

<b>Title</b>	Women in managerial pipelines: Perceptions of gender equality in corporate evaluation systems within UK Financial Services
<b>Summary</b>	<p>In this paper I outline a current research project focusing on the career progression experiences of women in managerial pipelines within large organisations within the financial services sector in the UK.</p> <p>Funding was secured in June 2016 and following ethical approval the research commenced in July 2016. The focus is on female managers' experiences of company evaluation (appraisal) systems and the research methodology is mixed method (Clark and Creswell, 2011). The study is the first in the UK to use the "Agency-Communion paradigm" to research junior, middle and senior managers via the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1981) used extensively in the US. Furthermore, the research adopts a multi-layered approach (Syed and Ozbilgin, 2009) to support future comparative studies in other countries.</p>
<b>Track</b>	Gender in Management
<b>Word count</b>	1,896

## **Introduction**

Much attention has been given to representation of women on boards through initiatives involving either voluntary self-regulation (Machold et al, 2013) or government targets (Davies, 2015) and there is some evidence of progress (ibid). However, research undertaken by both practitioners (e.g. McKinsey, 2012) and academics (e.g. Klettner et al, 2014) has concluded that the real issue resides within the managerial pipelines which feed into top jobs. There is increasing appetite within the business community to address this issue (CBI News, 2016).

In this paper I outline a current research project which focuses on the career progression experiences of women in managerial pipelines within large organisations. More specifically, the research focuses on female managers' experiences of corporate evaluation (appraisal) systems within UK Financial Services where female progression into leadership roles is lower than in other sectors (McKinsey, 2012). The research methodology is mixed method (Clark and Creswell, 2011) and the study is the first in the UK to use the "Agency-Communion paradigm" to research junior, middle and senior managers via the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1981) which has been used extensively in the US. Furthermore, the research adopts a multi-layered approach (Syed and Ozbilgin, 2009) to support future comparative studies in other countries.

Research demonstrates that women's progression into top management jobs is constrained by factors at three levels, namely society (e.g. Powell and Butterfield, 2015; Eagly & Karau, 2002), organisation (e.g. Schyns & Schilling, 2011; Hearn & Collinson 2006; Stead 2013) and individual (e.g. Wood & Eagly, 2009). Heilman (2001) has argued that the key factor is biased evaluations arising from gender stereotypes and recent empirical evidence confirms that women continue to experience in-company evaluation systems as gender-biased (McKinsey, 2012). Among 1,768 middle managers and lower in large and medium-sized companies (in Germany, France, Czech Republic, United Kingdom) McKinsey's (2012) research found that 65% of men but only 30% of women "strongly agreed" with the statement "Does the evaluation system in your company treat men and women equally?"

## **Overview of paper**

The first part of the paper justifies the focus on the Financial Services sector in the UK and outlines the case for more women in management. The second part examines the extant analysis of factors constraining women's career progression into top management jobs, and the underlying concepts regarded as key to unlocking change. Next the paper sets out the proposed research methodology and makes a case for a mixed method approach to address the research question. The final part of the paper explores the potential for the research to be developed into a comparative study involving several countries, subject to funding.

## **Literature Review**

This research is focused on Financial Services (FS) in the UK which employs around 1.1 million people (Tyler, 2015). This sector has been chosen because the lack of women in management is more pronounced than in other sectors, both numerically and in terms of consequences. Recent analysis by McKinsey (2012) shows that within large<sup>1</sup> organisations across Europe, female managerial progression above middle management into senior

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<sup>1</sup> Companies with more than 10,000 employees and/or revenues greater than 1 billion Euros, and that provided data.

management, vice president and executive roles is lowest in FS compared to other major sectors, namely media, telecommunications, technology; consumer goods; transport, logistics, tourism; energy and basic materials. Furthermore, analysis of managerial behaviours within FS following the financial crisis of 2007/08 has highlighted the need to reduce risk taking, address short-sighted appraisal processes and tackle systems of excessive privilege and reward (Fraser, 2014; Martin, 2013). Women are regarded as part of the solution to this with evidence demonstrating that their presence in boardrooms generates behavioural improvements by reducing conflict (Nielsen and Huse, 2010), mitigating group-think (Adams and Funk, 2012; Rost and Osterloh, 2010), asking challenging questions (Huse and Solberg, 2006), improving succession planning and improving the evaluation of board performance (Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2012; Thorburn, 2013). In addition to behavioural improvements there are social and economic arguments for more women in management. These include equity (unacceptable to exclude people from leadership on basis of gender), efficiency (more balanced representation means better use of available talent) and business performance (companies perform better financially with women on the Board, even more so where women are in leadership roles at all levels) (Klettner et al, 2014, PwC 2015).

Extensive research has analysed factors at societal, organisational and individual level which constrain women's progression into top management jobs (Powell and Butterfield, 2015). Numerous theories have been developed to explain these constraining factors including sex-based selection decision theory (Perry, Davis-Blake and Kulik, 1994), role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), status characteristics theory (Berger & Webster, 2006; Ridgeway, 2006), think manager-think male prototype (Koenig et al, 2011; Hearn & Collinson 2006; Schyns & Schilling, 2011), gender belief systems (Deaux & LaFrance, 1998) and preferences for male or female boss based on gender identity and sex-type (Ashmore, 1990; Wood & Eagly, 2009). The net result is that women enacting leadership, particularly in managerial roles, are often rendered invisible within local norms which value masculine behaviours (Fletcher, 2004; Stead, 2013). These local norms are embedded in company evaluation systems, expressed through the evaluation criteria and through the people who enact the evaluations. According to Heilman (2001) biased evaluations arising from gender stereotypes is the key factor constraining women's progression into top management jobs.

If gender stereotypes are the underlying problem, then the key concepts underpinning this research are power and identity and the objective is to enable social actors to recognise and challenge power and dominance embedded within organisational and societal discourses and practices. Taking a Foucauldian perspective this research recognises the fundamental relationship between power and knowledge, which is co-constituted through discourse i.e. through language which operates as both a creator and a consequence of power (Foucault, 1980). From a post-structural perspective, identity is regarded an ongoing project, meaning that each individual is actively and constantly working on their sense of who they are (Watson, 2008). Of importance here is the differentiation between self-identity and social identity:

“We can formalize the self-identity/social-identity analytical distinction by defining self-identity as the individual's own notion of who and what they are and social-identities as cultural, discursive or institutional notions of who or what any individual might be.” (Watson, 2008 p131)

Within a managerial context, what an individual 'might be' is influenced by discursive resources shaping available social-identities defining what a management practitioner 'ought

to be’ (Sturdy et al, 2006). These managerial social-identities are sex-typed male and are promoted and sustained through local, organisational and national discourses which are mechanisms of power. Likewise, what a man or a woman ‘ought to be’ is similarly promoted and sustained resulting in gender stereotypes (i.e. available social-identities) which both describe and prescribe acceptable ways for men and women to behave (Heilman, 2001). It is the apparent inconsistency between gender stereotypes and the male sex typing of managerial roles which results in women experiencing either negative bias with regards to future performance (i.e. perceived lack of fit) or disapproval if they succeed but are thereby perceived to disobey the norms associated with their gender stereotype (ibid).

### Research methodology

Female Millennials (born 1980 to 2000) are bringing new attitudes into the workplace yet within FS lack of career progression opportunities is the top reason why they leave their employer (PwC, 2015). Hence this study will compare Millennials with older females on three dimensions these being their gender self-profile, their notion of a good manager, and their experiences of their employer’s evaluation system. The key research question is “Are there differences between Millennials and older females in terms of perceptions of gender equality in corporate evaluation systems within UK Financial Services?” The target population is women in junior, middle or senior management roles, in large or medium Financial Services organisations in the UK who were either born between 1980 and 1995 (50% of target) or born before 1980 (50% of target). Research subjects are a sample of this population of sufficient size to support statistical analysis (> 100).

Gendered leader stereotypes have been studied since 1973 using three research paradigms (Koenig *et al*, 2011). Of these sixty-nine studies, only four have been in the UK, and only one has used the “Agency-Communion paradigm” (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002). The proposed research will be the first in the UK to use this paradigm to research junior, middle and senior managers via the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem 1981) used extensively in the US. It differs from Vinnicombe & Singh (2002) in four ways:

Factor	Vinnicombe & Singh (2002)	Proposed research
<b>Subjects =</b>	Senior managers	Junior, middle & senior managers
<b>Employer =</b>	One insurance company	Multiple FS organisations
<b>Instrument =</b>	Personality attributes	Bem Sex-Role Inventory
<b>Method =</b>	Questionnaire (quantitative)	Mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) (Clark and Creswell, 2011)

An online questionnaire will be designed with questions to support quantitative data analysis. These will include personal details (age, role, level of seniority etc.), self-description using BSRI (i.e. personal gender profile), description of a ‘good manager’ using BSRI, and views on their employer’s evaluation system (Likert scale). Follow-up qualitative interviews will be undertaken with a sample (45) of research subjects to develop contextual insights into their evaluation experiences. Questions will be informed by gender stereotype theories (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001) and related theories about the intersection of sex, gender and leadership (Powell, 2012).

At the organisational level the research will undertake a narrative analysis of each company’s evaluation/appraisal practices for managerial roles and will ultimately aim to influence policy-making at this level. At a national level the research will compile quantitative data on women in management (graduate entry through to middle and senior management) within

UK-based large organisations (i.e. employing more than 1,000 people). In addition, there will be a literature review of structural conditions within the UK (e.g. laws, culture, and political ideology) and the historical context (e.g. labour market patterns over time).

### **International perspective – comparative studies**

The proposed research is focused on the UK but with further funding it has the potential to be developed into a comparative study involving several countries either within Europe or beyond. Of importance here is the careful design of the research to encompass a multi-layered approach using the ‘relational framework’ proposed by Syed and Ozbilgin (2009). This pays attention to the micro-individual level, the meso-organizational level and the macro-national level (ibid). Such an approach acknowledges the interplay between individual choices (agency) and identity (self and social), organisational discourses and processes, and cultural narratives and structures within the national context (ibid). This ensures that an individual’s experience of equal opportunity is examined at a local level within its organisational, national and historical context. This multi-layered approach supports the development of nuanced comparative studies with other countries and reduces the risk of cultural imperialism i.e. unreflexively transferring diversity management policy, practices and findings from one setting to another (ibid).

### **Developing this paper**

The first draft of this paper was submitted in February 2016 as a “Development Paper” for the BAM conference in September 2016. Since then the paper has been updated to reflect the revised research design for which funding has now been secured.

Prior to discussion at the conference the paper will be further developed to include a more extensive literature review, and possibly a discussion of the empirical research and findings to date.

One of the objectives of presenting the paper at the BAM conference will be to identify colleagues doing related work and to generate interest in establishing comparative studies in other industry sectors/countries.

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