relation to how to enhance knowledge and professionalism and, specifically, to the added value arising from attending leadership courses. This last code stressed the importance of further learning and enhancement of professionalism – both in the leadership role and in HE management. The code also made the further point whether women already holding a post in leadership were really in need of attending these courses (where they may already be the most senior post holders among participants). Again this issue was regarded as even more significant when occurring within the same HE system (for instance, in England).

After examining interpretive codes and highlighting a number of these, such as forms of dissonance in relation to legitimising others in leadership posts, or to assessing the level of reputation of the different domains of HE, in the following paragraph I reveal the pattern codes.

4.3 Pattern codes - Practices of women constructing their career as leaders

Lastly, after the data overview emerging from the descriptive and the interpretive codes the pattern codes were developed. It became apparent that respondents could be distinguished by their attitude towards impeding factors encountered within their structural domains, as described in previous chapters. This attitude should be regarded as the response to a situation and its transformation in a particular direction (Giddens, 1979; Connell, 1987), which is Giddens' definition of 'practice', and the reason why 'practices' and not 'attitudes' will be the term used in this study henceforth. Therefore, this response describes the way these women acted in order to overcome barriers and develop their career strategies.

Further, this concept of practice used to describe the expression of women's agency and "their capability of doing those things in the first place" (Giddens, 1984:9).

As a result, the professional women were primarily classified on the basis of their practice in conforming or in reacting to 'rules and resources', but also in showing awareness of their entitlement to leadership, or in seeking to have this entitlement confirmed through further professional development. Thus, in conclusion of the process of data analysis, all accounts were placed into four main groups, which are identification, moral duty, super-confidence, and dedication to professional development in the field of practice.

Therefore, pattern codes and related specifications of these four groups stood as follows:

- **Pattern codes relating to identification with structural domains.** These involved alignment with rules and resources in the sector, thus showing not only acceptance but also compliance by those women who saw themselves as part

of their structural domains. Overall, these women demonstrated a sense of identification with the role and overall with their home institution, as shown below here:

“Because those were the rules [of the organization] at the time ... they should be accepted as they are, even if unfair”
(Carolyn)

“And I suppose ... a woman that it's fine as long as we realize where our position is” (Heather)

“ ... amazing, such a privilege to be in my role [such as] close [to university leaders]. And it was the moment when I really understood how the whole university system works bringing all offices together” (Heather)

“And I'd say that was the job [as institutional leader] that of all the jobs I had I had loved the most” (Virginia)

This sense of identification was also likely to be something to be proud of, even an expression of their agency, and this was confirmed by the words:

“And I took on that role and it took me absolutely to the top of my passion” (Virginia)

Thus, rules should be accepted even when unfair to these or to other women; within this framework, opportunities were likely to come sooner or later, though more probably resulting from men's choices and concessions. Choices and issues occurring within the family were hardly relevant for this group of women.

• **Pattern codes relating to refusal to identify with structural domains coupled with moral duty.** These showed women with a disregard for rules and with the determination to change them. This was coupled with the further aim of doing something to support other women's career progression:

"Then I started looking at my boss and thinking: I can do what you do better than you do" (Teresa)

"I was looking again at people above me, thinking I can do what you do so much better" (Margaret)

"Of course you don't say that you're ambitious, because we girls don't say that, but however you'll try to make a change if you feel you don't fit in with these rules [of the organization and/or of the sector]" (Margaret)

"Because my priority is supporting women, and this is purely as the result of my experience, I do take my responsibility for all women really, really seriously" (Teresa)

Rules were perceived as unfair and these women were driven by a sense of justice aiming to change the status quo of gender inequality in HE. These women were also proactive and had a fair degree of autonomy in their post. Seeing their supportive attitude to other women as a sort of responsibility, they may have gained this attitude from experience such as having encountered non-supportive women in their own careers. Therefore, these women were keen

to be connected with others in the sector, for instance with other women in networks, or by using interpersonal relationships as an asset within professional associations. This was more likely to be the case of women breadwinners in their own family.

• **Pattern codes relating to awareness of own entitlement or super-confidence.** These women differ from those who identify with structural domains since they do not ponder on the social structures where they find themselves; and this happens because social structures have become integrated into who they feel they are as leaders. As a result, these codes showed women with a high degree of self-confidence more often coupled with a fair understanding of what the rules were from the outset, although having inherited these rules without taking a judgmental stance. Therefore, these women were those who knew the ‘rules of the game’ prevailing in the sector as the result of prior career experiences. The knowledge of their structural domains was embedded in these women’s practices or even inherited.

“So I understood how to behave in a man’s world, and learnt the rules of the workplace right there” (Stephanie)

“But I also saw how to be accepted and when I was allowed to raise my hand and talk at meetings” (Emma)

“I know this working environment and the sector pretty well and I know even more what happen on any floor of my institution” (Leslie)

Therefore, 'super-confidence' refers to women's capability to act as men do and to be treated as peers by men, as heard from the respondent below:

"Because possibly of my previous career I'm a very robust person, I'm very confident and, you know, outgoing, and so I don't let those sort of barriers affect me" (Whitney)

Firstly, this capability implies feeling at ease within men's spaces, for instance they are those who claim to be fully entitled to play sport with men. Secondly, this capability can refer to women able to speak not just as men do but also, where relevant, to engage with stakeholders from the local community and speak with local knowledge of the region/country of the institution. Lastly, these women were aware of their high degree of self-confidence, mainly gained in other sectors and more often coupled with prior job experience in a 'man's world'.

In addition, gaining or maintaining this high level of self-confidence or even ego identity was never seen as a problem for these women, even if it may have been a problem for others, as this respondent claimed:

"But what I do see is a lot of women that are cowed by those male attitudes, women who aren't as confident as me, who are afraid to speak up, or are afraid to accept things that I would never accept" (Georgia)

Women in this cluster showed understandings of the balance achieved in the family and as institutional leaders, and the family was more likely to be regarded as an asset and valued in contributing to career progression. Examples of this pattern have included the description of the family as the playground to develop

their leadership skills and also to learn how to effectively switch from the leadership role in the family to another in their institution.

• **Pattern codes relating to seeking entitlement to leadership through dedication to professional development in the field of practice.** These codes showed highly-educated women with a wealth of knowledge in the field of higher education management and in its practice. These women differ from other groups shown above because they rely heavily on their professional development in the practice of HE leadership to develop or even to transform their social structures. Overall, their aspiration to a high level of knowledge of the sector, job, or more generally of the field was their response to 'rules and resources' within structural domains, as some of the respondents explained:

“Through a number of courses I have been able to reach this senior post in a relatively short time, so training and HE are all my passion” (Ingrid)

“In the meantime I decided that I needed academic credibility so I did a master degree ... and then a PhD. Again the PhD was quite important as it was a marker” (Angela)

“... [gaining further academic credibility] was a big step and that was seen as ‘oh women don't do that’ and people immediately started looking at me in a different way” (Angela)

“... as a woman in HE you can get credibility [as leader] only if you are able to keep yourself on the frontline of knowledge of professional practice” (Ashley)

More specifically, theirs was a response to a perceived lack of cultural entitlement to leadership in the sector, coupled with the need to have their cultural entitlement legitimised. However, this dedication to own professional growth as leaders was regarded as something key, not only in order to secure a post in leadership, but also to make the world a better place. This was confirmed by one of the respondents:

‘[in consideration of my role] I can make a difference ... so the world will be a better place, and I want to contribute to that’
(Ashley)

Interestingly, these women used a number of ways to accomplish their professional growth for the purposes of gaining this cultural entitlement. This included academic credibility through PhDs, MBAs, and further qualifications specific to HE management, as well as leadership courses. In addition, they may have experienced other sectors or a range of jobs in higher education, not only at a lower level but also laterally in the sector and abroad. Family issues for this group of women were less clearly accounted for.

4.3.1 Primary and secondary practice of women as leaders

After drawing pattern codes from the analysis, the texts of all interviews were coded in light of the four categories of practices with one regarded as the main category, or the primary or dominant one.

However, it was clear to me that although some of the respondents showed a predominant practice, others were more likely to be on the border between two categories. In most of the cases, respondents showed a dominant or primary practice, and this was sufficient for the understanding of their career construction to become leaders. While in other cases, in addition to a first practice women showed a secondary one with the combination of the two shedding further light on their construction of career as leaders.

Thus, the table below summarises the primary and, wherever relevant, the secondary practice of these women leaders:

Respondent	Country	Primary practice	Secondary practice
Heather	England	Identification	Dedication to professional development in the field of practice
Teresa	England	Moral duty	
Whitney	England	Super-confidence	
Ashley	England	Dedication to professional development in the field of practice	
Carolyn	England	Identification	
Georgia	Italy	Super-confidence	
Angela	Italy	Dedication to professional development in the field of practice	Super-confidence
Emma	Italy	Super-confidence	
Virginia	Italy	Identification	Dedication to professional

			development in the field of practice
Leslie	Italy	Super-confidence	
Stephanie	Sweden	Super-confidence	
Ingrid	Sweden	Dedication to professional development in the field of practice	Moral duty
Margaret	Sweden	Moral duty	
Annika	Sweden	Super-confidence	
Sharon	Sweden	Super-confidence	

Table 7 – Primary and secondary practices of professional women as leaders

Looking at the table above, we see that the four categories of practice are all present in England; that moral duty is missing in Italy; and that only identification is missing in Sweden. Dedication to own professional development in the field of practice is well-represented in the three countries.

However, after categorising practices from all respondents and establishing the four categories, the main concern was still not to overlook significant elements. A further concern was to confirm these categories as the main ones, as well as to discover the most appropriate label to denote each group. For this reason, all texts of interviews were reviewed once more, and then it was decided that the four categories as I had outlined them were capable of illuminating the data and enabling the research questions to be addressed.

In addition, some of these primary and secondary practices, identification and dedication or super-confidence and dedication for instance, may appear to be contrasting to some extent. However, this contrasting combination of practices

may help to explain women's career strategies, which is what is going to be explained in the following section.

4.3.2 Identifying career strategies of women leaders

After drawing an overview of dominant or primary and secondary practices, a range of career strategies was identified. In doing so, I moved from the consideration that "practice is of the moment", so that it is not likely to have the long duration suggested by Giddens (Connell, 1987:141), to the further consideration that career strategies should be regarded as the set of repeated practices activated by this group of women at the time of constructing their career as leaders.

Thus, the primary practice emerged as the leading feature of a career strategy showing women's response to impeding factors at the time when these women constructed their career in leadership. In addition, this primary practice can show the leading part of the whole strategy or only be in relation to a certain stage of career in women's career construction.

Overall, however, these strategies should be regarded as not mutually exclusive and so individuals can engage in different practices over time and sometimes even simultaneously.

Thus, in moving from categories of practice to strategies, the outcome was to label these strategies by using a definition coupled with a motto, with these mottos being key statements, or *in vivo* terms, collected from respondents and chosen for their easy-way to summarise key elements of each strategy. Overall, these were the four career strategies identified:

The alignment strategy, or the 'I know who the boss is' motto: this career strategy is likely to result from an identification practice, from a woman pleased

to be in that role, in that workplace, and to be placed within her structural boundaries (so, 'the boss' can be understood as the institution itself and the knowledge that this woman has of her home institution). She is aware both of constraints and enablers within these structures, but as these pre-exist they cannot be disregarded or blamed. This woman is likely to be sensitive about gendered barriers in HE and is likely to take action and have her own strategy for it in place (e.g. shortlisting one woman at least for any recruitment process). Lastly, she knows that within structural domains there is a great of opportunities to grasp, which can be activated depending on key people in the institution or on circumstances.

The commitment to change strategy, or 'I can do it better than you' motto:

this type of strategy might be seen in opposition to the 'identification' strategy, since this woman does not recognise the authority - of the institution or of the current boss in it - and challenges herself and the particular context in an attempt to enhance her expertise, but also to back other women in their career progression. As a result, this career strategy characterises women who see the challenge in everything and put change in their career as a deliberate and first choice (the motto here is to express their purpose to push themselves continuously). These women are likely to stay in a post for 2-3 years and then leave to take something else on, not necessarily a higher post in HE management. They are therefore passionate about frequent changes in career and about their will to push for fairness within structures: this is the type of woman who can be perceived as brave compared to other women, even because she was able to quit a job without having a new one. They are pleased to be pioneers in their role - or also in their career trajectory - and they may also

be publicly on the frontline in tackling gender inequality in the workplace so in favour of other women's career progression.

The taking on challenges and changing myself at any time strategy, or 'I want more of a challenge' motto: this career strategy is held by women who have frequently moved between sectors, so those who are highly skilled - with their main expertise which, more often than not, arises from other sectors -, and who are self-confident enough due to a prior experience in male dominated fields. Differently from the commitment to change strategy, this is more about women moving in and out of the sector and among institutions (so the motto expresses the range of challenges that are more likely to be found inside and outside HE), but also about changing career route even laterally or by accepting lower posts or by taking long breaks in career. They are sensitive to other women's career progression, but may also be among those who purposively penalise other women since:

'I know very well how much women are penalised in this form of society' (Georgia)

The looking for entitlement by investing in my professional development career strategy, and the 'studying is important and it is what I do anyway' motto: this career strategy characterises women who have gained a wealth of expertise in one field (or more than one, if not all, HE management-related) and this may have been done through education and professional practice, or as the result of a varied career trajectory experienced in a number of jobs and perhaps in more sectors. Women in this career strategy are expected to rely on a background of expertise which may be assimilated to academic knowledge, so

they can rely on professional and academic credentials (and credibility), and they are seen as the masters in their field of practice.

4.4 From practices to approaches to leadership

Therefore, the four categories of practices shown in previous sections emerged as "major organizing ideas" and were regarded as able to describe and summarise the main approaches to leadership constructed by these women as agents (Creswell, 1998:144). Thus, these approaches are interconnected with the four practices and should be seen as the expression of how women purposely position themselves in leadership in HE.

From the 'identification' practice to the 'woman of the institution'

This strategy shows a woman who has a wealth of expertise in the field of practice of HE management, and this may be for instance the result of a career in a single HEI with related understanding of the environment in which she operates. This woman may therefore have played different progressive roles up to a senior post within a single HEI.

Therefore, issues of identification with the role and institution were likely to happen together in this approach: here, the institution is seen as fully supporting her career progression and she may become institutionalised in her institution and also in her role. Due to her sense of identification, this woman might come to personify her home institution, or become a sort of 'gatekeeper' at the institutional level and decide who is entitled to join or should be left out.

However, an inconvenience of this single-institution career trajectory may be that others see you in that particular role, and may not be able to consider you

suitable for different or even higher posts. One of the respondents describes the issue thus:

'I think within the same university is a good thing but it's also a bad thing ... (with recruiters thinking) "how do we know you can perform anywhere else apart from one university?", so that's a good and a bad thing' (Heather)

While another respondent claimed:

'You can hold a role in the same institution for a long while and become the head of that institution in people's eyes; at that point, others will struggle to see you elsewhere' (Virginia)

Other women in her career are more likely to have been challenging, since she claims that:

'I would say in my experience the women have been harder on me than men, they've challenged me more, they've pushed me more, I've felt less supported than I did with the men' (Carolyn)

This woman also shows awareness of barriers for herself and for other women in HE: these barriers may be gender or society-specific, or also age-related (for instance, she knows how problematic it can be looking young and aspiring to a senior post or looking too old to accept a new post in her late 40s), but these barriers can also depend on a lack of self-confidence:

'One of the main barriers that I came across was about being young, or looking young, or looking small, so those of you that

have a bit of height helps, so until very recently I think I looked younger than I was, so looking youthful did not help ... I think another barrier is my own psychological barrier ... so I think I'm causing my own barriers' (Heather)

From 'moral duty' to the 'woman with a service to other women'

This strategy shows a woman who sees that rules in the sector are more likely to be unfair, and this may arise from a variety of causes including the lack of support from other women, so that she seems to make a type of personal judgement. She is however led by a high sense of responsibility toward the institution, regardless its unfair rules and the lack of other women's support, and this the reason for her to claim:

'Not a single woman who has helped me with my career, not a single woman ... so I'm very bitter about the role of women in my career and as a senior woman I take it very seriously. You know I would mentor any woman who comes and asks me and wouldn't mentor men' (Teresa)

As a result, her mission as a leader is to help other women in their career and she is happy with delivering this service to other women, thus she claims:

'We have a responsibility as women to support other women ... I really believe that through this work I can make a difference because, to quote M. Albright, there's a special place in hell for women who do not help other women' (Margaret)

This woman may be regarded as a pioneer and therefore brave in her career choices (e.g. by taking a long career break, but also by taking on a lower post late in her career after holding the one as HoA). Lastly, she is likely to be actively involved in professional networks as well as in women's circles, in and out of the profession in HE management.

From 'ego identity' to 'the spin-off woman'

Overall, this strategy is meant to represent a woman who is likely to show the wealth of experience and self-confidence gained in other sectors. In addition, this woman is likely to demonstrate her familiarity with men's rules as a result of experiencing a man's world in previous jobs:

'I play golf with men, so I know where my place is in a man's world, even in the workplace' (Annika)

In addition, even whether she may have experienced unpleasant situations in her career (e.g. dismissed due to pregnancy), she may have built her career on these disagreeable events and her position as leader too. This may have strengthened her self-confidence and ability to cope with unfair rules or any sort of difficulty.

'While I was in that sector I got married and when I was pregnant with my first daughter ... I was basically sacked for being pregnant, and that was that, so I was out (of the sector). I had no intention of leaving (the sector) but I was made to leave and this has made me stronger and determined to be a 'different' leader one day' (Emma)

She is therefore aware that other women lack her level of self-confidence and, in her approach to leadership, she is determined to help other women.

'I found barriers for other reasons in my career, but not really because of my gender ... I don't think I have personally and I think a lot of this [goes] with the personality of women ... and they are the women that I really want to help, and there's a couple of women I'm working with now in order to develop them because they are so capable but they don't know how capable they are, where I know there are men who are far less capable, who are promoting themselves as being more capable' (Whitney)

Lastly, she is likely to be a sort of 'role model' in her family, especially for her daughters.

From 'dedication to professional development in the field of practice' to the 'start-up woman'

Lastly, this strategy is for a woman who is dedicated to any sort of improvement of her own professionalism as leader. Studying and life-long learning are therefore regarded as the main components of her professional life, and this attitude may be not just for career purposes, but also to show her contribution to society, as she claims:

'I really believe that through this work I can make a difference'
(Angela)

Thus, education is expected to be shown as the main vehicle legitimising her cultural entitlement in the sector, and it may also become a lifestyle of the ideal leader:

'For me, studying is important and being with me anyway ... I am better educated than many of the academics I'm working with. It does help with credibility at the level I'm now working at. There's a barrier in society that says that people shouldn't develop themselves and I think somebody has invented that to hold the other people down' (Ashley)

Lastly, she can develop a wealth of expertise in the field of HE management, become professor of practice or the equivalent, or a mentor or fellow within professional associations. This may happen even if she may be the one who has struggled to be taken seriously in HE management because of prior expertise in unrelated fields of practice. Her dedication to professional development can therefore be her way to show support to other women to become leaders in the sector.

4.5 Conclusion

After explaining the choice to present the data from the interviews this chapter has explained the analysis of the interview data, and illustrated the development of a conceptual model that frames discussion of women's practice toward structural domains in leadership posts in the HE sector. These were explored in the context of the four dominant practices of identification, moral duty, ego identity and of dedication to professional development in the field of practice. Subsequently, we moved from practices to four approaches constructed by

these women as leaders. In the following chapters these practices and approaches will be explained in detail in the three countries to highlight social and cultural elements, wherever relevant to the discussion on women in leadership in HE. Then practices and approaches will help understand how women, in light of these structural factors, have not only constructed their career but have decided to perform as leaders in the sector.

Chapter Five – Professional women as leaders in England, Italy and Sweden

5.1 Introduction

After describing practices and approaches in Chapter Four, this chapter aims to explain the range of factors more likely to impact on the construction of women's career in each country. In fact, these structural domains are to be intended as the configuration of where these women find themselves and so as context-specific boundaries in which respondents have constructed their career and related strategies.

Next, the chapter looks at practices and approaches in each of the three countries in order to identify similarities or differences and highlight how these may be context-specific.

5.2 Factors most affecting the construction of women's career in England, Italy, and Sweden

The aim of this first part of the chapter is to explore these factors for each country more in depth as the key themes heard from respondents. Thus, the sections that follow describe these themes, discussed one after the other (not in order of importance), and highlight the dominant features found in each country.

Factors in the HE sector in England - Age and appearance, men having the last word, legitimising others as institutional leaders, identification, professional associations, and careers in transition in HE management

Legitimacy:

Respondents have shown different levels of recognition for legitimacy with regards to others in senior leadership posts – in other words, those of their superiors – that have been mainly mediated by their evaluation of how these individuals have performed in the role. For instance, this is represented when contrasting views are reported concerning who the boss is, or when respondents say something such as ‘I can do it much better than my boss’. Interestingly this assessment of who the boss is or questions over the performance of an authority figure were only reported in England.

Men’s acceptance of (which) women will be allowed to hold the senior roles:

This factor reveals that men are expected to have the final word on which women to admit and on the level of agency that these women will be allowed to exercise.

Age:

Age appears to matter in England more than in other countries, and this was proven by the majority of women quoting the ‘age factor’ as key at a certain stage of their career. Age was frequently regarded as the key factor, for example when taking the decision to enter HE from other sectors, or to leave it for a while (for instance, for a career break). Therefore, having the right age for a leadership position or using the age factor as the parameter to take decisions seemed to have more of an impact on women’s careers than gender in England, and this result was apparent despite a respondent claiming that ‘I do not know which between gender and age matters more here’ (Carolyn).

Appearance:

This was more likely to be combined with age, with women saying to be seen as too young for the senior role in question or that their career progression has moved along faster as they have looked older.

Identification:

This was heard to be often associated with the leadership role (but also with HE management as the specific field of practice), with the home institution and with a unique home institution even if not the current one. The institutionalisation of a woman in a specific role was also raised as an issue, particularly from those holding the role in the same institution for most of their career, since others cannot see these women holding the same or higher roles in other institutions.

Role of professional associations:

These associations appear to play a major role in HE management. In addition, I have noted how a number of accounts indirectly described these as safe spaces where professionals in HE management can enhance their knowledge as well as strengthen ties through a wide range of networking opportunities (Whitchurch, 2013; Poli, IFS, 2013).

Sense of responsibility towards other women and their career progression:

The intention to show solidarity with other women's career efforts was heard, not only from those women who fell into the category of the woman with a service to other women. Moreover, this intention is more often paired with a plan of action to make it happen, so it is backed by examples of how they have dealt with other women's career aspirations.

Careers in transition in HE management:

Reports of these women's careers frequently show trajectories that are in transition - from one sector to another, from one institution to another, from a higher to a lower post being among the main trajectories. In addition, these careers may be crossing what I earlier described as intersecting career trajectories, with individuals who, more often than before, are allowed to move from management to academia (for instance, in relation to women being offered academic contracts and so moving from a professional to an academic contract within the management domain). This is proven by the rise in the number of those becoming professors of practice in England, for instance in HE management or in research management.

To conclude this first section, we see how professional women leaders in England, regardless of having the highest number of roles in professional leadership in the three countries (as a result of England being the only country where academic and professional career paths may more often cross each other), appear penalised more than those in Italy and Sweden. This emerges not only in relation to some of the overall figures as shown in She Figures (2009, 2012) as well as in Morley's report (2013), but specifically when considering the rate of women holding leadership posts in HE as this is the lowest in the three countries: less than 10% compared with 15% in Italy and with 45% in Sweden. Additional features characterising the sector include: career trajectories in HE management being regarded as unique experiences and therefore non-linear, this confirming Locke and Whitchurch (2016) in relation to career trajectories of the academic workforce. However, it is still possible to identify common components, for instance the investment in all-type

professional growth and in professional networks, and the importance of age as a common topic of discussion and frequently quoted among factors leading to make decisions to leave the sector or to join it.

Factors in the HE sector in Italy - Temporary careers in HE management, men having the last word, role of men as mentors or sponsors, role of family networks, and identification with society and its boundaries

Temporary careers in HE management:

Unlike in England, reports in Italy do not so frequently highlight the sense of being in transition, which is not so common in consideration of the low level of mobility intra-sector. As a result, a job in HE management is seen as a temporary workplace and hardly as a first career choice, however a place in which you feel in transition and wish to leave for other sectors or even for posts abroad.

Men's acceptance of (which) women will be allowed to hold the senior roles:

This factor reveals that men are expected to have the final word on which women to admit and on the level of agency that these women will be allowed to exercise.

Family networks:

These refer to any connections that back candidates only in consideration of their family relationships and, as a result, which are not based on meritocracy and evaluation of expertise. These are widespread in the sector in Italy, thus they were not frequently mentioned, and were only reported when asked specifically. Recently issued regulations and ethics codes within universities

have not only attempted to do away with these connections, but also to prevent them from penalising talented candidates. Therefore, these connections were regarded as structural components in the sector and tolerated even when not approved.

The role of family networks (nepotism):

This has been only reported on demand, so that women have confirmed that 'family networks are elsewhere in the sector as well as in their institution' even by saying that '*they can be found at any floor of the institution*' (Leslie). In addition, they have confirmed that it is unlikely to rid universities of these networks in the short term, so to confirm Cubillo and Brown's study (2003) highlighting the impact of these family networks on women's careers.

'Growing in a man's world' or 'speaking the dialect':

This represents women's adaptation to men's rules in the sector: this theme stressed how women felt familiar with any man's world, it being inside or outside the sector or the home institution.

The role of mentors and sponsors and the role that mainly men play in women's careers:

This was reported as highly influential here. In addition, women's voices stressed that being raised in a man's world (for instance, in the IT sector) mattered, so that women had gained an understanding of an appropriate time to talk at meetings, and how to deal with men without hurting anybody within the 'men network'.

Identification:

This was more likely with the home institution and with the leadership role. There was also the case of institutionalised roles – or also institutionalised establishments - where women felt trapped in a role/institution because others saw these women only in that role/institution, and could therefore not take these women into account for other posts. This form of institutionalisation may even come as result of the low level of mobility within the sector.

Identification with society and consequently with the deliberate choice not to support other women:

This second level of identification with society showed a case where a respondent purposively made the choice to recruit men and not women, since the subject knew the extent to which women were penalized in that form of society. This occurred as a planned course of action, regardless of the interviewee being fully supported by her husband who raised all their children.

In conclusion, professional women as leaders in Italy have shown more linear career routes compared to women in England. However, interestingly, this conclusion relied on opposite career choices, such as those of women from other sectors who were appointed to leadership posts in HE, or those who spent their whole career within the same institution. In addition, this conclusion included women's feeling that working in HE was only temporary, primarily in consideration of the characteristics of the sector such as low pay and low standards of performance. Significantly, but not surprisingly, professional networks were never quoted as promoters of professional development or as the means to enhance ties and level of professionalism, with there being only

one exception. In addition, family networks were only reported when asked specifically. Lastly, demonstrating adaptation to a male world and practices were abilities regarded as something to show and to some extent to be proud of.

Factors in the HE sector in Sweden - Informal and professional networks, playing sport with men, high reputation backgrounds, and careers in transition in HE management

'Playing sport with men':

This refers to women's culturally embedded adaptation to men's rules in the sector: this theme stressed how women felt familiar with any man's world, whether this was inside or outside the sector or the home institution. The analogy with sport arises from the familiarity reported by women in belonging or in joining men's networks and so in their feeling of being fully accepted and entitled to stay in in the sector. This feeling appears to have been taken for granted and not to be under discussion at any time. It is therefore common for women in this context to maintain relationships with men at work and informally, and to report these relationships when asked specifically. This factor is therefore less likely to be dependent on men's acceptance, as described for England and for Italy.

Informal and professional networks:

These networks are very likely to be shared with men. Primarily, these networks refer to the professional sphere, and are spaces where women in the sector or in the same role can discuss issues with their peers.

Academic credibility and high reputation background:

The point to make here was about the factors that could help these women to gain academic credibility in the sector, for instance in relation to women with backgrounds from a different profession or from other sectors. As a result, academic credibility was never regarded as an issue here, since this often arose from the wealth of expertise gained in other institutions, sectors or professions.

Sense of responsibility towards other women and their career progression:

This was heard to be frequently mentioned and also demonstrates a proactive attitude towards other women's career progression to the extent of choosing the heir for the leadership role at the home institution.

Careers in transition in HE management:

Careers were regarded as in transition less in relation to their flexible trajectories, and more about moving frequently between HEIs, and between these and other sectors. There was neither the issue of a post in HE management as temporary nor of this post not being regarded as a first choice in a woman's career.

In conclusion, professional women as leaders in Sweden highlight overall a familiarity with men's networks and with men's rules, the latter to an extent being taken for granted. However, the majority of women in leadership posts in HE management came from other sectors if not from different professions, and therefore mobility inside and outside the sector was well-represented. Lastly, all

types of networks were regarded as key to enhancing professional development, including informal ones, which appeared to be equally as vital.

5.3 Looking at practices and approaches of women leaders in England, Italy, and Sweden – Locating ‘women’s place’ in leadership in HE

Thus, in this second part of the chapter the aim is to analyse patterns of practices and approaches, wherever relevant, in each of the three countries. Therefore, these practices and approaches activated by women leaders have been shown in each country in light of context-specific connotations, wherever found, and then the whole range of similarities and differences are shown in the following table.

Practices and Approaches More Likely to be Relevant in the Construction of a Professional Women’s Careers as Leaders – Overview of the Three Countries		England	Sweden	Italy
Practices	Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification with role, institution, and sector but also with HE management - Institutionalisation of the role - Personification or animation of the home institution 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification with role and home institution - Institutionalisation of the role - Personification and animation of the home institution
	Moral Duty	Moral duty as being passionate about the profession	Moral duty as empowering women and preparing for	

			leadership posts	
	Super-Confidence	Grown in a man's world	Playing sport with men	- Grown in a man's world But also: - Speaking the dialect
	Dedication to Professional Development in the Field of Practice	More in relation to HEM and to leadership altogether	More in relation to leadership	More in relation to leadership
From Practices to their associated Models of Women in Leadership	The Woman of the Institution	Affection for the role, the home institution and also for the sector - and overall the field of HEM.		Likely to have an affection for the role and the home institution, whilst less likely for the sector
	The Woman with a Service to HE and to Other Women	Women bitter about the role of women in their career and determined to take on this responsibility	I have already chosen the heir for my post in the institution	
	The Spin-Off Woman	More HEIs and other sectors	More HEIs and sectors/professions	Other sectors, less likely, more HEIs
	The Start-Up Woman	Exploring new things, but also being passionate about studying for its own sake	Passionate about training and any kind of alignment with academic expertise	Passionate about leadership courses for career purposes, and not just for the sake of studying

Table 8 – Practices and approaches of professional women in their construction of career as leaders in the light of context-specific features

Looking at the table, we see for instance how the practice of identification is more likely to be with role and institution in Italy, while, this is more likely to be with role, institution and also with the sector in England. This contrasts sharply with Sweden where it may be missing entirely. As a result, this table shows cross-national practices in relation to 'super-confidence' and 'dedication to professional development in the field of practice'. But it also shows how the HE sector is likely to be the leading context for these women leaders though characterised by culture-specific features (for instance, the 'super-confidence' practice becomes 'grown in a man's world' in England, 'speaking the dialect' in Italy and 'playing sport with men' in Sweden), as further explained in the paragraph that follows.

Hence, among further similarities and differences, I have highlighted the following ones.

Firstly, concerning practices, and specifically in relation to the practice of 'super-confidence', this may be rephrased as 'Speaking the dialect' in Italy, so that the aim is to further show how this key statement has cultural connotations, which can be understood in one country and become unclear once expressed in the same terms in other contexts. This 'dialect' not only refers to women's capability to 'act as men', but also refers to the specific language of that particular region, including the knowledge of the wider local environment and the relations in place with key institutional figures. On the contrary, this practice in England and Sweden is related to the capability of speaking and behaving as men do, and this as a result of women having grown in a man's world, for example, in workplaces where men are likely to be the majority of employees, such as in IT. This may also be because it is the norm 'to play sport with men', and share working spaces and institutional roles with them. This latter is the case when

the country has a fair balance of women in the field or in leadership posts, such as in Sweden. However, there is no difference between 'to play sport with men' and 'to have grown in a man's world', since they represent the same practice and only become more capable of explanation according to the specific context or country.

Secondly, in relation to approaches to leadership, the 'woman with a service to HE and to other women' shows how, on the one hand, this is more likely to be the result of negative personal experiences in England – with women feeling bitter about the role that other women played in their career and are therefore determined to reverse this trend, and be responsible for other women's career progression. On the other hand, there is an opposite course of action in Italy, with women spanning from those feeling a mild sense of responsibility towards other women, to those intentionally recruiting only men. This depends on how much the form of society has affected women's opportunities in their careers. Conversely to England and Italy, in Sweden the approach is likely to be forward-looking with women backing other women, whether or not they are regarded as capable of taking on their leadership post on as heirs.

In conclusion, this section showed cross-national practices, but also culture-specific features in relation to the HE sector where women found themselves when they decide to become institutional leaders.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the factors more likely to affect the construction of career of women in the HE sector, these factors being associated, among others, with age, or age and appearance, and with legitimacy in England; with temporary careers and family networks in Italy; and

with informal professional networks and high reputation backgrounds in Sweden.

In addition, the chapter has analysed these practices and approaches in each country and highlighted what can be regarded as cross-national or, on the contrary, context or culture-specific.

Chapter Six – Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter contains the discussion of the main issues covered in previous chapters, specifically those concerning women's practices and approaches to leadership, giving consideration to what has previously been discussed in the literature.

Thus, women in professional and academic careers as leaders are compared, for instance in terms of their career routes to highlight what differentiates academic, as described in the literature, from professional women, those in this study, as leaders.

In addition, the four approaches to leadership are compared and contrasted, in order to highlight how women position themselves as leaders, with or with no comparison, or even compromise, with men. Furthermore, an explanation follows of how blended women could be regarded as the types of leaders capable of intertwining the academic and the professional domains.

Next, the implications for my professional domain are explained. Lastly, a list of recommendations for researchers, institutions and finally for women aspiring to become the next generation leaders in HE come to be suggested.

6.2 Synthesis and discussion

This section shows, by looking at key findings and conclusions, how the research questions of this study have been answered. The table below, therefore, summarises these questions and findings.

Research Questions		Key findings
Challenging factors affecting the construction of women's career as leaders for each country	Ways found by these women enabling them to become institutional leaders	Practices as women's response to rules and resources within the structural domains found in life/career. And also career strategies as women's way to secure a post in leadership
	How these women have positioned themselves as leaders in HE	Approaches to leadership constructed by these women as agents

Figure 4 – Summarising research questions and key findings from this study

Furthermore, on the basis of the thematic network shown in Chapter Four (Figure 3) re-shaped after analysing data and identifying practices and approaches, a synthesis of how these women have overcome structural barriers and purposively constructed their career as leaders follows. The following table helps in visualising the framework describing the eight lenses that are expected to influence women's construction of career as leaders in HE.

The HE sector and its HEIs: the role of the sector but above all of the home institution, but also a more or less gendered organisational culture (dealing with men's rules of the game and the gendered culture of entitlement)	Career routes taking into HE management: feeling in transition between sectors and HEIs but also between styles of leadership, coming from other sectors, among others	Men and women in career: who has helped and who has not
Issues in the family: supportive partners, more children or the choice of not having children, being a role model for my daughter	Framework describing how women construct their career as leaders in HE management	Importance of social capital: how women use it for career advancement, women's networks, professional associations, mentors and sponsors
Owning or building up own self-confidence: coaching, and leadership programmes can help	Being a young/mature woman and the head of administration: a mixture of gender, age, appearance and leadership	Gaining academic credibility in HE: being a PhD holder, being blended, further professionalisation, coming from powerful professions, among others

Figure 5 – Final thematic network describing women's career as leaders in the sector

6.2.1 Summarising women's construction of career as leaders in HE management

As shown in the thematic network above, each lens contains not only a mixture of enabling and impeding factors that most affect a woman's career but also the description of women's practices and approaches as leaders. Thus, the eight lenses are explained in the following subsections.

The higher education sector and its HE institutions

Regarding the HE sector, this has been regarded as a (mediaeval) court where all those aspiring to a leadership post need male Presidents' support, meaning support (in terms of mentorship rather than of sponsorship) from the most senior academic-management role, a role which most likely will be held by men (O'Connor, 2014). Findings from this study confirm that women need support from a more senior role, but that this supportive role can equally be played by women and men (although in Italy men predominate in this key role), usually but not necessarily at the presidential level. In conclusion, this study has not clearly shown that men holding positions of power can support women to fulfil their aspirations as leaders any more than women can do.

Regardless of the nature of this support from a most senior role, a gendered organizational culture within the sector characterized by its own 'rules of the game' is still prevailing in all countries except for Sweden. However, even though it is suggested that women might not recognise either the rules or the game itself (Clegg, 1994), women in this study have demonstrated full recognition of both the game and its rules. In fact, they have shown their own way to overcome barriers and become institutional leaders by either conforming with the rules of the game, or by refusing them in a commitment to changing

them; but also by determining entitlement to leadership posts in the sector regardless of these rules.

In addition, we have seen that men are likely to have the final say about which women to allow to these leadership posts, with this need for approval more likely to be seen in England and in Italy. However, we have seen that women may also become institutional gatekeepers and so they may replace men as those having the last word. This need for approval seems to confirm Burkinshaw's communities of masculinities not only for posts in academic-management but also for those in senior management and therefore those targeted at professional women as leaders. This confirms that logics of preservation and co-option are still prevailing in the sector.

In the family

To have a family was never described in this research as a problem, even when women had large families. In fact, most women in the sample had two or more children and the majority of these women had daughters. It was more likely to hear women saying that the family should be regarded as a woman's strength, for instance as 'the playground' where they can build up or adjust their style of leadership. Thus, this finding aligns with studies carried out by Lumby and Azaola claiming that motherhood is expected to be a 'vital attribute of women's leadership style' (2014).

In addition, respondents in a family arrangement reported having had very supportive partners, regardless of the welfare state found in their country. Only one respondent in Italy mentioned to have been only men-friendly in recruitment, since women are more likely to be penalised considering their family arrangements. Interestingly, this occurred although this woman had a

supportive partner who raised their children, so that her personal story showed that women may not only be penalised but they more often have to rely on partners in order to facilitate family and career course.

Summarising these findings, this may mean that family responsibilities are more likely to be referred to by men as a problem (O'Connor, 2014), whilst women speak about their family responsibilities only when directly questioned and this to confirm how they see them "as simply one of the range of issues they were juggling" (2014:153), or also that they tend to see opportunities even through all difficulties.

Career routes into higher education management

Overall, women in this study were likely to feel in transition between sectors or HE institutions, including careers abroad and breaks due to career re-assessments. Furthermore, this feeling of being in transition can lead us to consider the HE sector as a temporary workplace, seldom as a first choice career. This latter feeling of HE as a temporary workplace was more prevalent in contexts of HE where the perception of roles in HE management was less appealing, such as in Italy.

In addition, this feeling of being in transition within the sector was confirmed differently in England, demonstrating Lewis' findings (2014) of accidental choices of career in HE management can be applied to women in a professional career, including those at most senior levels. It also confirms Whitchurch's claim that "those in blended roles were unlikely to have had a conventional career path through HE" (2008b:33). In addition, these non-linear and sometimes unique career paths show similarities with academic ones (Becher and Trowler,

2001; Locke et al., 2016), so that the two routes appear to be more blurred than ever before in today's HE landscape.

Furthermore, women in this study were likely to feel in transition between more than one style of leadership, including leadership roles held in their own family.

Lastly, looking at women's careers in this study and this multifaceted feeling of being in transition, and then recalling the range of metaphors explored earlier in Chapter Two, we see how these career paths seem to be associated more with the 'idea of the labyrinth' described by Eagly and Carli (2008), including career breaks, or decisions that can shift their career laterally, or even those that can lead to less senior posts after being head of administration.

Men and women in career

Furthermore, the study shows how women often expect other women to support them in their career and that, on the contrary, they do not expect anything to be done by men. Therefore, this demonstrates how women hold expectations towards other women as belonging to a community of gender, the one described by Deem (2000) in Chapter Two, where there is mutual support and members show solidarity towards each other. In addition, and perhaps as the downside, this shows characteristics of the 'gentleman's club' described earlier, whereby women's expectations are to be treated by other women as men do within their 'old boy' networks or within their communities of practice. This also shows how women are unlikely to reproduce their communities since they are not yet established, as earlier suggested by Burkinshaw (2015).

Using social capital

Regarding women's use of social capital for career purposes, sponsors and mentors were regarded as central as were professional associations.

In relation to these collaborative networks, evidence found in this study showed how these are fully understood in countries such as England and Sweden, whilst they are hardly or less valorised in Italy. These professional associations might also become core parts of overall strategies that successful women have adopted in their career, as seen in this study and as demonstrated in the quotations below:

'I have been very active in professional associations internationally and in Europe' (Annika)

'Investing in benefits from professional networks cannot let you down' (Sharon)

Therefore, these associations may become the ground for women to develop or to practise their social skills, since they are perceived to be more powerful than women-only networks. These mixed associations may become the showcase for women's expertise and the places where it becomes more likely to gain access to more powerful networks, like the men-only types of networks. In addition, women in this study show that the use of social capital can happen through mixed and informal networks, since there is awareness – again more in England and Sweden – that these networks will help in career if opportunely activated.

Academic credibility

In relation to academic credibility, which refers not to the need to have an academic track record (i.e. publications, research funding, teaching experience), but instead to having either or both a doctorate or a respectable background such as a profession, this was confirmed by the majority of respondents as mandatory to be taken seriously by academics. This credibility is not only central to women's career, but is the added value for all those in managerial career searching for entitlement or for recognition from the academic community, and clearly represented by the start-up woman.

However, this requirement of academic credibility has been shown to be comparable to the wealth of expertise that women may have gained in their career, particularly when women entered the sector from professions or other sectors perceived to be 'backgrounds of power'.

A mixture of age and gender, appearance and leadership

The importance of the age factor was stressed several times, more often in England, as key at certain stages of women's career. This was then combined with appearance. In the latter instance, women were required to look 'right' for the role. This was what one of the respondents claimed:

'I've done ... a lot of self-investment of how you portray yourself as a woman in your body language, in how you dress and how others perceive you' (Virginia)

Interestingly, the two factors together related to the leadership domain so that women should present themselves as the right women - the safe candidate or the woman having inherited men's rules of the game - and have the right age to enter the most senior posts in the sector as one of the respondents claimed:

*'I think my progression has got faster as I have looked older
so I think there is a physical quality' (Heather)*

Regarding the 'age factor' women may also have chosen to enter HE late in their career for various reasons, in an example of a midlife career re-assessment as this respondent claims:

*'Because I was thinking I'm getting too old for this, so I
decided to look elsewhere for my career and it was logical for
me to move into educational administration' (Whitney)*

Furthermore, from the results of this study, the concept of leadership in a woman's world appears multifaceted so as to include a personal sphere -- the family regarded as 'the playground' coupled with the age factor which establishes when women are ready to take on a senior post -- but also a professional one, depending on whether women had previously held a 'male' first job.

In conclusion, issues of intersectionality relating not only to gender but also to age and culture, among the main ones in this study, have shown to have impacted on these women's careers, primarily depending on country.

Self-confidence

In relation to owning or building up self-confidence, this study has shown that one of the contexts that matter most is likely to be the first workplace (male-dominated or not) experienced by women. As a result of that, the main distinction is between women who have inherited a male culture as a result of a prior workplace (this category is represented by the spin-off woman, that is the

woman showing a high level of self-confidence as well as familiarity with men's rules) and women who have built their self-confidence up regardless of any prior job experience in male dominated contexts (such as the start-up woman). Lastly, coaching was reported to be central to women leaders in order to develop self-confidence, while leadership programmes were reported to be an asset, and often became the tipping point in women's career. This came with the exception of a woman in England who wondered why she should attend further leadership courses and specifically one targeted at women already holding posts in leadership (since she envisaged herself to be the highest post holder in the group of participants within this leadership programme).

6.2.2 Professional versus academic careers of women as leaders

The first part of this section looks at how women in professional and academic careers are alike or different as leaders in the sector. This is done by considering women's career routes and issues of identification, as these emerged in this study and were confirmed by studies only focussed on academic profiles.

On the one hand, concerning professional career routes, these have been regarded not just as intersecting or hybrid career, depending on country, but also as floating and always in transition. These careers are therefore likely to be non-linear and unique, characterised by a number of tipping points (i.e. career breaks, being sacked because pregnant, choosing lower posts in leadership, among others), so to become much more similar to academic career routes. In addition, these professional careers can be regarded as temporary, for instance in Italy.

On the other hand, regarding issues of identification, unlike academic women who are more likely to identify with the discipline and, to some extent, with their home institution, we have seen how professional women tend to identify with the role or with the field of HE management. In addition, they may raise issues of institutionalisation but also of personification. This issue where professional women leaders replace men acting as the gatekeeper in their home institution, will be discussed in the next sub-section.

In fact, in the second part of this section, the four approaches to leadership have been contrasted and compared, with several cases found in the literature or one with another, to see how women position themselves in leadership with or without comparison with men.

The woman of the institution and institutionalisation of role and home institution

Firstly, with regards to the woman of the institution, this may bring to mind features of 'the organisation man' (Whyte, 1956) described in the literature, as the person who only works for his "Organisation" and develops a strong sense of belonging. However, even when the woman of the institution shows similarities with the man above, her practice of identification conveys a twofold meaning in this study: on the one hand, the sense of identification towards the role, the field of practice, the knowledge of the sector but also the home institution, especially when this is the main one in her career. On the other hand, identification describes how others see these women, including a set of downsides, such as the difficulty of being seen as the right candidate for other HEIs or even for higher posts. These twofold meanings have been termed 'institutionalisation' for the purposes of this study.

Indeed, this additional meaning of 'institutionalisation' can go beyond previous meanings and imply that women may become the gatekeepers within their institutions, and are therefore those who carry out decisions on who is entitled to be recruited and why. In doing so, they may replace men in accepting which women can be entitled to institutional roles in leadership. Consequently, they might become 'institutionalised' in their home institution, so that the woman and her institution become a unique pair. Among its downsides, this may potentially lead to underestimating further calls for reducing burdens and disadvantages as described by Morley within the 'greedy organisation' (2013).

Along with this sense of identification with role and/or institution, this work recognises how women may identify with the form of society they live in and so penalise other women in recruitment process. This is more likely to occur when the woman in the leadership post expects their significant other, in this study more often younger in age and subordinate, to be the person handling family burdens.

Summing up, the sense of identification appears to be multifaceted in leadership posts in HE management, ranging from identification with the institution or with the field of practice, to institutionalisation of the role or even of the woman within her home institution. This also means that women may feel trapped in a role for life, or in their home institution, as they personify that institution through their leadership approach.

The spin-off woman compared with the start-up woman

The spin-off woman, can be regarded as the representation of how women can feel at ease when they behave as men do, having grown up in male dominated contexts. Therefore, even when this woman may have experienced unpleasant

situations, including being dismissed due to pregnancy more than once, she is likely to have built her confidence during her career on these disagreeable events. However, in her approach to leadership, she appears to be proactive in her efforts to back other women's career progression; in doing so, she showcases her 'ego identity' or full potential of self-awareness, including knowing what women, even though not derived from the same male territory, should do in order to succeed within the gendered culture in the sector.

Differently from the spin-off woman, the start-up woman builds her leadership on the wealth of knowledge and on the professional expertise gained in the field of practice and/or in the sector (Allen-Collinson, 2009; Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2009). From the results of this study, therefore, the definition of 'start-up woman' has been regarded as appropriate to describe the approach to leadership characterising women who, though not so accustomed to men's behaviours as the spin-off woman is, nevertheless continue to invest in her professional growth. This continued dedication intends to gain the full entitlement to perform her leadership role in the sector with no compromise with men.

The woman with an approach of service to HE and to other women

Considering the approach to leadership adopted by women with a service approach to the sector and to other women, this may bring to mind features of the 'servant leader' as those: "... defined by their ability to bring integrity, humility, and servanthood into caring for, empowering, and developing of others in carrying out the tasks and processes of visioning, goal setting, leading, modelling, team building, and shared decision-making" (Waite, 2011:9). Furthermore, this approach seemed to prioritise other women's needs or to see

the duty to cope with these needs as a moral or social responsibility to take on as part of her career, which may be tied in with an inter-generational sense of responsibility. However, I was not able to consider intergenerational issues more in depth, for instance to show how these women leaders have been able to fully support younger women concretely. In fact, the intergenerational overview was only provided in relation to the range of ages in the sample, going from 51 to over 60. On the contrary, I have not been able to contrast these women with groups of younger women since these groups, as we have seen in the literature, may put their career first and have a family later (Manfredi et al, 2014). Specifically on my findings, only one woman in the whole sample made a deliberate choice not to have children; and she saw this as part of her winning career strategy. With regards to this choice, the respondent in question states:

'I would say one other thing: I've made one other big compromise in my life and that is I have no children ... I don't think I could have done that if I didn't have a very supportive husband and no children.' (Heather)

6.2.3 Intertwining the academic and the professional domain - Blended women as leaders

As a result of this investigation, the use of 'blended' profile to term professional or managerial women as leaders may be appropriate as the connector between academic and professional domains. However, the concept of 'blended' refers not only to the mixture of academic and professional credentials held by an increasing number of individuals in today's HE leadership. As shown in Chapter One, this concept was useful to distinguish between women in a managerial and in an academic career and only include the former group as sample in this study. But this distinction has also shown the range of intersections in today's

career routes, so that women starting off in administrative roles may enter academic contracts and be entitled to academic-management posts. Indeed, the other way round has become even more common in today's HE.

In addition, the blended character appears to be expressed by each of the four practices to some extent; but it appears to be mostly expressed by the Dedication practice. Firstly, the Identification practice may express women's way of gaining full understanding of male culture in the sector in order to conform to it, as the 'woman of the institution' does. Secondly, this search for understanding may help women cross further boundaries and call for transformation of the set of rules and resources within the HE sector, as it is core to the Moral duty practice. Thirdly, the 'Super-confidence' practice showcases the development of women's 'ego identity' as suggested by Alfred (2009) in relation to women's use of agency and social capital. This means that this practice relies on the knowledge of 'men's rules of the game' in HE in order to cross further boundaries, but also to move some of these boundaries forward. Lastly, the Dedication practice sees women who are likely to hold their blend of credentials, or even to aspire to increase these credentials for the sake of leadership in the professional practice of HEM. These women may come from other sectors or even from abroad, and are those who mainly challenge the boundaries of the knowledge of leadership in the field of practice in HE management; this is done by investing in further professional development opportunities. Therefore, this practice concerns women's search for full entitlement to hold leadership posts in the sector sought for the sake of their professional practice, even regardless of men's acceptance.

6.3 Conclusions

Overall, findings from this study shed light not only on patterns of challenging factors for each of the three countries, but also on the practices that these women have chosen in becoming leaders. In addition, these findings show their approaches to leadership, specifically how these women have positioned themselves as leaders in the sector, for instance in relation to men. Additional findings reveal the perception of a lack of support among women, which may stand for a lack of a leadership-specific type of support in context of HE leadership mostly depending on country. In addition, there is a shortage of 'only-women' support circles, or communities of women able to offer this professional support, even or preferably informally, coupled with a lack of awareness that women need this peer support. This, however, is variably evident depending on country. Indeed, the interviewees in this study have shown how women should become more accustomed to relying on other women's contributions, especially, but not necessarily, from those at the same career stage, and hence valorising this more in groups of peers.

It is also interesting to note that the issue of 'men as the problem' did not come up in the interviews with this group of women. Therefore, men were never seen as the problem and neither were their 'rules of the game' in HE. Instead, as shown above, it was more likely to find women complaining about not having found supportive women helping them in their career rather than women questioning men's rules, and indeed none of the respondents regarded men or men's attitudes as a problem in ruling the sector.

Furthermore, as a result of this study, we have seen that the contexts that matter most are likely to be not only the HE sector where these women are, including specificities of their leadership domain, since these may affect their practices and approaches as shown in Table 10. But also the first (male-

dominated) workplace experienced by women and also their home institution especially when women have had only one main institution. In relation to this latter, we have seen that women may be in need of men's approval to be entitled to hold leadership posts in the sector, so that men are likely to have the last word on women's leadership. However, the institutionalisation of women's role or institution may take these women leaders to become the 'man having the last word' on other women to accept for leadership posts.

Concerning the use of structure and agency as the conceptual framework to investigate the construction of women's careers, this study has explained women's under-representation in senior positions not only in terms of agency, as previous studies have mainly done (Morley, 2006; O'Connor, 2014), but also the study has considered the structures in which these women find themselves and operate. The overview of the three countries (looking at challenging factors, practices and approaches) has proven that the context is more likely to be significant in a woman's career in leadership in the sector.

In addition, in relation to these structures, findings from this study confirm that women have chosen either to conform to men's rules, to change these rules or to find their own way to 'play the game' in the sector as fully entitled post holders. The 'spin-off woman' was the only approach regarded as copying or repeating men's behaviours, not as a deliberate choice but rather as the result of the inheritance of these male behaviours. Lastly, among key findings, the combination of age, leadership and appearance matters, so that women are expected to look like leaders, but also to be the correct age and as safe as men for the role.

6.4 Post-reflection on my feminist journey

In this section, the purpose is to reflect back on the personal and feminist journeys to see how these have developed throughout the thesis. As explained earlier, my feminism journey has moved from liberal feminism to post-structuralism through the exploration of other feminist theories. Coupled with the feminist, my personal journey has made me aware of what it means to be a woman in the higher education sector, not simply being a senior manager investigating her professional identity, as I was when this journey began.

As a result of that, both these journeys are deeply connected with the reasons why I have chosen to use Giddens and his theory for this study. His 'structuration' theory best represented the social and working environments where women are likely to find themselves when they undertake a career to become institutional leaders. It is Giddens (2009: 614) who emphasized that "gender is a critical factor in structuring types of opportunity and life chances faced by individuals and groups, and strongly influences the roles they play within social institutions from the household to the state". Thus, when studying women's careers, it does not seem to be sufficient to simply study women's agency and its contribution to their career. On the contrary, any forms of social structure influencing women's careers are expected to be relevant and to be considered in studies like mine.

I am however aware that there may be potential tensions and even contradictions in my approach to feminism theories. This is even clearer when different feminist theories may seem to be applied at different stages of the thesis. However, this apparent blend of theories is only meant to show the different stages of my feminist understanding throughout the doctoral journey when I moved from being a senior manager to becoming a woman and senior

manager in this sector. Therefore, the purpose of this reflection is to show that these tensions have been acknowledged, explained and possibly mitigated.

Finally, my journey is not completed yet and in the following two sections, Implications for the Professional Domain and Recommendations, I will explain some of the ways in which I will take this exploratory journey to the next stage of development. This includes a desire to undertake research into women's careers and connect this study to social issues impacting on women's lives in the higher education sector, thereby raising awareness that by:

- promoting collective, female values and practices
- embracing the bonds that link all women who share a same set of values and practices

we can learn how to collaborate with other women in the workplace more fruitfully and possibly shape our collective, renewed sense of direction in the higher education sector.

6.5 Implications for the professional domain

Overall, the study aims to contribute to the state of knowledge in the field of equity and diversity policy but, above all, to practice, particularly in the HE sector and in its management; and possibly in more European countries, not exclusively those of the study.

Specifically, this study aims to inform women in a professional career in HE management who are now in their mid-career phase and who wish to aspire to a more senior role. It can also provide insight for those at an earlier career stage to focus on the direction they wish to take, as well as for those already at top levels, as this study provides information to help to reflect on their career path and make their experience beneficial for others.

This study, however, is also meant to be useful for those women in an academic career given that career dynamics can be different coming from a managerial or an academic route, since these women are likely to encounter some of these same barriers.

As a result of this study, I would like to continue my work on raising awareness of mechanisms in HE management that lie behind the under-representation of women in leadership. Among actions to be taken, I would like to stress how women should learn to work together and valorise other women's contribution to their leadership more, especially when this contribution from other women is the most suitable for tackling a particular situation.

A further indirect aim of this study is to help women in a professional career to evaluate whether they need a career re-assessment at a certain stage of their post; this could mean making a bid for a career in leadership, but might also involve shifting their career laterally, for instance by undertaking further training or doing research including enrolling in doctorates late in their career.

Lastly, I have enjoyed carrying out this study and being at the frontline in the exploration of this topic. In fact, by looking specifically at women in a managerial career rather than academic women I have researched a neglected area. However, I have also shown that an investigation of professional careers can contribute to the understanding of academic women and shed light on issues common to women, for instance in relation to issues of identification or career routes.

6.6 Recommendations

As the final list of recommendations, I believe researchers might wish to:

- Continue to do research on women in leadership in HE management in different functions and in different contexts of HE in order to set out and confirm female approaches and styles, and then disseminate their different leadership styles.
- In addition, researchers are expected to continue to do research into issues of leadership and women's careers, including the investigation of styles of leadership, the comparison with other women's styles and also the exploration of the degree of compromise that they have incorporated in developing these styles.

Whilst, HE institutions might wish to:

- Develop training opportunities only targeted at women so to encourage more woman-friendly training opportunities.
- Shape leadership courses that are culture-specific where practising collaboration with other women is the core practice.
- Lastly, HE institutions should empower women in HE through compulsory and informal institutional networks, as well as through participation to research projects which deal with gender issues.

Lastly, women should:

- Be courageous enough to set up alliances with other women in the workplace to begin to valorise good competition as an asset, including listing the benefits arising from it.
- Seize their career opportunities with reinforced awareness and collective behavior. This would help in understanding what a feminist consciousness can do for us, as women, leaders, insider researchers in the field of HEM and research.

6.7 Conclusion

In the chapter, a synthesis of how professional women have constructed their career to become leaders was provided. This was done by looking at eight lenses of influence on women's career and these were individually described. Furthermore, women in professional and academic careers as leaders were compared, with the four approaches to leadership used to deepen the literature search of similarities or differences. Lastly, after drawing the conclusions of this study, the implications for my professional domain were discussed. This discussion was then coupled with a list of recommendations for researchers, institutions and for women aspiring to become the next generation leaders in the HE sector.

*At the moment that women are beginning to share in the making of the world,
this world still belongs to men: men have no doubt about this, and women
barely doubt it'*

(De Beauvoir, 2010:10)

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Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Can you tell me about your professional experience and career progression and, wherever relevant, describe all the different stages of your career?

- 2) In answering this question, your considerations may look at the form of country/society in which you have found yourself, but also at your family, the relationship you have had with men and women in your career, and also at how you would describe your degree of individual agency at different stages of your career.

- 3) In addition, can you tell me your reflections on the factors that might have affected your career (progression), but also on what has enabled you to succeed and so to become an institutional leader in the HE sector and in its leadership?

Appendix 2 – Participant Information and consent

The aim of this leaflet is to increase clear discussion with the participants and not to replace it. The leaflet addresses questions participants might want to ask or need to know before they can give informed consent. The list of its contents is based on the *Declaration of Helsinki* (and other research ethics guidelines).

Title of the thesis and who is the doctoral student carrying it out:

Tackling gender inequality in Higher Education management - A comparative study in Europe.

Susi Poli, EdD Candidate, Department of Lifelong and Comparative Education, Institute of Education, University of London.

Start and end dates of this thesis:

July 2014 – June 2016.

Abstract and more details on the study (follows after the ICF):

Provided in the document: SPoli_thesis_proposal_short_updated_version_January2015.

The hoped-for benefits:

The outcomes from this study are expected to reveal the challenges that women may expect to face at different stages of career in HE management. These outcomes may, therefore, help in designing mentoring and leadership programmes, but also institutional policies targeted at women who aspire to be leaders in HE management.

The practical details and timing:

The estimated average length of any interview is 45 minutes (max 1 hour). The venue of each round of interview will be agreed with each participant depending on her preference (e.g. public space, office, home).

Use of data, confidentiality, and anonymity

This leaflet aims to fully detail pros and cons of this study but also to agree a course of action prior to participants' acceptance of the interview.

Firstly, regarding privacy, a bespoke course of action will be agreed with each participant with the aim of fully protecting their anonymity. Any personal accounts elicited during the interviews will be omitted to preserve their confidentiality. Participants' names will be omitted from any materials and the most appropriate way to quote their statements will be found together with each participant.

Secondly, participants will have an opportunity to view the transcript of their interview and the final report, after the conclusion of the data analysis; moreover, they will be able to request any edits prior to publication and dissemination. Indeed, all participants will be asked to give explicit approval for their stories to be made public. Further explicit consent will be explicitly sought for the dissemination.

Lastly, all data generated from the project will be stored in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998) and only the final thesis will be made available publically. Storage of all documents will be in accordance with the Institute of Education's policy. This requires all data to be securely stored in encrypted data files that require password entry.

Who I am and ways to contact me, with address, email:

Susi Poli, Department of Lifelong and Comparative Education, UCL Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL, UK. For any enquiry, please email me to: spoli@ioe.ac.uk.

Name of research ethics committee that gave approval: UCL Institute of Education - REC Research Ethics Committee.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (ICF)

Tackling gender inequality in Higher Education management - A comparative study in Europe

Susi Poli, EdD Candidate, Institute of Education University of London

July 2014 – June 2016

I have read the information leaflet about the research (please tick)

I have read the information leaflet about the ethical issues (please tick)

I agree to be interviewed (please tick)

I agree to have my full interview recorded (please tick)

Name _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Researcher's name _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Abstract and more information about the study

Tackling gender inequality in Higher Education management - A European comparative analysis

Susi Poli, EdD Candidate, Department of Lifelong and Comparative Education, UCL Institute of Education

Abstract

Nowadays women are not under-represented in the overall workforce, but they are highly under-represented at the most senior roles, and the Higher Education sector is not an exception. Furthermore, it is likely for women to meet the same barriers in career advancement not only in most of the sectors but also across cultures; these barriers seem to vary at different stages of career and become more challenging once women begin aspiring to leadership roles.

Thus, this study aims to shed light on the number of barriers that women meet in career advancement to the most senior posts in the HE sector: this through the lens of the experiences of fifteen women who currently hold the most senior management role in a European HE institution, namely that of Head of Administration or comparable. My purpose is the understanding of the barriers that these women have met at different stages of career, even to see what is the lesson learnt and therefore what women may learn to do differently in order to succeed in a senior role.

The fieldwork of this study will be conducted through semi-structured interviews, whereas, for the data analysis, I will adopt a thematic narrative analysis to report the life histories of these women in leadership roles. The aim is to understand the key challenges at any stage of their career and, especially, once they begin aspiring to the most senior positions in today's management of HE institutions.

Aims and rationale

There has been an increasing deal of interest in this topic over the last ten years, and indeed the rationale for my study comes straight from a Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) report issued in January 2013 and titled 'Women and HE Leadership: Absences and Aspirations'. This study made a review of the development in the field of gender and HE and, among the conclusions, called for further research into the experiences of those women who have been able to achieve the most senior positions. In response to this call, I have drawn up this proposal and this is what I would like to do: an inquiry into the experiences of women who have achieved leadership positions in HE management in three European countries, and these have been chosen in consideration of their varied culture, form of welfare state, and family and gender-sensitive policies.

My contribution to the professional domain just comes from my current course of research and career. I placed myself at the same stage of career of women who aspire to be leaders when I took the decision to enroll in the Ed.D. in 2011: I was a deputy director at Bologna university, who had gained a wealth of experience in a variety of positions in departments and centrally but also in different HE sectors across Europe. This study, therefore, sets out to raise either women's awareness of feminist perspectives or

their confidence in chances of career advancement by showing how a group of women, now holding leadership roles, have been able to reach the most senior posts.

The research questions

This study investigates the topic of gender inequality in HE management and tries to answer the following research questions:

- What are the variables of women's under-representation in the most senior professional roles in HEM?

Whereas the set of sub-questions aim to shed light on:

- What is the role of society and family in relation to women's under-representation in the most senior roles?

- What is the role of the HE sector and its institutions, and then possibly of men, in relation to the under-representation of women in senior leadership posts?

- What is the role played by other women in the size of this under-representation?

The sample of countries (and cultures) for this study

I mean to carry out a cross-national study of women heads of administration in England, Italy, and Sweden. The three countries have different welfare arrangements as well as different models of gender division of labour (and, according to the Schunter-Kleemann's model, I have placed Italy in the strong male breadwinner countries; Sweden in the weak model and England in the modified cluster).

Defining the target group: women leaders from management

For the purposes of this analysis, I refer to the most senior positions in HE management held by women with an administration or management background (within HE or other sectors) and not with an academic background, since women with this latter background may have had more linear trajectories of career (Manfredi, 2014) or have practiced their networking skills more. These most senior positions should be as much comparable as possible, and thus I have analysed the set of tasks/responsibilities within the job description in each country (e.g. academic registrar and/or university secretary in England, head of administration/HoA in Sweden, and general director/DG in Italy).

Data collection and analysis

For the study, I will acquire data by using a qualitative design of enquiry based on life history interviewing, that is the narratives of a group of women who have been able to achieve the most senior positions in the management of their HE institution (Creswell, 2014). The fieldwork will be carried out through one-to-one semi-structured interviews with 15 women leaders.

Appendix 3 – Initial codes

Initial codes
A job in HE as a temporary workplace
Coming from a profession or from other perceived-to-be 'powerful' or respectful sectors - Powerful backgrounds from which to enter HE and gain credibility from academics immediately and treated as peers
All career lifetime spent in the same HEI
Multiple HEIs, including careers abroad
In need of career re-assessment, so in a long career break
Functions which more frequently lead straight to a senior role, but also unusual functions to begin your career in HEM from (e.g. arts)
Coping with national contexts where mobility within the university sector is infrequent but this can have its advantages
Other women as barriers – Being resentful about the role of women in my career
We have a responsibility as women (to support other women)
Choosing a woman as heir
Grown in a men's world (e.g. in previous jobs) and/or playing sport with men (e.g. joining men in informal networks)
The choice of recruiting only men
Men who teach women to do things (as they do), to be accepted in a men's world
Men and woman have equally helped in my career
Women who don't support other women (by quoting M. Albright)
Women support each other more in the university sector than in the private
No woman has helped me
Unclear context (differently from private sector) – Blurred boundaries between

functions/tasks/roles in the HE sector
HE as a place for men or with gendered connotations (Horizontal and vertical segregation)
Too many expectations on women
Holding a most senior role in a university and questioned if you would be able to play that senior role in another university
Men that have allowed women to become heads of administration
Supportive partners
Being the breadwinner
The choice of not having children
Children haven't stopped me
Sacked because pregnant
Being seen as the role model from my daughters
Tough to switch role from mother to leader of my institution
Being seen as more authoritarian at home because of my top role in my institution
Men sacrificing their career
Looking young: age matters more than gender
Women not able to speak the dialect (politically relevant and perhaps one of the ways or the only way to be heard in a man's world)
Treated as a secretary, but paid as the head of administration
Gender as barrier for other women, not for myself because of my self-confidence
Identification with the role (how others in the institution see you and how these people cannot see you in another role or in a different institution)
I really believe that through this work I can make a difference
You can hold a role in the same HEI for a long while and become the head of that HEI in

people's eyes
I took on that role and it took me absolutely to the top of my passion
To understand how to behave in a man's world and learn the rules of the workplace
I know who the boss is in my institution
I can do it much better than my boss
Looking at how the role of HoA has changed (and wondering if this role is still one of most powerful in HEIs)
Being a PhD holder and/or having academic credibility
Investing in training and further education
Importance of studying and lifelong learning as key to career development
How academics see you (and assess you)
How to be taken seriously by academics
Women cannot be not heard in HE because they are women and because the sector is led by academics, can't say which impacting more – Men and academic credibility in HE
Gaining academic credibility through a doctorate late in career
Leadership programmes matter and can make the difference in career advancement
Coaches can help those in leadership roles
I can do it whilst others are still there (in the same post or HEI)
And I remember thinking: I did that, nobody else did that, and think it stayed with me and gave me that sort of 'I can do this' attitude
Attending leadership courses but not necessarily to become a leader
I don't want to attend a leadership course but I have to
I need to re-invent myself all times (and set new targets in career) and can't stop it
Feeling a lack of confidence and in need of help including counselling

Confidence and reputation built up outside academia, in other sectors, before entering HE
Professional associations make the difference (e.g. AUA)
Informal networks (which include men)
Family networks are everywhere around here

Appendix 4 – Codes matching themes

Initial codes	Themes		
	Ca	Cu	
A job in HE as a temporary workplace	Ca	Cu	
Coming from a profession or from other perceived-to-be 'powerful' or respectful sectors - Powerful backgrounds from which to enter HE and gain credibility from academics immediately and treated as peers	Ca		
All career lifetime spent in the same HEI	Ca	Cu	
Multiple HEIs, including careers abroad	Ca		
In need of career re-assessment, so in a long career break	Ca		
Functions which more frequently lead straight to a senior role, but also unusual functions to begin your career in HEM from (e.g. arts)	Ca		
Coping with national contexts where mobility within the university sector is infrequent but this can have its advantages	Cu		
Other women as barriers – Being resentful about the role of women in my career	Re		
We have a responsibility as women (to support other women)	Re		
Choosing a woman as heir	Re	Cu	
Grown in a men's world (e.g. in previous jobs) and/or playing sport with men (e.g. joining men in informal networks)	Ca		
The choice of recruiting only men	Cu	Re	
Men who teach women to do things (as they do), to be accepted in a men's world	Cu	Re	SC
Men and woman have equally helped in my career	Re		
Women who don't support other women (by quoting M. Albright)	Re	Cu	
Women support each other more in the university sector than in the private	Cu	Re	

No woman has helped me	Cu	Re	
Unclear context (differently from private sector) – Blurred boundaries between functions/tasks/roles in the HE sector	Cu		
HE as a place for men or with gendered connotations (Horizontal and vertical segregation)	Cu		
Too many expectations on women	F	Cu	Re
Holding a most senior role in a university and questioned if you would be able to play that senior role in another university	Cu	Ca	
Men that have allowed women to become heads of administration	Cu	Re	Ca
Supportive partners	F	Ca	
Being the breadwinner	F		
The choice of not having children	F	Ca	
Children haven't stopped me	F	Ca	
Sacked because pregnant	Cu	Ca	
Being seen as the role model from my daughters	F		
Tough to switch role from mother to leader of my institution	F		
Being seen as more authoritarian at home because of my top role in my institution	F		
Men sacrificing their career	F	Ca	
Looking young: age matters more than gender	GAL		
Women not able to speak the dialect (politically relevant and perhaps one of the ways or the only way to be heard in a man's world)	SC	AC	
Treated as a secretary, but paid as the head of administration	Cu	Re	GAL
Gender as barrier for other women, not for myself because of my self-confidence	GAL	SC	
Identification with the role (how others in the institution see you and how	Cu		

these people cannot see you in another role or in a different institution)			
I really believe that through this work I can make a difference	Cu	Ca	SC
You can hold a role in the same HEI for a long while and become the head of that HEI in people's eyes	Cu	Ca	
I took on that role and it took me absolutely to the top of my passion	Cu	Ca	SC
To understand how to behave in a man's world and learn the rules of the workplace	Cu	Re	SC
I know who the boss is in my institution	Cu	Re	
I can do it much better than my boss	Re	SC	
Looking at how the role of HoA has changed (and wondering if this role is still one of most powerful in HEIs)	Cu		
Being a PhD holder and/or having academic credibility	AC		
Investing in training and further education	AC		
Importance of studying and lifelong learning as key to career development	AC	Ca	
How academics see you (and assess you)	Re	Cu	
How to be taken seriously by academics	Re	Cu	
Women cannot be not heard in HE because they are women and because the sector is led by academics, can't say which impacting more – Men and academic credibility in HE	GAL	Cu	Re
Gaining academic credibility through a doctorate late in career	AC		
Leadership programmes matter and can make the difference in career advancement	AC		
Coaches can help those in leadership roles	Ca	AC	
I can do it whilst others are still there (in the same post or HEI)	SC		
And I remember thinking: I did that, nobody else did that, and think it stayed with me and gave me that sort of 'I can do this' attitude	SC		

Attending leadership courses but not necessarily to become a leader	AC	Ca	SC
I don't want to attend a leadership course but I have to	Ca	Re	
I need to re-invent myself all times (and set new targets in career) and can't stop it	SC	AC	Ca
Feeling a lack of confidence and in need of help including counselling	SC		
Confidence and reputation built up outside academia, in other sectors, before entering HE	AC	SC	Ca
Professional associations make the difference (e.g. AUA)	Ne	AC	Cu
Informal networks (which include men)	Ne	Re	Cu
Family networks are everywhere around here	F	Ca	Re

Appendix 5 – Short excerpts from interviews

I was already interested in this backstage of university, what happening in management, rather than the front stage which is about teaching. Having said that I kept on teaching all the time so I kept on teaching activities at that point I was holding several teaching positions in HE and further and actively teaching for about a decade I'd say so it was alongside the uni administration. after the first FT job I progressed quite fast and it became apparent that at that uni there wasn't the type of job available that I wanted to do that was to kind of management all dep. at that point I changed uni and kept on teaching in these varied places and at some point I was attracted by the governing body that was a PT job in itself and later on quite more significant than I realised when I got that job (Annika).

After the PhD I was studying for some management diplomas, I studied quite systematically to acquire knowledge about management and this other side of the university I was interested in. Two course I went to quite significant to me, one was the AUA on sort of intro to HE and more than it. This course rather important for my professional life, I was very impressed and then I went to another seminar which was a coaching type of seminar that I was a 2-day seminar and at that point I made the decision that I wanted to be secretary and uni registrar ... I liked working abroad and I gained a lot of experience and I felt all the time that my goal was elsewhere and I wanted I come back to the UK and doing my progress in there. Then after that year abroad I came back to the UK and was working at university for one year and a half that was a higher job as uni manager that I had had before I went to this other country and then recently I was appointed to another job that was an absolutely dream job for me and I feel that so far it's kind of combination of what I've done and because I can work in a wide ranging role and I think the key thing I got this role my experience abroad, the job had just before, my education which was broad (Ashley)

I've been in this career I think the sector has changed and there are more opportunities for these hybrid professionals I can see that in very high posts that in tradition have only been in the academic domain are now people who work or

have worked in uni management. I think that now the post that I'm holding now is reflecting my education and my interests and also the fact that I've been teaching as well and I've also benefits from the fact that I'm taking now in this circle more seriously but I think that it also depends on the university I think that times have in general changed but probably also depends on the university, some are more traditional and want to have that admin that has been toiling for 30 years what I have encountered many times in early age was that education is kind of well you know is superfluous, you don't have to have, you don't have to study as much, something like that (Emma).

I came to Houston and they said "we have no jobs for you but we would like to employ you" and so I became the pa to the pro vice chancellor, and I worked in that role for a number of people I also set up a research post office and in 1988 I took post which was on maternity leave cover as the administrator (Heather).

[it was] 2012, so the vice chancellor came in in 2011 and he could see there was a better way of organising things and this is what I wanted since I've been here because when I first came I was responsible for 5 areas of corporate services and the other areas were looked after by various other members of the executive but that meant that there was no consistency and there was duplication of effort and so on. So I'd always wanted to get all of those areas so in 2012 my current role was created and I'm now responsible for everything except for finance because when finance after ... from the executive but I worked closely with him on finance (Whitney).

After the head of quality left and it was an area I was very interested in having looked to it from a far so I went to see him and I said I want my job can you make it happen? and he did. And it was brilliant. And I'd say that was the job that of all the jobs I had I had loved the most. And the reason why I have loved it the most was that I had a fair degree of autonomy. It was working with academic departments at that time the QAA had the subject review process in place so I was in the incredible fortunate position of working with any single academic in the unit in the university spending so much time in understanding what is history at Lancaster, amazing, such a privilege to be such as close. And it was the moment when I really understood how the whole university system

works all offices together. And it really lifted me in my way of thinking strategically about universities. So I loved that, absolutely that, but of course I was looking again at people above me, thinking I can do what you do such much better but again you won't go anywhere and again they are still there ... I want even not to go so far and say that women have been the ones saying to me: don't be ridiculous! So I remember having an appraisal quite early on in my time at Lancaster with my boss and she said: well. where you see yourself in 5-year time and I said I want to be an academic registrar that was the worst thing I could have said. From that day on every paper I wrote every minute I wrote was red pen I lost my voice my husband for about 2 years everything I wrote said did with challenge, picked over, it was awful. and I am absolutely convinced that this is because I positioned myself to see where I see myself there and she did not like it ... It's shocking, it is shocking. But when you think about it and you think about the learnt behaviours as women as girls grow up, we are not allowed to be ambitious, we're not allowed to be pushy we have to be ... this is a huge generalisation you know. So we learn our behaviours and come across people who are perhaps a little more displaying ambition, displaying you know hope for themselves I think the insecurity of women kick in so I try to be forgiven to say that they are probably feeling insecure about their position, their career and not getting support for you know the women about them. I try to be forgiven but I'm also really angry about it. To be honest hasn't affect it the trajectory if you like I have achieved some stuff so I can't be too better about it but there is a bitterness there but I also try to recognise where they might be. the internal barrier is huge and that what was the coaching taught me. you've got exposed internal barriers however I'm pleasant they are and you look at them internal around them deal with them actually and it's really tough, really tough (Teresa).