A study on gender inequality in Thailand: career experience of Thai female managers

Patcharin Hansatit

Southern Cross University

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Gender Inequality in Thailand: Career Experiences of Thai Female Managers

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Bachelor of Arts – Business English
Master of Commerce – Business Law

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

Southern Cross Business School
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17th January 2014
Declaration

I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University’s rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

SIGNED: ________________________________

DATED: ________________________________

CANDIDATE: ______________________________
Abstract

Gender inequality is a key feminist issue, particularly in the world of business management. Although the overall status as well as perception of women may have improved dramatically, much research has proven the existence of continued inequality and ‘glass ceilings’ in most Western countries, such as the US. Very little research has discussed gender inequality in Asian countries, especially in Thailand, and this study attempts to fill the gap.

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to evaluate whether there exists an inequality between Thai women and men, using various related measures, and then investigate the actual experiences of Thai female managers and executives in Thai workplaces across Bangkok, Thailand. Interviews were conducted with 20 Thai female managers and executives employed in organisations based in Bangkok to explore gender inequality and female leadership styles of high ranking female executives. A phenomenological approach was used to understand the issues and common themes that emerged from the participants’ collective stories.

The results showed that many had succeeded due to their own performance and effort. The assumption that women managers have only marginal or casual attachment to their work was not upheld. The participants indicated that work was central to their lives and that any interruptions to paid work were mostly of short duration. Nevertheless, the women’s participation in management structures at all levels was problematic.

It is recommended that management acknowledge the fluid, relational and pervasive character of power and the need to interrogate the workings of gender and power at all levels of society. Women who are held hostage in family structures are scarcely going to be able to come together to effect change. Without individual conscientisation and commitment to change inhibiting cultural situations, transformation of national and global management is unlikely.
Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been achievable without the encouragement and support of a range of individuals. Most importantly, I must dedicate this thesis to my family, including my mum and my sister and my dad, in particular, who is no longer with us. I wish he were here to witness my achievement. I believe that wherever he is, he would see this and be happy for me. A tremendous gratitude goes to all my best friends who are like a family to me, especially Mat and Peter, who always believed in me and supported me through every step. Without them, this thesis would not have been possible. Enormous thanks goes to all my fellow DBA candidates who gave advice and input in preparing the thesis.

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Thank you.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGEO</td>
<td>Chief Gender Equality Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIO</td>
<td>Chief Information Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>CKO</td>
<td>Chief Knowledge Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>FES</td>
<td>Friedrich Ebert Stiftung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDI</td>
<td>Gender-Related Development Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEM</td>
<td>Gender Empowerment Measure</td>
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<tr>
<td>GGI</td>
<td>Gender Gap Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>GII</td>
<td>Gender Inequality Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOS</td>
<td>Gender-Organisation-System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRB</td>
<td>Gender-Responsive budgeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HREC</td>
<td>Human Research Ethics Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>Multiple Correspondence Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Government Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSO</td>
<td>National Statistical Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OWAFD</td>
<td>Office of Women’s Affairs and Family Development</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Gender inequality is a key feminist issue, particularly in the world of business management. Although the overall status as well as perception of women may have improved dramatically, gender inequality is still a pertinent issue (Cong, 2008). Much research has proven the existence of gender inequality and ‘glass ceilings’ in most Western countries, such as the US, UK and Spain. (Liff and Ward, 2001). Very little of research has explored the issue in Asian countries, especially in Thailand. This research aims to update knowledge on gender inequality in Thailand and to investigate its role in Thai society. Many Thai women have become top executives in many leading Thai or multinational organisations in Thailand, yet there are also many women with the right qualifications still struggling in a man’s world, especially in management (Yukongdi, 2005). Why does this struggle continue despite improvements in the status of women? To answer this, the research investigates gender inequality in the Thai workplace and how Thai female managers cope with the situation.

In Thailand, discrimination in the form of perceptions of what women can do is historically deep rooted and caused by the traditional thinking of both genders (Muangsook, 2006). The core problem is conservative social attitudes towards women’s rights, which unfortunately are held not only by men but by many women as well. This must be openly addressed through specific national policies, which are fully implemented and evaluated for effectiveness in order to eliminate gender discrimination and cultivate equality between the genders (Thai Women Watch, 2003).

The face-pace growth of the Thai economy may have had some impact on women’s education, promotion to management and their progress (O’Neil et al., 2008). Much research has investigated women’s participation in the labour force and numbers have shown a rise of women employment in most developed countries, as well as in Asian countries, including Thailand. Has this increase of women in the labour force
meant that women’s lives have been improved and their status has been recognised? It has been observed that during the last few years in many parts of the world, a number of women are entering into management but not many of them are having an opportunity to reach management or higher positions (Wirth, 2001; Jugulu and Wood, 2008). The question is whether it is because of their abilities and dedication to their work or whether a ‘glass ceiling’ is affecting and preventing the women from reaching the top management positions.

Despite Thai women’s higher levels of education and social and political involvement in recent decades as compared with the past, they still seemingly are experiencing some deep-seated traditional gender-based prejudices and have not participated in significant numbers in management at the highest levels where they could have direct influence upon national policies related to gender equity in all fields. While men’s dominance in management may remain an uncompromising difficulty to many women’s career progression, this research serves to strengthen the possibility of individual women’s association with managerial work cultures (Whitehead, 2001).

1.1 Purpose of the Study

As stated by Yukongdi (2005), very little is known about women managers in less industrialised countries, such as Thailand, since most of what we know is drawn from research on women managers in industrialised countries, which are mostly Western. An extensive search of the literature found that there is a scarcity of empirical research examining women in management in Thailand. The majority of the studies relating to women managers in Thailand were conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, which was the height of the arrival of feminism. What is known of Thai women managers in the past may no longer be relevant and recognisable today. Therefore, this research will ultimately provide an update on the overall status of Thai women in management and explore their career experiences from a phenomenological point of view in relation to whether gender inequality still impacts on career progression for women decades after the rise of feminist theory.
Most organisations have been created by and for men and, therefore, are also based on male experiences. Although women have entered the workforce in their masses in the past generation and it is widely agreed that they add huge value through their dedication, organisations’ definitions of competence and leadership are still based on personalities stereotypically correlated with men: tough, aggressive and decisive (Myerson and Flether, 2000). The minority of women in senior management positions has led many researchers to investigate whether glass ceiling barriers such as sexual discrimination, gender stereotype, harassment and lack of family-friendly workplace policies in organisations are at play and how these blockades affect the performance of female employees. Issues that relate to the glass ceiling to be explored with Thai female executives are their reasons to participate in male-dominated departments, coping with working environments and overcoming obstacles in career advancement.

Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, connecting taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of observing individuals’ opinions (Willig, 2001). The purpose of using the phenomenological approach is to clarify the specific and to recognise experiences through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation (Edmondson and McManus, 2007; Willig, 2001). In the human scope, this normally translates into gathering rich information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participant(s) (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). This approach was chosen for this research because it aims to study personal and professional benefits in career progression, particularly in the experiences encountered by Thai female in management positions in Thai workplace. Apart from the study of the experiences of Thai female managers, there are another additional two purposes of this research, which are discussed below.

One purpose of this research is to explore whether gender inequality exists in Thailand and how gender plays a part in career progression. According to Yukongdi (2005), many Thai women have become top executives in many leading Thai or multinational organisations. However, there might also be many women with the right qualifications still struggling in a man’s world, especially in management.
Thus, the study investigates whether there is an existence of gender inequality in the Thai workplace and how Thai female managers cope with the situation.

Another purpose of the study is to investigate Thai female managers and their career experiences in management. It is widely known that management is male-dominated and it is difficult for female employees to get into management or be promoted as managers (Bell et al., 2002). The journey is not impossible but it requires more effort and sacrifices in comparison to male colleagues as a result of a variety of reasons such as female’s domestic roles and political issues inside organisations (Zane, 2002). The research explores whether it is true that women have to work harder when despite equal or higher qualifications when it comes to progression in career in management.

Thailand is known as one of many fast-growing economies in the Asian region (Niffenegger et al., 2006) and the question is whether the Thai workplace is ready for a discrimination-free society in order to catch up with other Asian and Western countries. This research aims to examine career progression path, family support, education scholarship and training programs and discrimination protection for female employees compared to their male counterparts. The impact of gender awareness on social, educational and economic policy formulation, implementation and evaluation in Thailand is also examined. The research hopes to gain insight into Thai women’s career experience and progression in management and interactions with their environments, the opportunities or events that influenced their career progression and their perception of these experiences.

1.2 Research Questions and Discussion

The research in this study takes two forms:

1. Gender inequality in Thailand is evaluated initially using various related measures to check whether there exists an inequality between Thai women and men.

2. Then, one of the major critical areas of inequality between men and women in Thailand, namely, economic participation and opportunity, is considered
with a detailed study to address the following research questions and specific aims through the experience of Thai female managers who are employed in professional organisations.

Table 1.1 Research questions

The research investigates the following:

1. Do Thai women with high qualification have difficulties in progression to management?
2. Does marriage and taking time off to raise family block Thai women from progressing in their career?
3. Are Thai legislative initiatives helping Thai women in advancing their career through to management levels?
4. Do Thai women think that they will have an equal chance with men to progress through to higher positions in management?

The aim of the study is to investigate whether women face the glass ceiling in reaching management positions in Thailand. Specific aims are to identify:

- difficulties in terms of gender inequality for highly qualified Thai women to break through to management;
- whether family roles (family obligations) are hindering Thai women progressing in their career;
- whether legislative initiatives help Thai women dealing with the glass ceiling; and
- whether women will feel supported in getting a promotion to management level.

The above factors contribute to a drop in career aspirations and rise in women leaving jobs or looking for a better opportunity in other organisations or industries that could provide them with more positive options (Chou et al., 2005; Yukongdi, 2005). Much research has been conducted to investigate women’s participation in the labour force and the numbers show a rise of women employment in most developed countries, including in the Asian countries (O’Neil et al., 2008). However,
there is very little investigation in the Thai context, especially in management, and the main purpose of this study is to fill this gap.

1.3 Overview of Research Design

This research is qualitative and exploratory, and involved interviews with Thai female managers and executives employed in organisations based in Bangkok, Thailand. These women are managers and executives at the senior level in their organisations who, at the time of the research, were all located in Bangkok. Berg (2004) adds that admittance has to be constantly negotiated throughout the interviewing process, since the access makes it possible to build the trust and establish necessary relationships with the individuals being researched. The interview questions were based on the literature review and traditional teaching in Thai society to clarify the topic of gender inequality and female leadership styles of high ranking female executives. As qualitative research, the basic strategy of this method is to ensure systematic and self-conscious research design, data collection, interpretation and communication.

The research design seeks to:

- create an explanation of methods used and data collected that can stand independently so that other trained researchers could analyse the same data in the same way and yield the same conclusions: and,

- to produce a credible and rational explanation of the phenomenon of the study (Mays and Pope, 1995). The research aims to present a clear version of the command, formation and interesting findings (Stenbacka, 2001).

A qualitative approach is appropriate as it allows the researcher to have the opportunity to ask for clarification from the participants when answers are not clear in the sense of explaining an experience and/or opinions about the attitude towards gender inequality. A quantitative approach could not access the attitudes and perceptions of each participant since it utilises numerical data or mass scale data collection. This research on gender inequality is not focused on hypothesis but searches for alternative and more possible explanations, opinions and results. This
research also requires the analysis of cultural context, social values and gender discrimination issues in Thailand and the personal experiences of each participant. Thus, the qualitative approach is the appropriate tool to collect the data.

The goal of this research is to understand how Thai female managers and executives experience and come to terms with their lives in those positions as well as their roles at home. According to Creswell et al. (2007), this study relies on a phenomenological approach because of its focus on exploring the experience of a phenomenon, which in this case is Thai female managers’ career experience. This research attempts to bring forward the voices of the women in this study and employ a phenomenological construct to uncover and understand the complicated issues that contribute to the meaning of these career experiences. This phenomenological framework allows for gathering of participants’ experiences, in their own voice, based on their own interpretation.

1.4 Research Assumptions

As in any qualitative research study, assumptions about outcomes affect the researcher’s direction of analysis and, therefore, different aspects of the research, including data collection, analysis and interpretation process will also be affected. This study assumes that participants would freely share truthful and comprehensive information in the context of the research to preserve the reliability and validity of the data collected. The ability to provide this type of information requires a relationship of established and mutual trust between participants and researcher. It also requires the participants’ ability to judgementally reproduce and understand the meaning of differences in their lives. A final assumption held by this research is that a phenomenological approach would deliver the best overall picture from which to explore and report on the experiences of the participants, since sharing their experiences in their own voice preserves the genuineness of this study.
1.5 Research Limitations

The research limitations of this study indicate that different equity management approaches affect gender inequality outcomes for women. This study explored women’s advancement into management, with education, opportunity, family support, social policies and economic policies also identified as potential factors for consideration. Further research may determine the relative value of these and other variables on the status of women’s employment.

The ability to analyse results and make causal inferences was reduced because research data were not longitudinal. In future studies, organisations, and possibly related authorities, could be examined over an extended period. However, the limited duration of this study does not diminish its value to future research and gender studies, as it raises a number of issues warranting further exploration. Organisational approaches to equity management have demonstrated that industry type and size influence the status of women, their access to education and social acceptance in specific workplaces. Researching relationships between equity and other industry variables may provide insight into the alternative organisational approaches that exist in other countries or cultural contexts. With further research a strategic approach to equity management can be proposed.

The classification broadly identifies factors supporting different organisational approaches to equity management. From a theoretical perspective, there are multiple ways to address the workplace disparities experienced by women in management roles, but the existence and success of such methods is currently undetermined.

This study uses qualitative methods. The results represent the opinions of 20 study participants, but are not necessarily representative of women working in management overall. Similarly, the snowball sampling used has inherent limitations. This technique allows for easier recruitment, but can result in peer participants holding similar views. Participants not known to the researcher, or each other, may have opinions that are relevant yet contrary to those hypothesised, but such views are excluded from the results due to the sampling technique. Although selecting
participants from different social groups was prioritised, most were middle-class and held similar opinions on equity-related issues.

1.6 Rationales, Scope and Significance of Research

The purpose of this study is to identify specific themes relevant to the career experiences of Thai female managers and executives. In addition to exploring issues of gender, leadership and investigational learning, it aims to highlight how these women navigate daily life as managers and executives. Interest in studying the career progression of women in managerial roles has increased in the last 20 years, particularly in the context of how women compare to men (Davidson & Burke 2004; Rowley & Yukongdi 2009), with numerous journal articles and academic works documenting the differences in the labour market’s demographic representation.

Thai society remains conservative despite full access to education for females, with women expected to stay at home and fulfil stereotypical family care roles (Yukongdi 2005). Thai women face extensive gender bias in virtually all spheres of life, despite recent improvements in social, educational, political and economic opportunities (Benson & Yukongdi 2005). Though increased access to education facilitates greater social and political involvement, Thai women continue to be impeded by deep-seated, traditional, gender-based values and thus rarely participate in high-level management, where they may be positioned to directly influence national gender equity-related policy in all fields. In recent times, women’s status has improved, but inequality between females and males still exists in several significant ways (Onozawa 2000; Yukongdi 2005; Weyer 2007).

Thailand is known as one of the many fast-growing economies in the Asian region (Niffenegger et al. 2006), which is why this study aims to determine whether the Thai workplace will conform to expectations and provide women with the same rights and opportunities as other Asian and Western countries. The study examines whether career progression, family support, educational scholarships, training programmes and discrimination protection are as readily available for female employees as they are for males.
The effect of gender awareness on social, educational and economic policy formulation, implementation and evaluation in Thailand is also investigated. This research is important from two perspectives: first, there is a dearth of research on the career progression of Thai women in management. The results of this study may serve to help organisations entrenched in traditional, masculine values to understand how their practices negatively affect the career experiences of Thai female managers and executives, and thus encourage the creation of workplaces that support the growth, development and protection of women.

Second, changes to the modern global economy demand that organisations develop workplace diversity to include a balanced number of male and female managers and executives. This requires organisations to develop long-term diversity strategies to attract and retain highly-qualified female managers and groom them for leadership positions. Diversity strategies must also ensure there are senior-level leaders that can act as role models and mentor young women within the organisation.

This study will investigate the career experiences of Thai female managers and executives, summarising viewpoints and analysing how executives interpreted their experiences. In doing so, this research offers a more comprehensive understanding than has previously been explored.

1.7 Overview of Research Method

The sample consists of a total of 20 female managers occupying middle and senior managerial positions in medium to large (greater than 100 employees) organisations. The shortage of women managers in some industrial sectors means that the numbers are extended by personal referral in a few cases. Interviews are conducted according to a semi-structured format by building on open-ended questions that encourage wide-ranging as well as further discussion on the topic.

The data collection uses an alternative approach, which is often found in qualitative research, of systematic sampling. The purpose of the research design is not to
establish a random or illustrative sample drawn from a population but rather to recognise specific groups of people who either possess characteristics or live in surroundings relevant to the social phenomenon being studied (Mays and Pope, 1995). With the chosen approach, the researcher can locate participants within a particular aspect of behaviour relevant and of benefit to the research. It also allows intentionally inclusion of a wide range of types of participants and selection of key participants with access to important sources of knowledge.

The research focuses on customs, women’s development, and the acceptance and perception of female executives. The participants’ understandings and experiences regarding their careers are analysed in order to reveal their associations of different matters and clarify their experiences in their professions. The analysis utilises data from the literature review and interviews, and keywords from the participants’ that are categorised into groups. Findings are drawn from the analysis.

1.8 Overview of Research Ethics and Contribution

The protection of human subjects or participants in any research study is vital (Wiles et al., 2006). The nature of ethical problems in qualitative research is sensitive and different compared to problems in quantitative research (Orb et al., 2001). Batchelor and Briggs (1994) claim that the failure of researchers to address ethical issues has resulted in those researchers being ill prepared to cope with the unpredictable nature of qualitative research. Included in qualitative research are the concepts of relationships and power between researchers and participants. The desire to participate in a research study depends upon a participant’s willingness to share his or her experience. Qualitative studies are frequently conducted in a setting involving the participation of people in their everyday environments. Thus, any research that includes people requires an awareness of the ethical issues that may be derived from such interactions (Orb et al., 2001). The researcher has to make sure that participants in this research are fully informed of their rights before conducting the interview. Any information and interview questions are not to offend the participants in anyway.
This research contributes to the body of literature by providing a contemporary understanding of female perspectives in terms of the gender inequality in Thai workplace. The insight provided in this study may be useful to potential female managers (or younger generations of managers who will replace existing managers in the future) in conveying strategies to overcome the challenges of inequality. Also, the research provides informative explanations to employers and government policy makers on the difficulties women face in their career progression towards management roles. The research can benefit all female and potential female managers by making them aware of their hurdles and strategies available to them. There is also significant value to Thai society by increasing the number of highly qualified women in the workplace and managements area.

Research shows that men and women work differently in terms of their emotional and physical capacity. If organisations and social community know how to put the right people in the right positions, it will ultimately increase productivity, which is considered to be the ultimate goal of any organisation. The related women’s associations and organisations will also be benefit from this research as it raises issues that need to be discussed and debated in society for the development of women’s economic progress. The outcomes also establish a model for any future research on gender discrimination in other male-territorial fields.

1.9 Summary

This chapter presented the outline of the thesis. It began with the background and relevant information of the research study. A discussion of the gender inequality in Thai workplace was given, including organisational culture and other crucial factors that contribute to this topic. A summary of the relevant methodology adopted for this study was reviewed. Then the chapter concluded by stating the contribution this study will make to the field of gender inequality in the workplace.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to research, investigate, and analyse the relevant literature in order to gain insight into what is known about the career experiences of Thai female managers and executives. This research examines the opportunities and challenges for women managers in the Thai cultural context and presents an update on their progress in management. The influence of Asian cultures and religious traditions has been used to explain women’s under-utilisation and under-representation in management. The aim of this research is to examine such influences on organisational and management practices, and how these affect women in management in Asian and cross-cultural comparison as a whole. The central focus of the research is Thailand. Some elements of management practices are universal whereas others, such as human resources (HR) practices, are more unique to a given context. This literature review focuses on specific aspects of the major theories in gender inequality and provides an overview and analysis of aspects that are relevant to this research.

In order to uncover the relevant literature, this review is divided into three major categories. The first category examines the existing literature on gender inequality and glass ceilings. The second category examines the studies of women in management and explores whether the journey has been limited for them. The third category explores the factors for Thai females’ career progress. This chapter also discusses the gender-organisation-system perspective, which is the theoretical framework adopted to explain the under-representation and under-utilisation of women in management. This is followed by an overview of women in the labour market, their educational levels and the proportion of women in managerial and profession positions in Thailand. The factors that contribute to occupational gender segregation, issues related to the balancing of family and work life and the barriers to women’s career advancement are also examined. The last sections of this chapter discuss the influence of national culture, focusing particularly on Asian societies as
well as a cross-cultural examination of gender issues, and present an overview of the economies featured in this research.

2.1 Overview of Gender Inequality

Feminist theories remind us that the experiences of women are historically and culturally situated. Thus, a brief overview of the history of inequality helps provide the groundwork used by some feminist theories, discussed later in this chapter, to contend for greater diversity in theorising about gender inequality. Inequality is not new to the human society. Throughout history hunter-gather, agrarian, medieval, caste-based and industrial societies have all had structures that advantaged some and disadvantaged others. Individuals and groups of individuals have had different access to economic, political, cultural, social, honorific and civic assets (Niffenegger, et al., 2006; Yukongdi, 2005). In spite of the ubiquity of inequality throughout history, inequality has only recently been viewed as a problem.

Ancient people paid little attention to inequality. Mostly, the social values of people were influenced by religion. Their destinies were in the hands of gods and it was the gods’ will that some people be born and live as slaves, that some were rich and others poor (Niffenegger, et al., 2006). These people believed that it was the judgement of gods that the poor die starving and cold. Inequality had been largely accepted as an unchangeable fact (Datuin, 2000). Not until the 18th century was it commonly believed that the nature of inequality could be altered. The will of gods no longer seemed to be sufficient explanation for inequality because it had been displaced by scientific investigation. In the 19th century, scholars began to formulate theories about the causes of inequality and how to affect social change (Datuin, 2000).

2.2 Theories on Gender Inequality

Dated back to the 19th century, theories of gender inequality came from a male-oriented intellectual climate. Gender issues were absent from detailed discussion in classical theory because it was a reflection of the inequality women faced at that
time (Smith, 2002). Studies of gender inequality were based on males’ norms and experience and then used to interpret those for women. In the past, women were seen as the source of problem, and to become more like men was the solution for them (Gardiner, 2004). From a human capital perspective, women are thought to lack the necessary assets that would allow them to move into highly paid jobs (Martin, 2004). However, several gender researchers demonstrate that no individual-level characteristics have ever been able to explain even half of the wage gap. The earning differences between male and females working in female-dominated jobs and those who work in male-dominated jobs cannot be understood from a human capital perspective. The differences between men and women’s productivity characteristics are not sufficient to explain the earnings gap. Theories of inequality with gender as their focus is what is clearly needed (Francisco, 2007; Meyerson and Kolb, 2000).

There are a variety of issues that are affected by society’s attitudes towards women. Attitudes are found in the history and institutional structure of society. These differences lead women to take different actions than males in similar situations (Fletcher, 1998; Buttner, 2001). The latest research has shown that during the past decade, Asia has experienced intense economic growth leading to a significant increase in demand for managers and professionals. In Asia, and particularly in East and South East Asia, women’s participation rates in the labour force are ranked among the highest in the world (Yukongdi and Rowley, 2009).

2.3 Background on Gender Inequality Measures

Many studies have been undertaken to measure gender inequality in the past two decades. The Human Development Index (HDI), created by the economists Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen in 1990, and published by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 1995) was one of the pioneer studies that led to the development of gender inequality measures subsequently. The HDI is a composite statistic of life expectancy, education and income used to rank countries on human development. It is a summary composite index that measures a country’s average achievements in three basic aspects of human development: longevity, knowledge and a decent standard of living. Longevity is measured by life expectancy at birth; knowledge is
measured by a combination of the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio; and standard of living by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (PPP US$). HDI has the explicit purpose to shift the focus of development economics from national income accounting to people-centred policies. In the 2010 Human Development Report, a further Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI) was introduced. The report stated that ‘the IHDI is the actual level of human development (accounting for inequality)’ and ‘the HDI can be viewed as an index of “potential” human development (or the maximum IHDI that could be achieved if there were no inequality)’ (Human Development Report, 2010).

Since the use of HDI and IHDI, the UNDP developed further indices to measure gender-related inequality. The popular indices are: (i) Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) (ii) Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and (iii) Gender Inequality Index (GII).

### 2.4 Gender-related Development Index (GDI)

The GDI was introduced in 1995 in the Human Development Report written by the UNDP. The GDI is a distribution sensitive measure that accounts for the human development impact of existing gender gaps in the three components of the HDI such as life expectancy, education and income (Klasen, 2006). It is a composite indicator that measures the average achievement of a population in the same dimensions as the HDI while adjusting for gender inequalities in the level of achievement in the three basic aspects of human development. It uses the same variables as the HDI, disaggregated by gender. Distribution sensitive means that the GDI takes into account not only the average or general level of well-being and wealth within a given country, but focuses also on how this wealth and well-being is distributed between different groups within society.

### 2.5 Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)

The GEM is the UNDP’s attempt to measure the extent of gender inequality across the countries, based on estimates of women’s relative economic income,
participation in high-paying positions with economic power, and access to professional and parliamentary positions. It is a composite indicator that captures gender inequality in three key areas:

- political participation and decision making, as measured by women’s and men’s percentage shares of parliamentary seats
- economic participation and decision making power, as measured by two indicators—women’s and men’s percentage shares of positions as legislators, senior officials and managers and women’s and men’s percentage shares of professional and technical positions
- power over economic resources, as measured by women’s and men’s estimated earned income (PPP US$).

The GEM was designed to measure whether women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision making (UNDP, 1995; Klasen, 2006). The GEM is determined using three basic indicators: proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments, percentage of women in economic decision making positions (including administrative, managerial, professional and technical occupations) and female share of income (Betata, 2007). The GEM is thought to be a valuable policy instrument because it allows certain dimensions that were previously difficult to compare between countries (Charmes and Wieringa, 2003).

The aim of the above two measures (GDI and GEM) is to add a gender-sensitive dimension to the HDI. The GDI, GEM and HDI were created as additional measures to the more traditional general income-based measures of development such as GDP and Gross National Product (GNP). The GEM, the more specialised of the two, is focused on indicating the relative empowerment of women in a given country (Klasen, 2006). The GDI and GEM became the primary indices for measuring global gender inequality for the United Nations Human Development Reports. Although the GDI and GEM have increased attention on gender equality in human development, they face much criticism for their methodological and conceptual limitations (Bardhan and Klasen, 1999; Dijkstra and Hanmer, 2000; Permanyer, 2011).
Beneria and Permanyer (2010) argue that the GDI is a composite index that measures development within a country then negatively corrects for gender inequality; and the GEM measures the access women have to attaining means of power in economics, politics and making decisions. Beneria and Permanyer claimed that both these measures are inaccurate in clearly capturing gender inequality. According to the UNDP, the GDI was criticised for its inability to accurately measure gender inequality due to its components being so closely related to the HDI (UNDP, 2011). The differences between the HDI and GDI are small, leading to the implication that gender disparities were irrelevant to human development. The GEM indicators prove to be more relevant to developed countries than less-developed countries. Despite these measures, with international growing concern for gender equality, the participants of the World Economic Forum in 2007, among others, recognised that the advancement of women was a significant issue that impacted the growth of nations (Ferrant, 2010).

2.6 Gender Inequality Index (GII)

Given the amount of criticism that the GDI and GEM came under, the UNDP felt that these indices did not fully capture the disparities women faced and so introduced the GII in the 2010 Human Development Report. The GII is an association-sensitive, responsive to distributional changes across dimension (Permanyer, 2011) composite index used to rank the loss of development through gender inequality within a country (UNDP, 2010). The GII measures inequalities by addressing the shortcomings of other measures through aggregate strategy using multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) in order to avoid aggregation problems (Ferrant, 2010).

The new index captures the loss of achievement due to gender inequality using three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and labour market participation. The GII does not include income levels as a component, which was one of the most controversial components of the GDI and GEM. It also does not allow for high achievements in one dimension to compensate for low achievement in another (UNDP, 2011). However, the GII has major data limitations, which constrains the
choice of indicators. For example, the index uses national parliamentary representation that excludes participation at the local government level and elsewhere in community and public life. The labour market dimension lacks information on incomes, employment and on unpaid work mostly done by women. The index misses other important dimension, such as time use—the fact that many women have the additional burden of care giving and housekeeping, which cut into leisure time and increase stress and physical exhaustion. Asset ownership, gender-based violence and participation in community decision making are also not captured, mainly due to limited data availability (Beneria and Permanyer, 2010).

The metrics of the GII are similar in calculations to the IHDI, which was also introduced in the 2010 Human Development Report, and can be interpreted as a percentage loss of human development due to shortcomings in the included dimensions. The value of GII range between 0 to 1, with 0 being 0 per cent inequality, indicating women fare equally in comparison to men and 1 being 100 per cent inequality, indicating women fare poorly in comparison to men. There is a correlation between GII ranks and human development distribution, and the UNDP countries that exhibit high gender inequality also show inequality in distribution of development, and vice versa (UNDP, 2010).

2.7 Gender Gap Index (GGI)

As of 2006, the World Economic Forum has been using the GGI in its Global Gender Gap Reports, in an attempt to better capture gender disparities and rank countries according to their gender gaps. The GGI is a framework for capturing the intensity and scope of gender-based disparities and monitoring their progress. The GGI benchmarks national gender gaps on economic, political, education and health criteria, and provides country rankings that allow for effective comparisons across regions and income groups, and over time (World Economic Forum, 2013). Beneria and Permanyer (2010) criticised the GGI for only capturing inequality in certain aspects of women’s lives, therefore making it an incomplete measure of gender inequality. However, the GGI is considered to include more variables as compared to other gender inequality measures.
This index is designed to measure gender-based gaps in access to resources and opportunities in individual countries rather than the actual levels of the available resources and opportunities in those countries. This makes the GGI independent from the countries’ levels of development. It is constructed to rank countries on their gender gaps not on their development level. Moreover, the GGI evaluates countries based on outcomes rather than inputs. The fundamental outcome variables include basic rights such as health, education, economic participation and political empowerment (World Economic Forum, 2013).

The Global GGI Report 2013 of the World Economic Forum (2013) examines four critical areas of inequality between men and women in 130 economies around the globe, over 93 per cent of the world’s population:

- Economic participation and opportunity—outcomes on salaries, participation levels and access to high-skilled employment.
- Educational attainment—outcomes on access to basic and higher level education.
- Political empowerment—outcomes on representation in decision making structures.
- Health and survival—outcomes on life expectancy and sex ratio.

Using the above variables, the Global GGI is constructed with the highest possible score as 1 (total equality) and the lowest possible score as 0 (total inequality).

2.8 Theories on the Glass Ceiling

The term ‘glass ceiling’ refers to invisible or artificial barriers that prevent women as well as people of colour, from advancing past a certain level (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission—FGCC, 1997; Morrison and von Glinow, 1990). The widespread use of the term in the mass media has led to an increase of different understanding of what constitutes a glass ceiling. Cotter et al. (2001) suggest four criteria that characterise glass ceilings as a form of disadvantage that is distinct from other forms of discrimination in the work place. According to the authors, the essence of a glass ceiling effect is the greater disadvantages of moving into higher outcome (e.g.,
earnings and authority) levels at later stages in one’s work life. They state that, if we divide the earnings distribution or other outcome hierarchy into separate benchmarks and observe the inequalities in the opportunities of advancing beyond each of these benchmarks, a glass ceiling effect is apparent if the degree of the inequality not only increases, but also accelerates, as one moves up the hierarchy (Phondej and Kitisarn, 2010; Pai and Vaidya, 2009).

Research on the career development of women managers in general often refers to the glass ceiling that restricts advancement of women to top executive positions. The literature confirms the presence of such a barrier in management. However, a few exceptional women have broken the glass ceiling and have obtained executive level positions, such as chief information officer (CIO) or chief knowledge officer (CKO). Although the literature has also discussed broader issues concerning the opportunities and problems faced by women in management, systematic research on the educational background, work experiences, motivation, persistence, aspirations, and overall career development of women in executive level positions in management is lacking. Given that there is a shortage of women employed in management positions, it is important to address this concern and gap in the management area.

The study of career development of women has become increasingly important, as the percentage of the labour force that is female has increased (Yukongdi, 2005). As more women enter the labour market, the focus has shifted from ‘women oriented towards homemaking versus careers’ to ‘traditional versus non-traditional careers and identifying career patterns of women’. This shift reflects the changing career expectations of women in management. Women are also more likely to remain in the workforce for significant parts of their lives. This trend results in more women pursuing lifelong careers in their chosen occupations, which results in more women reaching top level positions. The relative failure of women to move into top rank positions in management is an important topic of concern. The significance of the absence of women in the highest and most visible positions in management should not be ignored. By studying and understanding the career development and aspirations, as well as the barriers that exist and the factors that assist women in executive level positions in management, we can learn how to break down the
barriers and how to facilitate the development and achievement of more women to management positions.

The glass ceiling is the third form of discrimination that affects women in organisations and is an important factor in women’s lack of access to power and status in organisations. The minority of women in senior management has led many researchers to investigate whether glass ceiling barriers such as sexual discrimination, gender wage gap, gender stereotype, and harassment and lack of family-friendly workplace policies in the organisations are at play and how these barriers affect the performance of female employees in the organisations. Some of the ‘masculine’ organisational barriers that hinder women’s ability to be effective in their role as strategic decision makers include unwillingness to work alongside women or having female managers of male subordinates; isolation by male colleagues; exclusion from male-dominated informal networks and the lack of mentorship (Alessio and Andrzejewski, 2000).

The glass ceiling is also very visible to those whose careers have been affected by it. The phenomenon is seen most dramatically in the statistic on the percentage of women in senior management positions in large corporations. In all parts of the world, female senior executives, and especially female Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) are extremely rare in large corporations (Oakley, 2000). An awareness of the under-representation of women in top positions in the corporate world has prompted many corporations to review their policies. As many researchers point out (Oakley, 2000; Yukongdi, 2005; Martin, 2004; Pai and Vaidya, 2009) multicultural firms are seeking to promote more women into senior management as global competition challenges them to maximise the effectiveness of their HR. Even in the event that corporations are not persuaded that increasing the percentage of women in upper management will enhance productivity, the highly noticeable under-representation of women creates pressures from stakeholders for more visible participation from women in corporate boards and upper management positions (Yukongdi, 2005; Yukongdi and Rowley, 2009).
In the past, policy towards gender equality was focused on the so-called equal opportunities approach (Bagues and Esteve-Volart, 2010). Women must move their way through a metaphorical pipeline to reach top level jobs. Policy was designed to encourage women’s higher education on the understanding that providing women with the same human capital as men would enable them to reach the top positions they seemed unable to attain. There is a prevailing view that while women have started to move up into management and public service positions, once they reach a certain point, the so-called glass ceiling, they do not seem to go any further. The imposition of gender quotas in top positions automatically equalises the numbers of men and women in top positions (Bagues and Esteve-Volart, 2010; Simpson and Altman, 2000). This helps close the gender gap quite directly, but a further motivation for imposing gender parity in top positions only is the rationale that once more women fill those positions, it should be easier for other women to advance through the lower ranks and ultimately reach the top themselves. That is, gender parity in top positions could break the glass ceiling from above, having a knock-on effect for women working their way through lower rank jobs.

There are several ways in which this could happen. First, women at the top could become role models. If women are not currently getting to top positions because of social norms, having more women at the top might help change these social norms. Second, women in top positions can affect choices in ways that might help other women get to the top. They could choose more flexible working hours or promote public expenditure that benefits women more. More directly, women who get to top level positions because of gender quotas might hire more women than their male counterparts. This will be the case if female candidates are more likely to be recruited when evaluated by female evaluators. It is this latter proposition that is the focus of this research paper. Although embedded in many discussions of gender parity policy, there is not clear evidence supporting the claim that female evaluators are more favourable towards female candidates (Weyer, 2007; Bagues and Esteve-Volart, 2010).

The lack of progress of women in breaking through the glass ceiling into the upper ranks in corporations in the 1990s brings to the forefront the importance of female under-representation in senior management in more recent years as well. The study
of business ethics can be enriched by the unique contributions of feminist theories and approaches, especially in regard to the managerial issues surrounding the under-representation of women in senior management. Two approaches commonly found in feminist discussions of the role of business ethics in the study of management stand out:

- the nature of knowledge is socially constructed
- ethical questions should encourage openness to new knowledge, especially knowledge that comes from those that are marginalised or excluded from the knowledge creation process (Oakley, 2000).

This research is aware that feminist thought and business ethics come together around the moral imperative of listening and incorporating the viewpoints of marginalised participants when formulating business policy. In male-dominated and predominantly male-lead large corporations, women’s inputs and voices are often muffled. Current approaches designed to help women move up the hierarchy usually focus on helping women to find ways to adapt and blend in rather than speak out and find their own voice (Goodman et al., 2003). In examining why there are so few women represented in senior management, it is essential to also understand the ethical questions posed by feminists about the current limitations on women’s roles. The feminist mode of inquiry emphasises the exploration of not only who has the power and how it is utilised to either change or maintain the status quo, but also what forces exist that prevent women from fully expressing themselves and their values. There is a pressing need for presenting explanations of why women are under-represented in corporate leadership positions from the viewpoints of women that have experienced or studied the phenomenon first hand. The variety of theories and explanations discussed in this dissertation, many of which were generated by women involved in the corporate world either as participants or scholars, also represent conversations that need to be listened to.

There are two very different categories of causation that the lack of women in senior management positions fall into. In the first category, created by corporate practices, barriers stem from objective and therefore easier to change causes of gender imbalance that often tend to favour the recruitment, retention and promotion of
females, especially in jobs that comprise the typical career paths of a future senior manager (Jugulu and Wood, 2011; Francisco, 2007). The second category, behavioural and cultural causes, are rooted in issues of stereotyping, tokenism, power, preferred leadership styles and the psychodynamics of male/female relations (Francisco, 2007).

Other explanations rooted in feminist theory that focuses on structural and cultural explanations will also be investigated in this thesis. It is important to note that the data and situations examined in these categories cover, for the most part, conditions present in large Bangkok-based corporations, with the understanding that social conditions and corporate cultural norms can be quite different in other contexts, either contexts with different cultural norms or corporations of smaller size and scale (Kottke and Agars, 2005).

2.9 Corporate Practices As Barriers to the Top

Corporate policies and practices in training and career development, promotion and compensation are often identified as major components of the glass ceiling that prevent women from making it to the top. The experience that women need in areas such as operations, manufacturing or marketing is often not offered to young managers. This ‘line experience’ is often deemed an essential prerequisite for the CEO position and other senior management positions (Jugulu and Wood, 2011). Often these policies difficulties are not addressed in the lower ranks of management and, subsequently, when women rise to positions closer to the top later in their career, they often find themselves excluded from the upper ranks of management due to improper tracking earlier on.

2.9.1 Training and Career Development

Very few in upper management have line experience, a prerequisite for the CEO position. In order to be in line for the CEO position, senior managers usually need to have worked in areas such as marketing or operations and typically need to be offered this experience by mid-career at the latest to be considered in the pipeline for
the top position. In the 1980s, it was thought by many that the 1990s would be a fruitful decade for increasing the number of women at the top, because there would finally be enough women in the pipeline (Oakley, 2000).

2.9.2 Promotion Policies

When women first started to enter the corporate world as managers in substantial numbers in the late 1960s and early 1970s, very few expected to pursue a career path leading to a senior management position. Corporate policies at that time did not include affirmative action programs to promote women to senior management positions, which made the first generation of women workers even more cautious of setting a goal to rise to the top. Women in middle management often cite a lack of performance-based feedback compared with their male colleagues, which serves as an additional obstacle for further promotion. Diversity awareness and leadership training for women in the corporate environment will not succeed unless employees at all levels of the organisation are educated and fully understand the rationale behind the promotion of diversity (Jugulu and Wood, 2011), including the promotion of more women to the ranks of upper management (Yukongdi, 2005).

2.9.3 Compensation Policies

In general, women managers do not receive the same salaries and perks as male managers at all levels of the organisation (Meyerson and Kolb, 2000). By earning substantially less, female managers find themselves in a situation where they are less likely to be next in line for promotions to the top positions, as substandard earnings tend to slow their ascendancy up the corporate ladder throughout their career. Corporate practices in the areas of training, career development, promotion and compensation have not as yet resulted in propelling large numbers of women into senior management positions. Many executives claim that since major changes in practices have occurred only in the last 20 years, it is too soon to expect radical changes. Fortunately, almost all of the top ranked companies in many countries have an upper management that actively demonstrates support for the promotion of women. Also, almost all of these companies target women to participate in executive
education programs and almost all of these companies take steps to facilitate the movement of women into line positions (Kottke and Agars, 2005).

2.10 Behavioural and Cultural Explanations

Explanations for the extremely low numbers of women in the position of CEO and other senior management positions go beyond corporate policies and practices and also discuss the impact of gender-based behavioural dynamics (Wood and Eagly, 2002). This is especially true in considering subjective explanations that take into account the reasons why women are often not attracted to senior management positions to begin with or feel uncomfortable in the positions when they have attained them. Women executives are more likely to cite these subjective reasons as important barriers to top positions than their male counterparts. Women executives most often cite behavioural explanations such as stereotyping, whereas male executives tend to cite corporate promotional and career development practices as the primary barrier for women seeking senior management positions. Gender and communication styles, gender-based stereotypes, women and power, old boy networks and differing male and female attitudes towards power are other behavioural and cultural explanations. Further, the lack of women managers and executives, the support roles many women workers provide to men workers and occupational sex segregation all contribute to gender inequality. Various studies on women in management have engaged in the debate concerning gender differences in styles of management. Some suggest that women naturally display a more interactive and caring leadership styles while others argue that focusing on gender differences only reinforces gender stereotyping.

2.10.1 Gender and Communication Styles

Women’s linguistic styles are often misinterpreted or devalued by men and the less aggressive assertive forms of communication associated with females may be particularly unacceptable ways to communicate in the upper rank of most corporations. In corporate life, women are less likely than men to engage in behaviours that are self-promoting (Ridgeway, 2001). This can work to the
disadvantage of women who work in hierarchical systems where negotiating authority is something that needs to be done quite often. The promotion of managers up the corporate ladder often depends on their skill in negotiating authority and whether or not others support or undercut their efforts. In the almost all-male world of upper management, therefore, women are forced to change their linguistic style to a more command-oriented form in order to be perceived as strong, decisive and in control.

Many countries have their own civil rights act that bars sexual inequality in the workplace and facilitates more women in the workplace than ever before. However, there is little doubt that women have not moved up in the corporate ranks as much as men. In many countries, including in Asia, there are very few women in top leadership positions. Why? Fundamentally, career development literature concludes that there are significant differences between male and female employees despite the time, energy and money being used in women’s development programs (Pai and Vaidya, 2009). In a study of women in upper level management positions, Marlow et al. (1995) show that top level women managers did perceive significant differences in the importance of 18 criteria that are important to women compared to men. They felt that women have to be ‘better’ than men to achieve similar advances and promotions. They also felt that women still had more concern for the home and family. This may raise the question about the expectations men and women have for professional development programs. Equal development programs for men and women may not be equal after all. Women’s development programs cannot be mere copies of men’s programs; they must be designed with the needs of women in mind from the beginning.

Further, Goodman et al. (2003) investigate variables that differentiate work establishments that have women in top management positions from those that do not. Women occupied top management positions in slightly more than all of the 228 medium-to-large-sized private sector establishments the authors studied. They found that women are more likely to occupy top management ranks in establishments that have a higher number of lower level management positions filled by women, have higher management turnover, have lower average management salary levels, place greater emphasis on development and promotion of employees and operate in non-
manufacturing industries. Three general categories emerged in the Lemons and Parzinger (2001) study as potential barriers to the advancement of women in IT fields: educational aspects and family characteristics, corporate cultures and sociological factors. Suggestions for increasing promotion opportunities included more networking for women, coordinating career and family planning, being confident and aggressive in assignments, as well as being technically competent and avoiding the ‘women thing’.

Within labour economics, there is no practical consensus in the returns-to-seniority literature that women’s career progression in the labour market is significantly worse than men’s. However, much of this literature does not relate the occupations where the glass ceiling is considered most binding: management and certain professional jobs. Kahn (1993, cited in Pai and Vaidya, 2009) considers women’s progressing among PhD academics in the field of economics and management. The author found gender differences in some but not all aspects of career progression of PhD economists who received their PhDs between 1970 and 1990. The tenure hurdle seemed to be particularly difficult for academic women to overcome. However, there was some evidence that for more recent associates, tenure differences between men and women had narrowed. In another study, McDowell et al. (1999) use unique panel data for American Economic Association members to examine formally whether there were differences across gender in promotion probabilities. Gender differences in promotion were tested using random-effects probity model of promotion from assistant to associate professor and from associate to full professor. Overall, the results suggest that the promotion prospects for women were inferior to those of their comparable male colleagues. However, the researchers found more evidence that the promotion opportunities of female economists (particularly associate to full professor) have improved over time.

2.10.1.1 Western Experiences

The existence of the glass ceiling effect is not limited to the US. Researchers have overwhelmingly found that the glass ceiling effect does indeed exist in all the nations at the top level of the organisation (Pai and Vaidya, 2009). Wirth (2001, 2000) highlights the point by stating that women hold only 3 per cent of top management
positions in the world’s largest organisations. The German civil code, with its 19th century roots, entitled men to make household decisions with respect to location (buying or selling a house) decisions and asset usage decisions, among others. Although the code was ratified in 1958, it was not until the late 1970s that women experienced equal treatment under the law. Despite changes in the German society with respect to attitudes towards women, German women are still concerned with the existence of a glass ceiling when it comes to managerial jobs (Holst, 2006).

According to the Corporate Women Directors International Report published in 2004, women in Germany held only 10.3 per cent of board of director seats. In comparison, US women held 17.5 per cent seats, UK women held 12.5 per cent seats, Dutch women held 8.6 per cent seats, Swiss women held 7.7 per cent seats, French women held 7.2 per cent seats, Italian women held 1.8 per cent seats, whereas Japanese women held only 0.7 per cent of the board seats. The same report also stated that of the 22 companies in the Fortune Global 200 list whose board membership constituted at least 25 per cent females, 15 were US-based corporations, whereas only three were German (Holst, 2006). It is interesting to note that women in Germany held 6.9 per cent of the top management positions in large companies and 9.0 per cent of the top management positions in small-mid-sized companies, whereas 33.2 per cent of managers in associations and public authorities were female. The previous statistics show that there may be a greater likelihood of women reaching the top in smaller companies and public service organisations.

In a study conducted by Albrecht et al. (2003), the authors found the existence of a glass ceiling in Swedish organisations. Despite the fact that Sweden is considered to be a feminine culture, based on Hofstede’s cultural dimension, women in Sweden are experiencing the glass ceiling effect.Interestingly, based on the research conducted by Albrecht et al. (2003), the effect of the average wage gap at the top of the wage distribution followed a progressive path from the late 1960s to the 1990s. The glass ceiling effect was not present in the late 1960s, was evident in the 1980s and much more pronounced in the 1990s. Even though the glass ceiling effect has been discovered in many nations, it is important to understand that certain top level assignments are not balanced between males and females due to reasons other than stereotypes and attitudes. A study conducted in Austria (Kollinger, 2005) proves that
lack of availability of female managers with the talent for international assignments were some of the reasons for the imbalance in the gender distribution with respect to managers on international assignments. However, Foster (1999) points out that an increasing number of women are opting for international assignments and are locked out of these assignments due to stereotypical attitudes displayed by home country top management.

Apart from traditional stereotypes about the ability of a woman to lead corporations, gender identity is also responsible for the disparity between male and female top managers (Schruijer, 2006). In a study of managers in the Netherlands, Schruijer (2006) found that females with a masculine gender identity strove for more upward mobility in comparison to women with a feminine gender identity whose focus was directed to balancing work and personal life. In her study, she found a positive relationship between a masculine gender identity in females and career success in terms of income and hierarchy position. Age can also be a critical factor in analysing the glass ceiling effect. Simpson and Altman (2000) conducted a study in the UK and found that women under 35 years of age seemed to experience less of the glass ceiling effect than women over 35 years of age. In the UK, of all the female managers in the public sector, 86.3 per cent were over 35 years of ages, whereas only 40 per cent were over 35 in the private sector. This finding shows a point that was previously made: females find it easier to advance in the public sector than in the private sector (Pai and Vaidya, 2009).

2.10.1.2 Asian Experiences

In Asia, the concept of the glass ceiling is somewhat different than what it is in the West. Many of the studies conducted using Asian nations as a location of research used the lack of females in managerial positions, not necessarily top management positions, as an indicator of the glass ceiling effect. The number of women entering the workforce has increased as a result of the rapid growth of these economies. Almost 64 per cent of women in Asia are involved in economic activity (Yukongdi and Benson, 2005). Despite the high percentage of women involved in economic activities, women seem to be transferred to part-time and unskilled jobs. A major culprit for the existence of the glass ceiling effect in Asia is tradition, both cultural
and religious. In Bangladesh, women occupy only 5.1 per cent of administrative and managerial positions and only 6 per cent of women occupy jobs in governmental agencies (Zafarullah, 2000).

The difficulty in finding a job extends to other nations such as South Korea as well. In a recent study by Kang and Rowley (2005), 94 per cent of female surveyed believed that they had more difficulties than males in finding full-time jobs. Their belief was not entirely inaccurate as 46 per cent of females in South Korea work as temporary workers and only 15.2 per cent occupy administrative and professional positions. Only 7 per cent of managers in South Korea were female as compared to 21 per cent in Hong Kong and 19 per cent in China. Like many other Asian countries, gender roles and traditional stereotypical attitudes have held women back in terms of education and employment (Yukongdi, 2005; Pai and Vaidya, 2009). However, female managers in Taiwan believe that their chances of getting a promotion are much better than females from the previous generation (Chou et al., 2005). Females represent 19 per cent of managerial positions in Taiwan, whereas they represent 41 per cent of the total worker population. Similar to the findings in the UK (Simpson and Altman, 2000), younger Taiwanese women did not believe they faced a significant glass ceiling in their organisations. Female managers in the Middle East seem to encounter the glass ceiling to a greater degree than other nations. Female managers in an Egyptian five star hotel were interviewed to investigate the existence of the glass ceiling effect (Kattana, 2005). The researcher found that most of the female managers were not positioned to move to the top management level.

2.10.2 International Literature on Gender Inequality

Past international research into gender inequality has concentrated on women’s time use outside the home, with labour participation rates, or the number of hours women work, closely examined across different countries. Time use varies notably between genders and from one country to the next. For example, the Netherlands is the only country where the one-and-a-half earner model prevails, even among well-educated women (Steiber & Haas 2009). Conversely, this part-time work culture is not as prevalent in other countries. In southern Europe, women are most likely to work full-
time, though it is common for them to stop working once they have children Beer & Meyer 2000). Scandinavian culture sees women and men responsible for childcare, thus both continue to work part-time for over 30 hours per week after having children (Steiber & Haas 2009; Beer & Meyer 2000). These differences indicate that the contexts in which people are raised and live have a significant influence on how they use time. Changes in gender cultures and economic trends have also affected housekeeping and employment cultures (Beer & Meyer 2000).

Some scholars have argued that in impoverished countries women still feature strongly in the labour market, even where their workforce participation is institutionally and culturally unapproved, due to the economic necessity of employment (Haas et al. 2006; Uunk et al. 2005). Thus, the expectation is that women in these countries engage more in paid work than women in wealthy countries. Research by Uunk et al. (2005) suggests that in wealthy countries (as measured by GDP per capita) odds increase that women will reduce their working hours, or cease paid labour, upon first birth. This is challenged by research (Haas et al. 2006) indicating that a longitudinal child effect has been observed, both in countries where most women maintain continuous employment (in the Nordic countries, France and Portugal) and in locations where many women are excluded from the labour market prior to first birth (e.g., Spain). Given that mothers in more affluent countries frequently switch to part-time work after first birth, the change in women’s working hours may instead be influenced by a different yet associated factor, such as the availability/spread of part-time work (Steiber & Haas 2009).

In addition to the opportunity structures that affect women’s ability to enter the labour market, the availability of paid work must be considered (Pettit & Hook 2005; Steiber & Haas 2010). While high unemployment discourages women from seeking work, the ‘added worker effect’, where females compensate for their partner’s unemployment by seeking work, is prevalent in locations with high male unemployment levels (Jaumotte 2004). McGinnity (2004) reports that added worker effects are evident in some countries (e.g., Germany) but not others (e.g., the United Kingdom, where unemployment benefits are means-tested against family income).
The suggestion that part-time opportunities restrict women’s employment and that more mothers would join the labour market if part-time work was more readily available is common (Del Boca 2002; Guitierrez-Domenech 2005). From a theoretical perspective, the effect is two-fold. On the one hand, available part-time work allows women to combine employment with childcare and may encourage some mothers who would otherwise not be employed to stay in, or join, the workforce. On the other hand, part-time work may have the opposite effect on women’s labour supply; that is, when given the option, women will work fewer hours.

Research findings indicate that the availability of part-time work varies significantly in its influence on the labour market across countries. For example, the regional availability of part-time opportunities has a positive effect on women’s employment in Italy, but not in France or the United Kingdom, where part-time employment tends to be of low quality (Del Boca et al. 2009). International conditions shape women’s labour supply. Variances in childcare availability or part-time employment opportunities reflect different social realities in different countries. The difficulty lies in measuring indicators of women’s employment, and institutional and labour market conditions (O’Reilly 2006; Plantenga et al. 2009), as the commonly available indicators often lack comparability across societal contexts and time.

Research on women’s employment generally adopts a multidisciplinary approach by building on insights from research that focuses more on rationalities of choices; however, much traditional sociological research concentrates on constraints on genuine choice, while most comparative research is limited in focus to a set of explanatory factors. To date, women’s employment research has concentrated mainly on national care and family policy as the key factors explaining cross-country differences. Studies have demonstrated that the influence of contextual factors, such as similar policies, still result in variance between countries. Subsequent research needs to examine how institutional dimensions interact in different countries to identify the country-specific mechanisms underpinning aggregate outcomes (e.g., female employment rates). So far, comparative international research on women’s employment patterns has emphasised the importance of developed work–family reconciliation policies in continuing women’s labour market integration. However,
increased employment participation rates are an inaccurate indicator of improved gender equality in countries where women’s employment mainly consists of low-quality work. The ‘casual effects’ of family policies—including female participation patterns across the family life cycle, quality of work available and capacity to balance work and family responsibilities—warrant future investigation.

2.11 Position of Women in Management: A Cross-Cultural Comparison

It should be noted that obtaining accurate statistics on women managers is difficult, if not impossible, because of the variety of definitions used for the term ‘managers’ and the variety of data collection techniques. Even the data disclosed by the ILO is not reliable as administrative workers are commonly defined as managers. The ILO data therefore tended to give the impression that more women are in management positions than is actually the case (ILO, 1997; Vinnicombe, 2000). The proportion of women managers varies significantly between countries. In the US, where the gap between proportion of women in employment and in management has narrowed (Powell, 1999), the representation of women in management grew from 16 per cent in 1970, to 39 per cent and 44 per cent in 1990 and 1998 respectively (US Department of Labour, 1998). In the UK, the proportion increased from 10.7 per cent in 1995 to about 22 per cent in 2000 (Institute of Management and Remuneration Economics, 2000).

Similar trends were documented in countries that reported labour statistics to the ILO. Between 1985 and 1995, women’s representation in management increased by as much 1 to 25 per cent in countries as diverse as Japan, Turkey and Australia (International Labour Review, 1998). The Republic of Korea, for example, charted remarkable progress for women managers. Representation of women in management in the country grew from less than 5 per cent between 1985 and 1987 to about 25 per cent between 1993 and 1995. In Japan and Turkey, where the proportion of women in management is much lower at less than 10 per cent (international Labour Review, 1998), there is evidence that, even in these traditionally inclined societies, more women were pursuing managerial careers (Omar and Davidson, 2001).
In general, in almost all developing countries, management is seen as a career suitable only for men and therefore dominated by men (Adler and Izraeli, 1994; Omar and Davidson, 2001). Even in countries where women were better educated such as Indonesia, few women were able to secure managerial jobs, especially at senior level positions (Wright and Crockett-Tellei, 1994). At almost every level, women managers globally complained of having to deal with blocked mobility, discrimination and stereotypes. In Canada (Andrew, Coderre and Denis, 1994), Japan (Lam, 1992), Singapore (Chan and Lee, 1994), Thailand (Siegthai and Leelakulthanit, 1994) and the US (Fagenson and Jackson, 1994), women managers were commonly reported to be negatively affected by self-belief that successful managers must exhibit male attributes, that women were not able to combine roles of wife, mother and executive and that others especially men, were not willing to work under a woman boss. Women managers were also often found in lower management positions that gave them little access to power and challenging jobs (Davidson and Burke, 2000; Ng, 1999).

The hardship experiences by women managers is also caused by the manifestation of vertical segregation that places one sex, usually men, at a higher level than others in the same occupational categories (Anker, 1997). This is yet another global issue in which men are more likely to be production supervisors and women production workers or men likely to be senior managers and women junior managers (Vinnicombe, 2000: Omar and Davidson, 2001). In countries like Japan, the impact of vertical segregations is devastating for women. They are more or less excluded from the managerial career track positions in all types of organisations (Lam, 1992). In any case, occupational segregation by sex is detrimental to women as it spawns a vicious circle that perpetuates gender-based inequalities into future generations (Anker, 1997).

2.11.1 Ideal Roles for Women in Organisations

Fundamentally, cross-cultural variations are traceable to three different underlying assumptions about the ideal roles for women in organisations (Vinkenburget.al., 2000: Omar and Davidson, 2001). The first viewpoint focuses on the notion that
women are deficient and that men are seen as the ideal organisational worker. This assumption was widely adopted in many of the earlier research on the suitability of women as managers (Powell, 1993; Vinkenburg et al., 2000; Omar and Davidson, 2001). A review of the literature shows the possibility that some societies, especially those with strong cultural beliefs on the appropriate roles for women at home and work do still adhere to this assumption. Certainly, in countries with strong Confucianism orientation (e.g., Hong Kong and Singapore) and in those known to be more ‘Islamically inclined’ (e.g., Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia), there exist sanctions either against women working or against women holding jobs that gives them power over and prestige over men (Chan and Lee, 1994; Lim, 1993; Tayeb, 1997).

The equity approach, on the other hand, is based on assumed similarities of the genders (Adler and Izraeli, 1994). Women are said to be identical, as professional, to men and are therefore equally capable to contributing in ways similar to those of men (Vinkenburg et al., 2000). Qualified women are expected to be adapted into the organisational processes, to think, to act and dress like men and to have some similar managerial aspirations as men (Adler and Izraeli, 1994; Omar and Davidson, 2001).

In line with the current phenomena of the ‘feminisation of management’, the final approach is based on the assumption of difference between the genders. Widely adopted in Europe, this contemporary approach acknowledges the uniqueness of women and emphasises that both genders are capable of making a difference and an equally valuable contribution towards organisational success (Adler and Izraeli, 1994; Vinkenburg et al., 2000). In terms of leadership, for example, this assumption underlines the popular call for softer and more feminised leader behaviours. Many have argue that as organisations become flatter and teamwork structuring becomes the norm, management styles that are aggressive, competitive and task-oriented (those stereotypically associated with men) will give way to the female styles that are more relational-oriented, nurturing and caring (Copper and Lewis, 1999; Mintzberg, 1996; Omar and Davidson, 2001).
2.11.2 Profiles of Women Managers

Much of the available information on women who became managers comes from studies conducted either in the UK or the US. In both countries, women encounter the common phenomenon indicative of the high costs of becoming managers—compared to their male counterparts, they are more likely to remain single or, if married, they are more likely to be childless (Charlesworth, 1997; Wajcman, 1998; Omar and Davidson, 2001). The limited amount of recent research on women managers in Asia reveal that remaining single or being married but childless are options that many Asian women may not be willing to take. An exploratory in-depth study of women middle managers in Thailand (Arttachariya, 1997) verified similar circumstances, whereby it was found that the average Thai woman manager was married with two children. She was between 30 to 35 years old and had worked continuously throughout her career, with no career break for family or homemaking responsibilities except for a short maternity leave. She was likely to hold a postgraduate degree, with either a finance or marketing background.

2.11.3 Home and Work Commitment

Much of the earlier research on women’s career development indirectly assumes that women must choose either home or career (Cleveland et al., 2000). Numerous studies on women in management, as discussed earlier in this review, yielded results that support this assumption. Women managers in the UK and the US were about a third likely to half as likely to be married compared to the male managers (Charlesworth, 1997; Wajcman, 1998; Omar and Davidson, 2001). In recent years, some researchers have, however, questioned the validity of the career-versus-home-assumption. Cleveland et al. (2000) proposes that the choice between work and family for women (as well as for men) is often deceptive in the sense that few can afford this luxury. Assuming that the circumstance has indeed changed, the question is then no longer ‘whether to do both’ but rather ‘how to do both’.

The data on women managers at a glance in Asia appears to suggest that these women may not have encountered the difficult decision of having to choose between a career and home. However, in making comparisons between what is known about
women in management in Asia and in Western countries, much caution is needed. Absence of longitudinal data means that it is impossible for researchers to trace the changes in aspirations towards careers, marriages and children for the Asian women managers (Omar and Davidson, 2000). It is not clear if Asian women managers see themselves as having ‘careers’ or ‘jobs’. Whereas qualifications to positions of power require development of careers, economic career pressures may force many women to seek jobs that required less training, planning and commitment. A number of the studies on women managers in different parts of Asia gave the impression that women worked for financial independence and as a means to supplement family income (Cleveland et al., 2000).

Apart from the proposed changes in women’s aspiration for family and career, employed married women must deal with home and work in ways that employed men do not. On cultural grounds, gender is used as a basis to define different family roles for men and women (Charlesworth, 1997). For a man, fulfilling his work role has traditionally been synonymous with fulfilling his family role as the family provider. Working long hours, taking up jobs in new localities and seeking promotional opportunities are often seen as significant activities in line with the good provider functions, despite the fact that these activities do take men away from their families. A man will be labelled as being neglectful of his family if he does not work (Omar and Davidson, 2001).

At the same time, women face the difficulties of participating in two activity systems that are incompatible. When women choose careers, they add to their lives a new role and this role demands an appropriate balance with their traditional roles as wives and mothers. Empirical studies have demonstrated that women who combined work and family receive heavy penalties (Friedan, 1981; Tharanou, 1999; Omar and Davidson, 2001). The superwomen, especially those with young children, are expected to assume responsibility of maintaining the home and family as well as maintaining their careers. One highly influential study in couples and housework showed that working women’s, including those in egalitarian relationships, imbalance of roles meant that they had to do ‘second shifts’ as housekeepers and caregivers (Hochschild and Machung, 1989; Omar and Davidson, 2001). On average, women are estimated to work an extra 15 hours weekly and an extra one-
month of 24-hours day a year in the second shift. Recent research on women managers confirmed that the second shift is still an issue, as Wajcman (1998) reports that senior women put an extra 10 hours weekly into housework. Similar to women in Thailand, the average Thai female manager works the second shift for at least 9 hours weekly and has 2.2 hours less rest time than her male counterparts despite having full-time living-in help and/or relatives (Arttachariya, 1997). Accordingly, researchers have shown that working women managers are more susceptible to feelings of guilt, role conflict and stress (Wajcman, 1998).

### 2.11.4 Influence of Culture and Tradition

Strong ideological support to those traditional familial divisions and societal presumption on the appropriate roles for both genders means that deviations from the norms are commonly deemed as unacceptable and punishable (Omar and Davidson, 2001; Yukongdi, 2005). In some societies, such as those in the Middle East and in most Asian countries, gender role traditionalism and marital expectation present even greater challenges for working women. In these societies, marriage and motherhood are social requirements (Bank and Vinnicombe, 1995; Khattab, 1996) and sexual relationships outside marriages are forbidden. Women do not have real choice between being married, having families and pursuing careers. In countries such as Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and Taiwan, women are expected to be available for their families, especially when their children return from school and spouse from work (Oman and Davidson, 2001). Also, in most of these societies, cultural sanctions ensure that the traditional ideas about the ideal roles for women are maintained. Additionally, it could be argued that the maintenance of gender role traditionalism is caused by the collectivist nature of some cultures.

The primary concern for parents in collectivist cultures is obedience, reliability, conformity and maintenance of proper behaviours. As a result, societies that score high on a collectivist index, like those in Thailand (Arttachariya), 1997) and Japan (Lam, 1992), have the tendency to preserve traditional ideas and beliefs. In contrast, in individualistic cultures such as that in the US and the UK, childrearing patterns emphasise self-reliance and independence, where children are allowed a good deal of autonomy, encouraged to explore their environment and to engage in more creative
and self-actualisation behaviours (Triandis, 1989; Charlesworth, 1997; Omar and Davidson, 2001). Within such cultures, women have better chances of developing egalitarian attitudes that may mitigate the negative effects of gender role stereotypes.

2.11.5 Advantages of Remaining Single or Married but Childless

From the discussion above, it is quite unsurprising that some women in management choose either to remain single or be married but childless. The literature suggests that working women may reduce role conflict by eliminating some roles or by limiting the time spent in each of the roles (Goode, 1960). The prospect of facing role conflict and the pressures that come with it looks daunting for many women, especially for those who have high career aspirations. Research by Devanna (1987) and Davidson and Cooper (1984, 1992) report that women executives said they had given up marriages, family plans and social relationships because they fear that they did not have the capacity to deal with the pressures of combining work and family. Also, 70 per cent of the interviewees believed that remaining single had provided career-wise advantages in management (Davidson and Cooper, 1984, 1992).

However, Davidson and Cooper (1992) disclose that remaining single was not without its problems. Many women in their studies revealed that the pressures of remaining single included feelings of loneliness and isolation, having to continually justify their non-marital status, dealing with unsympathetic peers and supervisors and receiving little emotional and domestic support. Another common solution for reducing role conflict is to be married but to have no children or to have fewer. However, as in the case of the single women, women who chose to this solution could also experience some discomfort (Parasuraman and Greenhaus, 1993). Women’s preoccupation with femininity is likely to remain because of the inescapable reality of the biological clock of motherhood (Gallos, 1989; Powell and Mainiero, 1992). Even women who are successful are not immune to this, as shown by White et al. (1992) and Freeman (1990). Moreover, there have been suggestions that a career can be overshadowed by the rewards of having multiple roles. They act as buffers to failure, as women who fail in one sphere can fall back to other roles thus eliminating the discomfort or even producing an overall positive effect.
Within Asian society, where motherhood is highly valued, women may not have the liberty of choosing not to have children. Omar and Davidson (2001) found that some women managers from the Asian community experienced a unique stressor of having to produce a male heir. For many Asian families, especially of Chinese origins, sons are preferable to daughters because they can guarantee the continuation of the family name (Pong, 1994; Sudha, 1997) and do not leave the family once they are married (Pong, 1994). Studies from Kuo (1998) and Pong (1994) showed that son-preference has perpetuated in this modern era in Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand and Malaysia. However, in Singapore, the preference has declined in view of the less traditional orientation of the Singapore Chinese society (Kuo, 1998). For Muslim women, having children (not necessarily sons) may be crucial as Islam allows ‘qualified’ men. They must fulfil the strict criterion as defined in the Qu’ran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad to practice polygamy. According to Haddad (1980), the virtues of polygamy allow ‘justice’ for husbands in cases where their wives are barren, sick or sexually frigid.

2.11.6 Family Work Commitment and Women’s Career Development

The distinctiveness in the family and work roles assumed by men and women point to fundamentally different career perspectives for both genders. A number of authors (Cleveland et al., 2000; White et al., 1992; Gallos, 1989) question the veracity of most of the traditional model of career development. For several reasons, these models cannot sufficiently explain the career development of women. For one, most of these models were constructed based on the study of men as the organisational workers and thus they fail to take into consideration women’s unique life challenges and stresses. The male models assume separation of the work and home environment, which is at odds with the suggestion that women’s family and work demands run alongside each other (Cleveland et al., 2000).

For the married women, another issue that greatly influences their career decisions is the attitudes of their husbands. For these women to succeed, they need support from their partners, which may take the form of career sacrifices (which is highly unlikely) or more instrumental support such as sharing the housework or hiring outside help (Parasuraman and Greenhaus, 1993). A review of the literature
indicated this is not likely. Husbands and wives differ in their willingness to accommodate each other’s careers (Cleveland et al., 2000; Omar and Davidson, 2001). Women tend to be more adaptive, whereby they are more likely to reduce their career involvement in response to their husband’s career. Women are portrayed as non-serious workers who are willing to trade career growth opportunities for freedom and time with family and lack motivation to be successful. With respect to the organisational reality, women are often penalised for being married and having families, while married men are valued and rewarded by organisations (Parasuraman and Greenhaus, 1993; Davidson and Cooper, 1992).

Recognising these differences in the career experiences of women, Schwartz (1989) advises organisations to take a marketing-oriented approach of segmenting women into two groups according to their emphasis on career versus relationships: career-primary women and career and family women (the ‘mommy track’. The latter, Schwartz claims, is more concerned with achieving the desired balance between family and work and is willing to trade career growth potential. Thus, investment in women pursuing the mommy track does not pay and organisations should offer them alternative work schedules and family supports in exchange for reduced opportunities for career advancement. The mommy track option has been criticised for reinforcing gender segregation at work and promoting, instead of challenging (Lewis and Cooper, 1989; White, 2000), the notion that only women who can act like men should be given opportunity to enter the upper levels of management.

White (2000) instead argues for the development of negotiated careers that would enable women to have it all. Such a model is needed because women, even those who are successful, indicate a strong desire to strike a balance between the roles they assume at home and work. White (2000) also notes that there exists a strong need for organisations and workers to challenge the slow changing work norms that are based on the traditional male models. This includes the need to question that validity of the assumption that career success requires 100 per cent career commitment at the early career stages (Bailyn, 1992; Marshall, 1995). Career may be characterised by periods of high and low commitment that are negotiated by the individual and the organisation. White et al. (1992) analyses the work histories of 48 successful British
women and found half of the women made late commitment to their careers or had no coherent directions on their early work lives.

2.11.7 Gender-Organisation-System (GOS): Explaining the Barriers Encountered by Women in Management

The GOS takes a more systems-oriented view of organisations, as it views the status of men and women in organisations simultaneously with the organisational and societal contexts from which those status differentials or equalities emerge. The GOS suggests that people, organisations, roles and societies change in response to changes in the environment, albeit at different paces of changes may explain why women’s progress towards equal representation at all levels in the organisational hierarchy are different around the world.

In reviewing the explanations for the glass ceiling, researchers (see Cleveland et al., 2000; Davidson and Burk, 1994, 2000; Powell, 1993, 1999) highlight three perspectives. First, the gender-centred perspective states that women’s low representation in management is caused by factors internal to women—they possess personality traits, attitudes and behaviours that are inappropriate for key managerial jobs (Fagenson, 1990, 1993; Parker and Fagenson, 1994). In this case, a solution to the glass ceiling is simple, whereby women managers would simply need to follow and imitate men. Second, the structural explanation disseminates that the characteristics and culture of organisations provide greater opportunities for men to be successful in organisations. Third, social system perspective maintains that established and taken-for-granted organisational elements include some basic belief about gender and that these beliefs can explain women’s under-representation and under-utilisation in management (Adler and Izraeli, 1994). In contrast to the first two perspectives, this last perspective maintains that women’s behaviour and their ability to land certain types of jobs are influenced by the social and institutional systems in which organisations are embedded. In every circumstance, societal histories, cultural traditions, social and institutional practices, ideologies, expectations and stereotypes regarding gender roles for men and women affect the internal structure and the functioning of organisations (Fagenson, 1990; Adler and Izraeli, 1994).
Empirical evidence derived from the numerous studies on women managers (Cleveland et al., 2000; Davidson and Cooper, 1992; Davidson, 1997; Parker and Fagenson, 1994; White et al., 1992) shows that while each of these perspectives have contributed towards understanding that barrier women face in management each on its own cannot satisfactorily explain the pervasiveness of the glass ceiling. In the case against the gender-centred perspectives, for example, empirical evidence indicates that there are a few real differences in women’s and men’s qualifications to manage. White et al. (1992) reports that successful British women in their studies were as motivated as men, had good academic qualifications and believed that their hard work, tenacity and willingness to pursue opportunities contributed to their career success. Moreover, other research findings proved that it is not enough for women to imitate men in organisations. Often, women were as qualified as men, but their progress in organisations remained slow (Cleveland et al., 2000; Davidson and Cooper, 1992; Davidson, 1997; Parker and Fagenson, 1994). In fact, women managers often complained of having to do better or over-perform at the same level of management as men (Ragins et al., 1998).

The theoretical shortcomings of these three explanations for the glass ceiling are attributed to the fact that women’s experiences are multi-faceted by nature. Many of the experiences of women in management fit in with several theories and cannot be covered in one particular explanatory system. Women’s experiences at work generally and in management specifically are characterised by a serious of complex interdependencies, where the distinction between women’s private and public spheres are less clear-cut than that of men. Moreover, cross-cultural reviews of the literature on women in management further points to the need for researchers to consider the impact of cultural and traditions on the experiences of women in management (Mickleson, 1992; Powell, 1993; White, 2000).

2.12 Research Framework

In keeping with the complex and multi-faceted nature of issues envisaged on the research of women in management, the following research framework for this thesis
is based on a theory proposed by Fagenson (1993) that incorporates all the above perspectives simultaneously. The framework illustrated in Figure 2.1 (adopted from the GOS framework) undertakes to capture the complex person-organisation-societal interaction, while acknowledging the significant of local social context that will result in the under-representation of women in management.

Figure 2.1 Research framework

2.13 Theoretical Framework

This research adopts a broad theoretical perspective, the GOS framework, to examine the factors that facilitate or block women’s advancement positions. It is suggested that women’s career progression in management is affected by individual, organisational and societal factors (Yukongdi and Rowley, 2009). All of these variables simultaneously interact with one another. Therefore, the research needs to take a universal perspective when attempting to understand the under-representation and under-utilisation of women in managerial positions. The gender-centred perspective examines the role of individual factors by noting that personality traits such as aggressiveness, competitiveness, self-confidence, determination and
independence are regarded as traits of a promotable manager by society. Women, in comparison, possess characteristics—such as passivity, humbleness, irrationality, kindness, warmth and selflessness—that are argue to be out of sync with the qualities for managerial success. These gender differences are often attributed to differential sex-role socialisation. It is as a result of these differences, according to this perspective, that there are fewer women managers in higher organisational levels.

The organisational structure perspective suggests that organisational structure, rather than women’s personality traits of factors internal to women, influence and shape women’s behaviour in the workplace. At the organisational level, women are in the majority of disadvantages positions with little power and opportunity, compared with men who often occupy advantaged positions that offer greater opportunities for advancement. This perspective argues that this situation contributes to the under-representation of women in managerial positions.

The social system perspective argues that women’s behaviour and their ability to gain entry to higher level position are influenced by the social and institutional systems in which the organisation operates. The social and institutional systems include cultural values, histories, societal and institutional practices and gender role expectations, which, in turn, affect the internal structure and organisational practices. This perspective can be used to understand that women’s progress in organisations is limited because of societal expectations, culture and institutional practices.

Experimental evidence indicates that each of these perspectives can be used to understand the impediments to women’s progress in management; however, each on its own cannot fully explain the under-representation of women in management positions (Omar and Davidson, 2001). Consequently, a systems-oriented approach that takes into account the simultaneous interaction of factors at the individual, organisational and societal levels is adopted here to explain the barriers to women’s career advancement. The glass ceiling is a further explanation, which according to Oakley involve the following three barriers: corporate practices such as recruitment, retention and promotion; behaviour and cultural causes such as stereotyping and
preferred leadership style; and structural and cultural explanations rooted in feminist theory.

A study surveying over 1,200 women in Fortune 1000 companies came to the conclusion that those obstacles that make woman’s career advancement more challenging are not intentional (Townsend, 1997). Nevertheless, these gender-related behaviours in organisations that are creating obstacles fall into three categories:

- biological explanations
- socialisation explanations
- structural/cultural explanations (Leuptow et al., 2001).

It seems logical to argue that biological models demonstrate biological differences between men and women. These differences are thought to be a result of an ‘evolutionary model suggesting constant gendered differences based on genetic patterns evolved from adaptation to differing reproductive challenges of early males and females’ (Leuptow et al., 2001, p.1). From a psychological perspective, biologically based models explain stable biological differences between genders as a result of psychological dispositions. These different psychological profiles of the genders have developed over time (Wood and Eagly, 2002). Today, biological models and evolutionary models usually are not employed in the context of leadership differences between men and women leaders (Leuptow et al., 2001).

Instead, socialisation and structural/cultural explanations have received much more attention than biological models (Bartol et al., 2003) and have been called the most accepted explanation for gender differences. Both models are social constructionist accounts that say differences do not have a fixed meaning access culture—rather, it is societal expectations that produce and maintain inequality between genders (Leuptow et al., 2001; Wood and Eagly, 2002). More specifically, authors of socialisation theories argue that gender identity and differences are developed when a person is going through various developmental processes with life stages, such as schooling and work life, and therefore are based on individuals’ socialisation (Leuptow et al., 2001; Bartol et al., 2003).
In contrast to biological models, structural/cultural models propose that social structures, systems and arrangements that channel and define differences due to discrepancies in status and power are the cause for differences in leadership attributed to gender. According to the distribution of different social roles between men and women, relatively stable patterns of behaviour are displayed (Leuptow et al., 2001; Bartol et al., 2003; Weyer, 2007).

The following theories, social role and expectation states, are introduced in the work of Weyer (2007) to explain the effect of the glass ceiling with structural/cultural explanations, and they will be used to analyse the outcome of this research.

2.13.1 Gender Equity

Major advances in the gender equity movement over the last decade include the adoption of a gender perspective in health and development research, and programmes and new legal frameworks for protecting women’s rights (Moss 2002). The Platform for Action presented at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) emphasises holistic and life cycle approaches to women’s health. In addition to tackling the problems resulting from inequitable social and economic policies, the Platform targets the gender discrimination that underpins women’s health. The Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) provides a legal framework to protect gender equity in health and reproduction, in addition to social and economic life. Notably, most nations had ratified CEDAW by the end of 1999 (UNDP 1999).

Gender equity and economic structures are closely linked. Gender equity has been promoted by international development organisations (e.g., the World Bank) as a result of economic development and positive associations between low fertility and good health in women and children. Reduced income equality is attributable to: increased wage disparities between high- and low-skilled workers; ‘structural adjustment’ (i.e., decentralisation of publicly funded social services); tax policies favouring the wealthy; and the decline of labour nations (Moss 2002; Razavi 1997; World Bank 1998). This indicates that job characteristics (e.g., job strain caused by low control and high demands), limited psychological and social resources,
perceived hostility and discrimination, and lifestyle ‘incompatibility’ determine quality of health more than maintaining employment and financial rewards.

Epidemiologists and demographers have recently begun to consider household processes and women’s daily lives as factors that may shape the health of women and men. Conversely, development economists, researchers and advocates concerned with gender equity have previously only focused on intra-household processes or women’s status within the community, paying less attention to socioeconomic inequality as one of the drivers of women’s disadvantage. Clarifying how socioeconomic and gender inequality affect women’s health demands a comprehensive model that encompasses multiple determinants (Ostlin, Sen & George 2001). The historical, geographical, legal and sociopolitical frameworks that provide the context in which men and women live must be considered in the development of such a model. This includes the cultural and normative dimension, which has a profound effect on individual behaviours, and demographic characteristics, such as race, place of birth, education, marital status and age.

A woman’s biological characteristics and inheritance, together with institutional, social, and psychological processes, affect her health and wellbeing (Walters, McDonough & Strohschein 2001). Life stage and associated experience influence women’s health outcomes, but are difficult to represent in a two-dimensional framework. The biological endowments of individual women shape their roles in production and reproduction, which are simultaneously determined by what occurs within the household and community. The household, as the site for the exchange of essential resources of life—sex, food, warmth and emotional sustenance—is also relevant when examining women’s health, as are the psychosocial aspects of life, including stress, coping strategies (e.g., spirituality) and, though more biologically causal, mood (Moss 2002). Table 2.1 below summarises factors influencing women’s health.
Table 2.1: A Comprehensive Framework of Factors Influencing Women’s Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geopolitical Environment</th>
<th>Culture, Norms, Sanctions</th>
<th>Women’s Roles in Reproduction and Production</th>
<th>Health-related Mediators</th>
<th>Health Outcomes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geography, policy and services:</td>
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<td>Household:</td>
<td>Social capital/social networks/support:</td>
<td>• Chronic disease</td>
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<td>• Transportation</td>
<td>Discrimination:</td>
<td>• Structure</td>
<td>• Friendship</td>
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<td>• Welfare</td>
<td>• Ethnic</td>
<td>• Division of labour</td>
<td>• Family</td>
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<td>• Employment</td>
<td>• Gender</td>
<td>• Ownership/property support/caretaking</td>
<td>• Work mates</td>
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<td>• Healthcare</td>
<td>• Age</td>
<td>• Equality of access to household resources, e.g., wages, other income, land, other assets, community roles, labour market role</td>
<td>• Other ties</td>
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<td>• Childcare</td>
<td>Sociodemographic characteristics:</td>
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<td>Legal rights:</td>
<td>• Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>Psychosocial:</td>
<td>• Chronic disease</td>
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<td>• Women’s health</td>
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<td>• Language</td>
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<td>Workforce:</td>
<td>Health services:</td>
<td>• Infectious disease</td>
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<td>Organisations:</td>
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<td>• Formal</td>
<td>Availability/use</td>
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<td>• Banks</td>
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<td>• Home/market-based hierarchies</td>
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<td>• Credit co-ops</td>
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<td>Economic:</td>
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<td>• Policy</td>
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<td>• Extent of inequality</td>
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2.13.2 Social Role Theory

At the core of both social role theory (Eagly, 1987) and expectation states theory (Berger et al., 1980) is the concept that men and women are allocated different roles in society due to their gender. In particular, family and occupational setting contribute to the allocation of roles defined solely on the basis of gender. Men and women are assumed to possess qualities that ideally prepare them for the different roles they typically occupy (Eagly and Karau, 1991). Connected to social roles, there are specific expectations that are held towards individuals occupying a particular position or membership of a specific social category (Eagly et al., 2003).

In the organisation setting, leaders occupy roles that are defined in terms of hierarchy. However, at the same time the organisational leader is bound by roles related to gender. These roles are developed from a consensual belief within society that the attributes of women and men and are based solely on gender. Social role theory argues that women and men leaders behave somewhat differently because gender roles exert some influence on leadership roles in terms of the expectations they and others hold (Eagly, 1987). In addition, social role theory argues that there is bias in the evaluation of women leaders, caused by the gap between the raters’ stereotypes about women and the raters’ implicit constructs of leadership (Forsyth et al., 1997; Weyer, 2007).

Research shows that women face a number of barriers to their career progression that complicate, limit and compromise their career choices and advancement. Although these barriers seem to affect women’s vocational life from different angles, they manifest influences of gender socialisation in women’s life, personal and vocational alike. Gaining a clearer understanding of these socially constructed internal and external influences helps to capture not only the phenomenon of the surface but also the reasons behind these social and cultural barriers that often hinder women’s career development.
2.13.3 Expectation States Theory

According to Ridgeway (2001), expectation states theory predicts similar effects of behaviour and evaluation as social role theory. However, expectation states theory expands on social role theory and implies that it is the status element of gender stereotypes that cause such stereotypes to act as powerful barriers to women’s achievement of positions of authority, leadership and power. Whereas social role theory proposes that bias is based upon the incongruence of roles held by women, expectation states theory proposes that the lower status of women causes bias in evaluations. Ridgeway postulates that simple structural conditions are the cause for gender to acquire an independent status value in our society. Status value is created when cultural beliefs indicate that persons who have one state of the characteristic are more worthy in the society than those with another state of the characteristic. Such status characteristics include, but are not limited to, age, race, ethnicity, education, occupation and physical attractiveness. Expectation states theory distinguishes between nominal characteristic such as gender or race, where individuals are perceived in a categorical way, and ordinal characteristics such as wealth or education, where individuals are perceived on a range of low education to high education, for example.

In society, there is a general belief about the overall competence and capacity of individuals with a specific characteristic. According to expectation states theory, each characteristic has its own independent status and carries a distinctive set of stereotypical traits shared in society, ranging from specific to diffuse (Weyer, 2007). Specific status characteristics are associated with performance in a wide area of tasks (Foschi, 2000). Berger et al. (1980) argue that observable inequalities in face-to-face social interaction are used to construct status characteristics. For example, when members in a problem-solving group interact outside their specific tasks, stable inter-related inequalities arise, such as the number of times an individual speaks up. In turn, these inequalities lead to expectations for future performance. Paired with prior beliefs and evaluations of the individual’s characteristics and with the interaction that depends on them, stable inequalities prolong themselves (Weyer, 2007).
As mentioned earlier, there are a number of different status characteristics, among which is gender (Berger et al., 1980). Evidence that gender is a prominent status characteristic leading to inequalities is indicated by:

- the congruence of the traits that differentiate between genders
- men being evaluated more positively
- more favourable traits associated with men than women (Berger et al., 1980).

While these status inequalities arise at the individual or micro level of interaction, they influence the group or macro level of society. In this way ‘gender status beliefs create a network of constraining expectations and interpersonal reactions that is a major cause of the “glass ceiling”’ (Ridgeway, 2001, p. 637).

To focus on more current implications of the glass ceiling and gender inequality, some characteristics and behaviour no longer relate to situations in the contemporary world. The two theories outlined above might not be suitable to explain the phenomena today even though the glass ceiling and gender inequality are the major causes. Current research needs a more applicable theory other than gender and behaviour differences. A number of theories of women at work have been considered because gender studies and female career progression, particularly in management departments; have tended to be descriptive with little supporting theory to underpin the research. A key assumption in much of the work is the proposition that attitudes towards women differ because they are in the minority and therefore the key to solving gender issues within the management profession is to increase the number of women in the management area (Bell, 2002). Thus, preference theory, discussed as follows, has been chosen by the researcher to be the basis of analysis in Chapter 4.

2.13.4 Preference Theory

The latest research results on women’s position in the labour market are making old theories, especially those focusing on patriarchy (male domination) and sex discrimination, out of date. New theories are needed for the 21st century that take account of and are consistent with the newest research findings. This study has chosen Hakim’s (2004) preference theory, a recent theory for explaining and predicting women’s choices between market work and family work. It is a theory
that is historically formed, empirically based, multidisciplinary, prospective rather than retrospective in orientation and applicable in all rich modern societies (Hakim, 2000). Lifestyle preferences are defined as casual (individual) factors, which need to be monitored in modern societies. On the other hand, other social attitudes, such as patriarchal (male-controlled) values, are either unimportant as predictors of behaviour or else have only a very small marginal impact, by creating a particular climate of public opinion on women’s roles.

Preference theory predicts a division of work lifestyles, as a result of the diversity in women’s sex-role preferences. It argues that in thriving modern societies, women’s preferences become central determinants of life choices, particularly the choice between an emphasis on activities related to children and family life or an emphasis on employment and competitive activities in the public sphere. The social structural and economic environment still constrains women’s choices to some extent, but social structural factors are of declining importance, mostly in social class. Preference theory forms part of the new stream of sociological theory that emphasises ideational change as a major cause of social behaviour. Men and women not only gain the freedom to choose their own biography, values and lifestyle, they are forced to make their own decisions because there are no universal assurances or collectively agreed conventions, no fixed model of the good life, as in traditional or early modern industrial societies.

Preference theory can be seen as an empirically based statement of the choices women and men actually make in modernity. It contrasts with economic theories of the family (Becker, 1991) that assume that women and men are from homogeneous groups, with different goals and preferences, which make some family division of labour optimal and efficient for all couples and produces sex differences in investments in careers. In general, preference theory predicts diversity in lifestyle choices and even a polarisation of lifestyle choices among both men and women. Further, the theory specifies the historical context in which core values become important predictors of behaviour. It notes that five historical changes collectively produce a qualitatively new scenario for women in prosperous modern societies in the 21st century, giving them options that were not previously available.
2.13.4.1 *Four Central Principles of Preference Theory*

There are four main principles in preference theory, as follows.

1. Five separate historical changes in society and in the labour market, which started in the late 20th century, are producing a qualitatively different and new development of options and opportunities for women. The five changes do not necessarily occur in all modern societies and do not always occur together. Their effects are cumulative. The five causes of a new development are:
   - The contraceptive revolution, which, from about 1965 onwards, gave sexually active women reliable control over their own fertility for the first time in history.
   - The equal opportunities revolution, which ensured that for the first time in history women had equal right to access to all positions and careers in the labour market. In some countries, legislation prohibiting sex discrimination went further, to give women equal access to housing, financial services, public services and public posts.
   - The expansion of white-collar occupations, which are far more attractive to women than most blue-collar occupations.
   - The creation of jobs for secondary earners, people who do not want to give priority to paid work at the expense of other life interests.
   - The increasing importance of attitudes, values and personal preferences in the lifestyle choices of affluent modern societies.

2. Women are heterogeneous in their preferences and priorities in the conflict between family and employment. They are heterogeneous also in their employment patterns and work histories.

3. The heterogeneity of women’s preferences and priorities creates conflicting interests between groups of women. Sometimes it is between home-centred women and work-centred women and sometimes between the middle group of adaptive women and women who have one firm priority (whether for family work or employment). The conflicting interests of women have given a great advantage to men, whose interests are comparatively homogenous; this is one cause of patriarchy and its disproportionate success.
4. Women’s heterogeneity is the main cause of women’s variable response to social engineering policies in the new development of modern societies. This variability of response has been less evident in the past, but it has still obstructed attempted to predict women’s fertility and employment patterns. Policy research and future predictions of women’s choices will be more successful in future if they adopt the preference theory perspective and first establish the distribution of preferences between family and employment in each society.

Reviews of research evidence for the last three decades show that once genuine choices are open to women, they choose between three different lifestyles: home-centred, work-centred or adaptive (Hakim, 2004). These divergent preferences are found at all levels of education and in all social classes. Social class becomes less important than motivation, personal life goals, attitudes and values.

2.14 Types of Women in Management

2.14.1 Work-Centred Women

This group of women are in a minority, despite the massive influx of women into higher education and into professional and managerial occupations in the last three decades. Work-centred people (men and women) are focused on competitive activities in the public sphere, in careers, sport, policies or the arts. Family life is fitted around their work; many of these women remain childless, even when married. Qualifications and training are obtained as a career investment rather than as an insurance policy, as in the adaptive group. The majority of men are work-centred, compared to only a minority of women, even women in professional occupations. Preference theory predicts that men will still retain their dominance in the labour market, policies and other competitive activities, because only a minority of women are prepared to prioritise their jobs (or other activities in the public sphere) in the same way as men. In the long run, it is work-centred people who are most likely to survive and become high achievers, in greedy occupations.
2.14.2 Adaptive Women

This group of women prefer to combine employment and family work without giving a fixed priority to either. They want to enjoy the best of both worlds. Adaptive women are generally the largest group among women and are in substantial numbers in most occupations. Certain occupations, such as school teaching, are attractive to women because they facilitate a more even work-family balance. The great majority of women who transfer to part-time work after they have children are adaptive women, who seek to devote as much time and effort to their family work as to their paid jobs. In some countries (such as Thailand and some Asian and southern European countries) and in certain occupations, part-time jobs are still rare, so women must choose other types of jobs, if they work at all. For example, seasonal jobs, temporary work or school-term-time jobs all offer a better work-family balance than the typical full-time job, especially if commuting is involved. When flexible jobs are not available, adaptive women may take ordinary full-time jobs or else withdraw from paid employment temporarily. Adaptive people are the group interested in schemes offering work-life balance and family-friendly employment benefits and will gravitate towards careers, occupations and employers offering these advantages.

2.14.3 Home-Centred or Family-Centred Women

This group of women are a minority and relatively invisible in the Western as well as in Asian world, including Thailand, given the current political and media focus on working women and high achievers. Home-centred women prefer to give priority to private life and family life after they marry. They are most inclined to have larger families and these women avoid paid work after marriage unless the family is experiencing financial problems. They do not necessarily invest less in qualifications, because the educational system functions as a marriage market as well as a training institution. Despite the elimination of the sex differential in educational attainment, home-centred women are now marrying a man with substantially better qualifications and the likelihood of marrying a graduate spouse is hugely increased if the women herself has obtained a degree (Hakim, 2000; Blossfeld and Timm, 2003). This may be why women remain less likely to take courses in the arts, humanities or
languages, which provide cultural capital but have lower earnings potential. This group of workers is most likely to drop out of greedy careers relatively early in adult life.

In general, it is necessary to differentiate between a person’s core values and life goals and the multitude of topics on which public opinion data collected. There is an important theoretical and methodological distinction between personal goals and preferences, which are causal in relation to individual behaviour and general social attitudes and societal norms, which are usually non-causal. There is a distinction between choice and approval, between personal goals and public beliefs, between what is desired by the survey respondent for their own life and what is considered desirable in society in general. The two are not coterminous and there is only a weak link between society norms and personal preferences and goals (Hakim, 2000; 2004). For example, people may agree that it would be better if everyone stopped smoking, yet continue to smoke themselves.

Preference theory also provides a different explanation for the continuing pay gap and occupational segregation. Moreover, it predicts that they will persist in the 21st century and that men will continue to outnumber women in the top jobs, simply because they try much harder to get them. The majority of working women seek a larger degree of work-life balance more than men do. Women are more likely to ask for shorter work hours than to ask for higher pay or promotion (Babcock and Laschever, 2003).

2.15 Conceptual Framework

Many new theories have been developed during the last two decades, which incorporate variables that have been shown to influence women’s career development. Theories of particular interest here include Hackett and Betz’s Self-efficacy Approach and Farmer’s Model.
2.15.1 Explanatory Dimension Concepts on Women’s Career Progression

There are various theories that can be used to explain gender discrimination in workplaces because gender studies tend to be descriptive and relatively explanatory. The terms gender discrimination and gender inequality are used interchangeably in this section. Much of management literature has problematised women’s relationship to dominant masculine organisational practices and cultures. The issues of women and their career have been explored for more than 30 years. Many researchers have begun to develop explanatory theories and concepts to these issues. This research has adopted three dimensions of explanatory concepts from the work of Evetts (2000) to emphasise different factors and influences on Thai women managers and their career progress in management. The three dimensions also result in different interpretations of change and continuity, perceptions of choice and determinism in women’s careers. The three dimensions of explanatory concepts are:

1. Cultural dimensions: family and feminine ideologies and organisational cultures.
2. Structural dimensions: family structures and organisational processes.
3. Action dimensions: women’s choices and strategies.

The explanations of women’s careers are outlined, illustrated and assessed in respect of careers in particular occupational and professional sectors. Most other researchers have linked dimensions 1 and 2 in explanations and many have emphasised the determinants (culture and structure) rather than the choice elements in women’s careers. No one dimension is more important than the others—all three of them are needed for a full explanation of women’s career experiences, in terms of aspects of change as well as continuity in women’s careers. According to Evetts (2000), individuals will perceive different dimensions to be more important in the accounts they give of their own experience of their career.

2.15.2 Cultural Dimensions: Family and Feminine Ideologies and Organisational Cultures

The cultural dimensions of explanations are obvious and persuasive in accounting for women’s career difficulties and gender differences in careers (Metz and
Arguments are complicated but the explanation is that women will have culturally learnt to prefer and to choose certain kinds of occupation. For the most part, women will seek the satisfaction of helping others in their chosen fields and avoid the potentially hostile, competitive and assertive areas of promotion in organisational careers. Women who, in their career choices, are ambitious and seem to challenge gender stereotypes will be seen as odd and different in important aspects of femininity, which is caring and relatedness. They will be admired by a few but they will mostly be criticised by other women as well as men in their attempts to break new ground. The powerful cultural expectations are ideological forces that have had and continue to have a clear controlling effect on women’s career choices, aspirations and expectations. The cultural dimensions of expectations have been used to highlight the difficulties for and the determinants of women’s career choices and the continuation and reproduction of gender differences in career achievement (Metz and Tharenou, 2001; Mavin, 2001).

When explanations involve cultural factors, it means that the focus is on the belief systems and controlling social attitudes that affect occupational choice and career aspirations. Cultural dimensions highlight the controlling concepts of femininity, of what it means to be a women and the ideology of the perfect family which influences ideals of femininity, and the culture of organisations and professions, particularly the culture of management, which is usually seen as masculine (Karami et al., 2006). Cultural belief systems influence and control behaviour by means of a common sense view of what is ‘natural’ as well as through moral principles of what is right and appropriate. The beliefs that are incorporated in the cultural dimensions of femininity and family, as well as the supposed masculinity of many organisations, continue to be powerful controlling forces in women’s working lives. Such ideologies affect the ways in which women choose an occupation or profession, decide to balance a sense of satisfaction with themselves and partners, wives, mothers, daughters and professional or career workers.

To pursue a direct career and compete for promotion, women might have to intentionally oppose the ideology dictates of family and motherhood as well as the cultural imperatives of what it means to be feminine (Kottke and Agars, 2005). Such powerful ideological forces have had a clear controlling effect on women’s career
aspirations and achievements. Another aspect of the culture dimension of explanations has been an analysis of the culture of management in organisations and the profession, which has been handled in different ways over time. Early research on women in professional and managerial work was concerned to demonstrate ‘no difference’ in leadership style and task performance (Evetts, 2000). Efforts are made to specifically analyse the female work culture. Such a culture is seen to highlight collegiality (rather than hierarchy), caring and sensitivity in relationships (rather than authority) and had a different perception of priority and good practice. It was also suggested that such a female work culture is advantageous in many respects for clients, customers, work colleagues and for workers themselves.

The strategy of asserting difference, rather than sameness, does help to shift the focus away from women’s deficiencies in career terms onto women’s strengths (Lyness and Thompson, 2000). For instance, women managers take communal and relatedness values with them into organisations. Some of the outcomes are a perspective on connectedness and an acceptance of affiliation and cooperation as an alternative and an improved means of getting work done. However, if work, the professions, industry and organisations are ones where a culture of individualism and competitiveness constitute what is recognised as career potential, then women who want to achieve career promotion will be required to meet such expectations and to manage the cultural dilemmas if they wish to succeed (Lyness and Thompson, 2000).

Beliefs about ‘good’ management were perceived to be in conflict with women’s other roles and responsibilities. Correspondingly, ‘good’ management is not perceived as involving caring, relatedness or connectedness. As a result, women seeking to promotion in organisations have to demonstrate promotion potential in the organisation’s terms (Mavin, 2001) and adapt and match the cultural expectations of organisations. There are similar cultural difficulties for women in banking where it has been frequently suggested that customers prefer male managers and financial advisors. These cultural dilemmas do not apply to the same extent in teaching and headship. In fact, some women head teachers are troubled by the interference of gendered expectations and assumptions into their professional work and even the priority given to their gender rather than their professional identity unless they
managed in diverse ways and had a wide variety of leadership styles and skills. It is such gendered cultural associations that make it difficult for women in senior positions in organisations and professions (Mavin, 2001).

2.15.3 Structural Dimensions: Family Structures and Organisational Processes

Many sociological concepts can be used to illustrate this dimension of explanations. However, it is essential to note that dimensions 1 and 2 are very closely linked and it is preferred not to separate them, but rather to regard both as aspects of structure. The structural dimensions of career include the institutional and organisational forms and patterns in both the family and the organisation. Structural dimensions are the ways in which work tasks and responsibility are divided up between members of the family; the divisions of labour and departmental systems in organisations; and the promotion ladders and career paths within organisations and professions (O’Neil and Bilimoria, 2005). These family and work structures and work promotion processes form the contexts in which women’s career decisions and choices are made and which differentially affect the occupational destinations and career routes of women and men.

In general, women are perceived and perceive themselves as having the prime responsibilities for the support and maintenance of their families, both nuclear and extended, and the care of its members. These responsibilities both limit and restrain women’s commitment to paid work and to promotion in their careers (Tower and Alkadry, 2008). Therefore, the requirements of the paid work and careers of men are perceived as of primary importance for the present and future well-being and economic security of the family and its members (Metz and Tharenou, 2001). This automatically means that women’s careers are required to recognise and incorporate this structural determinant. Family structures co-exist with organisational work structures as conditions for and determinants of women’s paid work and career experiences. Organisational structures consist of the divisions of labour, work practices, departmental divisions, promotion ladders and hierarchies of work position in organisations and professions. It is these structures and the job descriptions and experience requirements of particular positions, which affect career paths and routes. These structures also result in gender differences in occupational distribution and
promotion progress (Oakley, 2000; Metz and Tharenou, 2001; O’Neil and Bilimoria, 2005).

The characteristics of internal labour markets also affect the distribution of career opportunities for women and men. It is through the occupational culture of particular work and through the generalised acceptance of certain procedures and processes for controlling and managing promotion that work is created (Heilman, 2001). There is more diversity and complexity in career patterns and in women’s career choices than such structural generalisation would seem to indicate. For example, in organisations where engineers and scientists work, there are indications that the women were choosing or were being encouraged to choose the professional rather than managerial promotion routes. Thus, the women were becoming highly skilled technical specialists but not the managers of other engineers or scientists.

The structural influences on careers has increased understanding and awareness of family, professional and organisational structures and processes that constrain and limit the actions of some women career builders and reproduce gender segregation in occupations (Pai and Vaidya, 2009). The importance of cultural factors is part of the same process, since family and organisational structures depend on a generalised acceptance of the ‘reasonableness’ of particular patterns (Kottke and Agars, 2005). The cultural beliefs and controlling social attitudes support and maintain the structural arrangements and processes within organisations and families. Such ‘common sense’ beliefs constitute the hegemonic ideology that shapes the promotional constraints for women’s careers. The structural (cultural) dimensions of explanations have been used to emphasise the difficulties for and the determinants of women’s careers, as well as the continuation and reproduction of gender differences in careers.

2.15.4 Action Dimensions: Women’s Choices and Strategies

The cultural and structural dimension of explanations focuses primarily on the determinants of careers or at least the constrictions in the careers of women (Hakim, 2006). In general, in the action dimension of explanations, careers are not determined in any casual way by structural and cultural factors. Structural processes
and cultural expectation constrain choice but nevertheless women do choose to an extent between opportunities available to them. Careers frequently result from earlier decisions, which narrow the range of opportunities. Careers also result from coincidence, accident and encounters as well as from career planning, structural and organisational changes and changes in cultural conditions (Hakim, 2006).

The 1980s saw the re-emergence of an action or agency frame of reference, however, in the context of cultural and structural constraints, women were perceived as actively building their lives and careers out of the conditions created and maintained by larger structural and cultural forces. Thus, careers are not perceived as determined by cultural and structural forces. Such forces are mediated in their impact by processes of social interaction: cultures and structures are experienced; individuals respond and react in diverse ways; and people construct their own meanings, make choices and develop strategies. In the study of the action dimensions of women’s careers, the difficulties of organisational and professional promotion structures and the cultural belief system of family and femininity still have to be managed by women (Hakim, 2006; Wood, 2008).

Women manage such constraints in different ways, which include adaptation, manipulation, negotiation, resistance and confrontation. Tactics for coping with constraints vary between one woman and another and any one woman will vary over time and in different contexts (Hopkins and Bilimoria, 2008). No particular strategy is more important than others, although promotion-successful women, especially in male-dominated careers, sometimes have received a disproportionate amount of media attention and acclaim. Such women have also received a disproportionate amount of criticism. Most of the time, the criticism comes from feminist researchers who have interpreted successful women’s promotion achievements as a sell-out to or an adaptation of male career patterns and values by means of the exploitation of other women’s labour (e.g., cleaners and nannies) (Wood, 2008). The action dimension emphasises the rational choice element of all career decisions in the face of complex career constraints and variable career resources.

To analyse career experiences, the action dimension of careers (of women’s careers and career strategies) is considered alongside the cultural and structural determinants
of careers in particular organisational contexts. The demonstration of wide variety and diversity, as well as complexity, in the choices that are made and the strategies developed is discussed. Some women are developing direct careers in the industrial or commercial organisations or in schools in the education system. Some are achieving high promotions by remaining (or having to remain) single and/or childfree. Others are developing highly complex caring arrangements and coping strategies at least for a period. Other women are choosing not to focus on promotion but instead to balance paid work and family responsibilities either for a short period or as a longer-term career strategy (Hakim, 2006).

Some women choose particular sectors or their organisations and professions perhaps avoiding managerial positions, again for shorter or longer periods, in order to enable them to fulfil other responsibilities (Jogulu and Wood, 2006). Other women choose career patterns with part-time and practitioner careers, again for short or longer periods. Several women, particularly in teaching, take career breaks beyond statutory maternity leave, though younger women and women in engineering, science and banking are perhaps less inclined to do this. Most of these women know that particular career choices assist while others are likely to handicap promotion progress, but they opt for such choices as seeming to meet immediate needs, aims and goals. The consequences for the careers of the engineers and scientists of choosing the professional specialist rather than the managerial route are well recognised. Obviously some of the women would change their minds over the course of their careers and perhaps become unhappy with a particular course of action felt to be the best way at the time of decision. This is what makes careers dynamic and a process rather than a once-and-for-all decision. Also, some women have fewer choices to make in their particular organisational contexts or fewer resources in their personal lives. Particular career choices limit future career options and opportunities and careers often result from earlier decisions, which close some doors and narrow the range of future possibilities (O’Neil et al., 2008).

It is also important to emphasise that career choice and strategies are essentially personal and individual. Collective action does not form a part of the career decision making process (O’Neil et al., 2008). Women develop individual and personal solutions to the cultural and structural constraints in their careers. Either by
prioritising promotion or by negotiating various balances in their careers, they are concerned to meet, not challenge the needs and demands of their organisations and professions. These women are active in constructing resolutions and devising personal strategies. They choose between the examples set by other women in their organisations but they do not expect company or educational policies, trade union procedures or feminists principles to help sort their arrangements. Their personal situations and career ambitions and intentions are perceived as too variable and diverse to be adequately met by corporate systems or collective action.

2.15.5 Summary of the Dimensions

The three dimensions have been separated for the purpose of clarification and illustration. It is essential to keep in mind the links and inter-connections between the processes of career culture, structure and action; of how structure and culture arise out of actions and how actions are influenced by structure and culture. What people do in their careers always presumes some kind of pre-existing structure and culture (promotion ladders, rules of behaviour, cultural expectations). However, in what they do, people simultaneously recreate the structure and culture or alternatively new structures emerge and cultural expectations are gradually adjusted (Burke and Vinnicombe, 2005).

Structural change is certainly ongoing and continuous and there is recognition of the impact of legislation on women’s opportunities of careers. There is also acknowledgment of other structural changes, in both organisations and families, but these changes are usually interpreted as disadvantageous for women’s career opportunities. Changes in the structures of organisations include the general trends of downsizing and the removal of middle levels of management and new departmental divisions and groupings of workers. Other changes specific to particular internal labour markets include new job descriptions and divisions of responsibilities, increasing levels of self-employment, consultancy work and short term contracts, budgetary devolution and the development of internal financial markets in organisations (Burke and Vinnicombe, 2005; Pai and Vaidya, 2009).
Change is even clear in the structures and processes of families. Structures of family are increasingly diverse, with single parenthood the fastest growing family form. Weekend-only partnerships are also an increasing pattern, particularly for dual-career couples. Extended family responsibilities for childcare, along with increased use of nursery and crèche facilities and after-school clubs, the employment of nannies or informal arrangements between working mothers, all indicate diversity of structural conditions and patterns (O’Neil et al., 2009). Despite recognition of these ongoing structural changes, the paradox is that the structural dimensions of explanations continue to emphasise the reproduction of constraints to women’s careers and of gender differences in career achievements. Aspects of gender inequality (i.e., wage differentials and unequal career destinations) continue to be emphasised in explanations. Changes are interpreted as the shifting or adaptation of gendered career routes such that career inequalities continue to be reproduced through different organisational forms (O’Neil et al., 2009).

Therefore, it seems that it is the action dimension of explanations that has gone furthest in incorporating changes. Structural change is accompanied by increased complexity, diversity and variation in women’s career choices and strategies. The biggest changes are perceived to have occurred in women’s attachment to paid work and in their career ambitions. Women now expect to be in paid work for the large majority of their adult lives. The break for childcare, which in the past often marked the end of a paid work career for many married women, is now increasingly limited to paid maternity leave only. Some want to compete for higher positions in professions and organisations. This results in increased diversity and variation in women’s career ambitions and expectations, which research is beginning to explore (O’Neil and Bilimoria, 2005).

When women’s career actions and expectations change and changes are also occurring in career structures in organisations and families, then changes in career cultures will eventually follow. Changes in cultural expectations for and beliefs about gender appropriate career behaviour might be slower to affect. The controlling force of cultural imperatives constitutes a check and a brake in both action and structural motivations for change. Cultural stereotypes and moral prescriptions will eventually change but beliefs and expectations will adapt to sustain new structural
career patterns. There is already evidence of change as present-day attitudes to and the limited acceptability of the working mother, the career women and the dual-career partnership are beginning to be explored (Pai and Vaidya, 2009).

In recent years challenging traditional gender-differentiated explanations for women’s careers has been of great importance (Burke and Vinnicombe, 2005). One should not underestimate the increasingly diverse choices made by women actors in the organisations and professions in which they are building careers. The analysis of cultural and structural constraints and determinants of women’s careers needs to be supplemented by recognition of the variety and variation of women’s responses. It results in untidy variations and contradictions in workplaces and organisations, which represent women actors’ coping strategies as well as the attempts of some to challenge the constraints to women’s careers.

There is a need for feminist analysis to bring women as agents for change into sociological analysis and theory, while recognising the continuing force of structural and cultural obligations. The continuing division of feminist researchers into opposing factions—those who emphasise choice, those who stress change, those who view women as victims or as agents—will need to be reassessed if one is to make analytical progress. By beginning to understand how change provides opportunities as well as constraints, women can begin to develop career actions that will be appropriate for changing career structures and cultures.

2.16 Regulations on Gender-Related Issues

Gender-related legislation in the labour market has generally evolved from regulations that focus on safeguarding women’s family responsibilities and ensuring their physical security, to more neutral provisions that promote equal pay and equal opportunities between women and men in the workplace. Legislation specifically designed to protect female workers first appeared in the early 1840s in Great Britain, where they prohibited women from working in mines and restricted their night-time work. Within the next five decades, other European countries followed with legislation to restrict women from underground work, night-time shifts, long
working days and jobs where their hair could get caught in moving machinery (Wikander et al., 1995). During this period, occupational bans and working hour restrictions for women were often supplemented by mandatory maternity leave. Both types of legislation are still widespread and they are included among the conventions of the ILO.

Despite their prevalence, these social policies to protect women can have the unintended effect of raising the cost to firms of hiring women. Restrictions on women’s right to work and overtime work limit the ability of firms to run extra shifts, and mandated maternity benefits, when financed by firms, act as a tax on the employment of women. In response to these regulations, firms may lower women’s wages or substitute away from female labour. Women will also adjust their labour supply depending on the degree to which the mandates constrain their working hour options and the degree to which they value the benefits. Since the combination of supply and demand changes leads to ambiguous predictions of labour market outcomes, the impact of protective measures largely becomes an empirical issue.

By the mid-1900s, a number of countries invalidated their occupational bans and working hour restrictions for women as opposition to the discriminatory nature of the measures grew. Critics argue that the protective policies hampered women’s ability to compete with men for some high-paying occupations, thus worsening women’s concentration in relatively low-paying jobs. As a result, legislative efforts shifted from the protection of women to the promotion of workplace equality between men and women. Such measures include equal pay clauses and equal opportunity measures in employment. Although these measures are still controversial in terms of their effectiveness in raising women’s relative earnings and in reducing occupational segregation, they are found in a growing number of industrialised and developing countries.

Although not explicitly designed to target women’s well-being or equality in the labour market, seemingly ‘gender-blind’ policies can also have labour market outcomes that differ for men and women (Weyer, 20007). For example, the minimum wage and public sector retrenchment may have no gender content in their stated aims, yet in practice they can affect male and female workers differently. The
minimum wage and public sector downsizing are quite prevalent among developing countries and a growing body of evidence indicates that they have negative effects on women’s relative wages and employment. When governments enact labour laws that protect women, promote workplace equality between men and women or even have objectives unrelated to gender, the measures may have consequences specific to women’s labour market outcomes.

Protective legislation can entail negative effects that are particularly severe in developing countries, such as crowding even more women into the informal sector and encouraging firms to engage in outright discriminatory hiring practices, including the requirement of sterilisation certificates and pregnancy tests (Babcock and Laschever, 2003). This study presents a theoretical context for understanding the impact of these various labour market policies on women’s career progression. Numerous governments in many countries have tackled the occupational segregation problem head on by promoting employment redistribution with legislation that improves women’s access to occupations in which they formerly had few opportunities. These provisions prohibit sex-based discrimination in many aspects of employment, including hiring, training, promotion and resignation. Closely related measures that prevent discrimination on the basis of marital status or family responsibilities present similar objectives in equalising job opportunities for men and women. While technically gender-neutral, such laws disproportionately affect women since job prohibitions for married workers or workers with families do not generally apply to men or male-predominant occupations (Cotter et al., 2001).

In theory, if equal opportunity measures are effective in reducing discrimination against women in male-dominated occupations, the creation of new job opportunities will encourage some women to shift occupations and other women to join the labour force. However, there could be a negative short-run effect on female labour supply if women choose to temporarily exit the labour force in order to acquire sufficient skills and education for the new positions. Therefore, the short-run effect of equal opportunity measures on equilibrium employment and the corresponding wage is unclear. In the longer run, the employment effect should be positive as women complete the desired amount of education and training and re-enter the labour market. Women’s relative wages should rise if the legislation succeeds in reducing
women’s concentration in relatively low-paying occupations. As occupational segregation declines, an equal pay clause may in turn become more important in boosting women’s relative earnings (Blau et al., 1998). The reason is that men might also face discrimination in such female-dominated jobs as nursing, childcare provision and secretarial work. Equal opportunity measures could in principle be used to assist men in obtaining traditionally female occupations. This approach would help to further reduce occupational segregation, provide a broader support base for the policy and help to combat gender stereotypes in the work force (Anker, 1998).

Some countries have responded to the equal pay issue with comparable worth policies that have broader definitions for equal pay value across occupational categories (Alkadry and Tower, 2011). Governments have also responded with affirmative action laws that require greater efforts on the part of employers to recruit and hire women for occupations in which they are under-represented. Empirical evidence on the effectiveness of these various anti-discriminatory policies in countries is abundant but inconclusive, largely because of methodological difficulties in separating their effect from other concurrent changes. Among developing countries, including Thailand, have limited published evidence for equal pay and equal opportunities, but it seems to point in the direction of little to no impact.

Although the competitive labour market model can yield somewhat ambiguous predictions regarding the direction and magnitude of changes in women’s labour market outcomes, the general conclusion is that protective labour market policies will reduce women’s welfare by limiting the choice set of alternative compensation packages (Oakly, 2000). For example, labour legislation in Taiwan that restricted women’s night work and their overtime work led to a significant decline in women’s employment and actual working hours. Working hour restrictions across countries were once justified by the need to reduce the danger that women faced when they travel to and from work late at night and the need to have working women spend more time at home. As a policy priority, such restrictions ought to be removed, as the measures can no longer be justified by dangerous and exploitative working conditions. Protective measures that constrain woman more than men in their
working hours can hinder women’s progress towards equity in the labour market. The measures contribute to the exacerbation of occupational segregation by sex as some employers become resistant to hiring women who have less flexible working hour options (Behrman et al., 1995).

Maternity leave, also historically motivated by the need to safeguard women’s family responsibilities, constitutes an alternative protective measure that does support women’s efforts to remain and advance in the labour market. In fact, a growing body of evidence indicates that job-protected maternity benefits promote women’s attachment to the labour force and increase their firm-specific human capital. Women appear to value not just the financial benefits but also the employment guarantees that accompany their benefits. Although maternity leave legislation is widespread among developing countries, available evidence indicates that a significant number of women are either not covered by maternity leave benefits, unaware they are entitled to leave benefits or are employed in covered firms that fail to comply with the legislation (Alkadry and Tower, 2011; Kottke and Agars, 2005).

Given that women worldwide are often more constrained than men from participating in the labour market or in higher status occupations, it prompts governments to regulate labour market policies in order to focus on alleviating constraints and creating new job opportunities for women. Government effects to promote equal opportunities in the workforce help women to obtain non-traditional occupations by ending discriminatory employment practices based on sex and marital status. Although this type of legislation is becoming more prevalent among developing countries, enforcement remains problematic. For example, Korean women continue to face a considerable glass ceiling in administrative and supervisory positions, despite strong gains in their education and the enactment of equal opportunity legislation (Kang and Rowley, 2005). Ensuring equal treatment for male and female workers will strengthen women’s economic status and generate efficiency gains for the entire economy.

More family-friendly policies help to address the needs of working parents and their children. Parental leave statutes alongside maternity leave legislation will support
fathers in their efforts to take on more responsibility for childcare. Also, many governments in many countries have increased their attempts to shift the financial burden of childcare provision away from individual families and to extend access to quality childcare services. Although government involvement in childcare provision and support is not as common in developing countries, there are exceptions. For example, the Korean government provides subsidies to employers with childcare centres to help them cover operational expenses (Kang and Rowley, 2005). Such measures are becoming more appropriate as family structures move away from the extended family system, as fertility rates decline and as the share of women employed in paid jobs grows. Childcare assistance serves as a useful complement to maternity and parental leave statutes in supporting work parents.

However, maternity leave for some countries serves only as part of what the law states employers must comply with. Female employees sometimes are not aware of their rights or believe bearing a child and looking after it is their primary job. As mentioned above, many developing countries do not have parental leave schemes to support working women. The reasons behind this include company policies and finance issues. In Thailand, for example, female employees cannot have maternity leave for more than three months because it will pose a risk to their career in the long run. Childcare mostly relies on parents or grandparents, or hired help for those who can afford it. Thus, some simply cannot afford to have a child and so focus on their career instead.

2.17 The Kingdom of Thailand

This section introduces information on Thailand’s geography, population data and traditional views concerning inequality issues. Thailand is situated in the centre of peninsular Southeast Asia. It shares borders with Laos (north and east), Cambodia (southeast), Malaysia (south) and Myanmar (west). The south coast of Thailand faces the Gulf of Thailand and is bordered on the west by the Andaman Sea. As of 2008, Thailand has a population of 66.1 million (Sharp, et al., 2009). About 75 per cent of the population is ethnically Thai, 14 per cent are of Chinese origin and 3 per cent are ethnically Malay. The rest belong to minority groups including Mons,
Khmers and various hill tribes. The country’s official language is Thai and about 95 per cent of the population are Buddhist (Sharp, et al., 2009).

Unlike other countries in Southeast Asia, Thailand was never colonised. A bloodless coup d'état in 1932 ended the absolute monarchy and led to a constitutional regime. The constitution was amended in 1946 to establish a constitutional monarchy and a two-house legislative with a popularity elected lower house and an upper house elected by the lower house which continues today. Thailand’s economy recorded the world’s highest growth rate from 1985 to 1996, averaging 9.4 per cent annually. Speculation occurred against the Thai baht in 1997, which eventually triggered its collapse and the start of the Asian Financial Crisis. Thailand’s economy started to recover in 1999. Thailand’s GDP per capita is US$8,677 (2005), with about 2 per cent of its population living below US$1 (PPP) a day (Government of US, 2007).

The 1997 Constitution provides women and men in Thailand with equal rights. Nevertheless, gender inequality persists (OECD, 2009). Thailand is ranked 70th out of 157 countries on the GDI and 73rd out of 93 countries on the GEM. The Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,000 live births) in 2005 was 110 and, despite a high adult literacy for women (aged 15 years and older) of 90.5 per cent, only 8.7 per cent of seats were held by women in the lower house in 2007 (Sharp, et al., 2009). The guarantee of equality between men and women established in the 1997 Constitution has increased advocacy for gender mainstreaming and some initial promotion of gender-responsive budgeting by the national women’s machinery and non-government organisations (NGOs) (Bhongsvej, 2007). A 2000 analysis of public expenditure from a gender perspective was undertaken by academics at the government supported National Institute for Development Administration. The public expenditure and gender-sensitive budget analysis preliminary study for Thailand (2000) focused on government programs targeting women and those with a strong component related to women and children. This analysis highlighted the difficulties in determining the impact of the budget allocations on men and women within the parliament, government and NGOs (Vichit-Vadakan and Lorsuwannarat, 2000).
In 2004, the office of Women’s Affairs and Family Development (OWAFD) acknowledged that Gender-Responsive budgeting (GRB) was still far-fetched to achieve in the Thai budgeting system. However, the same report noted the increase in budgeting allocations for awareness-raising, training of trainers and development of materials on gender issues. Since 2005, the OWAFD, with the support of UNIFEM and the donor Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), has conducted a series of awareness-raising and capacity-building GRB activities. These have been primarily directed at gender focal points and Chief Gender Equality Officers (CGEOs) across departments (Bhongsvej, 2007). These efforts were further assisted by the provision of a GRB manual in Thai at the December 2006 seminar for gender workers and activities organised by OWAFD with donor support from FES. At this seminar, OWDAFD agreed to coordinate a network on gender budgeting as a forum for broad-based discussion (FES, 2006). Since then, GRB awareness-raising has expanded to engage women’s organisations, NGOs and academia. In 2007, FES supported an effort to mobilise political parties to embrace GRB in their policies (Bhongsvej, 2007). It is only a matter of time for Thailand to see the result of these policies.

Thailand has experienced intense economic growth over the last decade. Politically, as mentioned above, the government has established plans that focus specifically on developing women’s skills and knowledge, increasing their participation in decision making and promotion equality and social protection. This has resulted in a rise in the number of women occupying executive positions, particularly in the public sector. Although the Thai Constitution guarantees protection against discrimination on the grounds of gender, law enforcement has been weak and workplace discrimination persists in employment practices. Women’s role in society continues to be influenced by Buddhist beliefs and cultural norms that expect men to take the lead role. Yukongdi and Rowley (2009) argue that social attitudes towards Thai women have not kept pace with the changes in legislation.
2.18 Traditional Views About Women in Thai Society

Historically, a traditional Thai allegory provides a valuable insight into the role women have been expected to play in Thai society. The allegory represents the people of Thailand as the legs of an elephant (an animal revered in Thai culture), the men being equated with the elephant’s front legs and the women with the rear legs. The elephant requires both sets of legs to remain in upright and mobile. However, in traditional Thai thought, the role of males is, like the elephant’s forelegs, to lead, while the role of women, like the elephant’s hind legs, is to follow that lead. While this established notion of men being the leaders and women the followers in Thai society has undergone significant change in recent decades, as Thai women have achieved greater levels of equality in terms of economic, social, political and educational advancement in Thai society, there remains the urgent need for far greater advancement in each of these areas if women are to achieve genuine empowerment and equality in all areas of Thai society (Col, Meksawan and Sopchochai, 2001).

Gender inequality in Thailand is rooted in history and based in the family unit. To a lesser degree, it is the result of social policy, which is culturally rooted. At home, especially in rural areas, parents have traditionally treated their male and female children differently. Historically, most boys had plenty of freedom and no or fewer household responsibilities than girls. Parents expected lifelong service from girls while boys were expected to only enter the monkhood temporarily to show their gratitude by gaining merit for the parents (Onozawa, 2001). Moreover, since parents felt that sons were born to a superior role, they tended to provide them with the best education possible. Girls were traditionally left ignorant or barely literate because the parents believed their ultimate goal was to marry and become homemakers. Therefore, other knowledge beyond that necessary for family life was neglected for girls. This path is still followed today in many families, especially in rural areas. However, in general, the situation has improved significantly, especially in urban areas and in families where parents are more educated and thus committed to providing extended education to all of their children regardless of gender (Onozawa, 2001, 2000).
‘Women are buffalos. Men are humans.’ This Thai proverb summarises the divergent treatment of women and men in society and by Thai traditional law during the Ayuthaya period (1350–1767). In Thailand, buffalos represent stupid though hard working and generally, though not always, placid animals. Women were not only considered physical animals, but in a traditional Thai proverb they were also viewed as less productive than men. This rather negative traditional cultural perception of women’s value has long played a significant role in determining women’s status in Thai society.

Women have contributed significantly not only to the economic and social development of Thailand but also to the strengthening and cohesion of the entire social system. Historically, Thai women have played twin roles, working both inside and outside the home (Onozawa, 2001; 2000). In the modern period where economic progress has occurred, most Thai women still take full responsibility at home although they may also be full-time workers in the labour market. Although the women carry the heaviest domestic burden, they remain socially and economically and, in some cases, legally inferior to men (Grisanaputi, 2005). Traditionally, while being economically active and essential, Thai women have been regarded as the elephant’s hind legs—as followers inherently inferior to Thai men, who are the ‘rightful’ rulers in all areas of Thai society. If genuine gender equality is to be attained in Thailand, then this traditional devaluing of women must be effectively countered and eliminated (Yukongdi and Rowley, 2009).

**2.19 Thai Women and Education**

Human capital theory suggests that human capital acquired through education improves the productivity of the individual. Moreover, it suggests that investment in women’s human capital renders higher social returns than investments in other areas or in men’s human capital (Metz and Tharenou, 2001). This is because investment in women affects not only the women themselves but also those they care for, their children and families (Warunsiri and McNown, 2009). Therefore, providing opportunities for education and training to women will improve their potential and will increase the country’s overall productivity. Recently, the awareness of gender
stereotyping within the national education system has increased. The stereotyped roles of females and males presented in textbooks have been reviewed by the curriculum and Instruction Development Department in the Ministry of Education of Thailand. Providing the right image of the two genders to society, to parents, to teachers and to students themselves may help to narrow the gender gap in education.

Consequently, this will help to narrow the economic and social disparity between women and men. Although Thai women have made marked advances in education, there remains a long way to go (Benson and Yukongdi, 2005). In its 2005 comparative study of gender equality, the World Economic Forum presented a rather unwelcoming picture. The researchers of the study found that Thailand ranked 54 out of 58 countries in terms of educational attainment for females. This reflects less the ‘quantity’ of years of education girls may receive but rather the ‘quality’ of education they have access to (Lopez-Carlos and Zahidi, 2005). In education areas, therefore, the focus must be less on quantity and more on quality. Curriculum must be revised to eliminate gender stereotyping and encourage girls to go into those generally male-dominated fields, which importantly include politics. Despite Thailand having recently elected their first-ever female Prime Minister, female representation in politics is dire. Increased educational opportunities will do Thai women little good if they remain restricted to directing them to ‘female’ occupations and deprive them of a voice at the highest levels of political policy-making.

2.20 Thai Women in Politics

The gap in the political territory between men and women continues to widen. In the 2005 World Economic Forum global gender gap rankings, Thailand ranked 49 out of 58 countries studied in terms of political empowerment for women (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi, 2005). This finding reflects the fact that men throughout history have dominated Thai politics. While Thai women have played a very important role in the economic and social scopes, they have been very inactive in politics. In traditional Thai norms, politics is, simply, men’s business (Iwanaga, 2005; Vichit-Vadakan et al., 2006). As Vichit-Vadakan et al. (2006) note, women have difficulty rising to the top levels of the civil service for several reasons. Among these reasons is the fact
that men at the upper levels are accustomed to the women they work with being assistants and are thus not used to working with women on the same level as themselves and perhaps have difficulty perceiving women as being capable of working at their level. Further, the committees that oversee promotion within the ministries are almost entirely comprised of men. Since men tend to associate with other men outside the job (e.g., on the golf course, at pubs and clubs) those responsible for promotion decisions in the civil service tend to already know those male candidates up for promotion far better than they know female candidates (Onozawa, 2001, 2000). Clearly, Thai women have participated minimally in politics at the national level.

The local level is not much better. The Thai Local Administration Act of 1914 barred women from running for election at the local level. By 1982, the law prohibiting women from becoming village chiefs and sub-district chiefs was changed with the requirement that all village heads and sub-district heads elected before that year would retain their positions until the age of 60 (retirement age in Thailand). Although the rule was changed, it is not easy for women to obtain such positions due to the traditional belief that such posts deal with dangerous work and, hence, are not suitable for women. The percentage of female mayors throughout Thailand rose from 0.024 in 1980 to just 0.53 in 2000. Although women are gradually increasing their political participation in elective office, the increase is painfully gradual (Vichit-Vadakan et al., 2006, p. 26).

The reasons why so few women enter elective politics are tied to the prevailing social attitudes discussed above. Whereas in the past, women’s low level of education may have been a barrier to political participation, this is largely no longer the case. However, public attitudes continue to stereotype women as reflected in public attitudes towards women, who in the media and elsewhere have often been stereotyped as weak, indecisive, emotional, dependent and somehow less productive than men (Lopez-Carlos and Zahidi, 2005; Vichit-Vadakan et al., 2006, p. 27). The generally negative stereotypes of women showed in both print and broadcast media is at least partly related to the lower level of participation by women as media professionals. As working professionals, women were represented at 33.53 per cent in broadcast media and 26.24 per cent in print media in 2007. Greater participation
of women in the media as writers, editors, managers, directors, presenters and reporters will contribute to better representation and quality media.

Thai women themselves are certainly not immune to these traditional attitudes that play such an influential role in keeping them out of politics. Many women also accept the notion that their role is to take care of the family and to leave anything beyond the family to men. Thus, the general lack of participation of women in politics may not be caused only by men but also by women themselves. Women do not have confidence in female politicians, which may come from traditional beliefs about women’s roles or from jealousy (Lopez-Carlos and Zahidi, 2005). It is saddening that in many elections where women voters outnumbered men, a minimal number of women were elected.

2.21 Thai Women in the Workplace

Conventionally, Thai women have played a very active economic role. The gradual change in economic structure from an agricultural to an industrial economy since the 1960s has brought about a measure of change in traditional attitudes towards women. However, such change is very slow. Income and opportunity inequality between the genders continues to be a prominent feature of economic life in Thailand (Jeong, 2008). Modern Thai women play a crucial role in most areas of economic activity. In the home, women are responsible for most essential activities, including childcare and financial support. Within the formal economy, in both government and private workplaces, large numbers of women have participated fully in the development process. There are also millions of women who work in the informal sector as hawkers or in small factories. The National Statistical Office (NSO) (2004) labour force surveys have indicated that the rate of female participation in the commerce and service sector is greater than that of men. However, this does not hold in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors. Nonetheless, the role of women in these sectors remains significant.

The NSO has reported that the average labour force participation of Thai women was higher than 70 per cent prior to the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. It dropped to about
65 per cent during the 1997 crisis and has stayed at about 65 per cent since then. In 2007, the rate was about 64.1 per cent and increased slightly to about 64.3 per cent in 2008 (NSO, 2009; Warunsiri and McNown, 2009). At the middle and upper levels of the work force, women are under-represented in managerial and senior administrative position in the private sector, just as they are in the public sector. For instance, in the banking sector in 1995, there were 329 male branch managers and only 34 females in this position. As Vichit-Vadakan et al. (2006, p. 4) indicate, despite having made some significant progress in the workplace, ‘women are less likely to be in charge’.

Although Thai women can work as well and effectively as men, they face the pervasive socially conservative attitude that they are not qualified for several jobs, which is reflected in their salary brackets. In a 2005 comparative study of 58 countries by the World Economic Forum, Thailand ranked 39th in economic opportunities for women but ranked first in economic participation of women, reflecting that while female participation in the workforce is high in quantitative terms, the quality of that participation in terms of the types of work women have access to and the payment provided is not high (Lopez-Carlos and Zahidi, 2005). Men tend to receive higher wages/salaries than women, even for the same job (Vichi-Vadakan et al., 2006). Women dominate employment in the manufacturing and hotel and restaurant sub-sectors, the latter two being heavily dependent upon tourism. Although employment in the services/tourism sector has increased, its monetary growth rate has declined, thus affecting those working in that sector (Paitoonpong et al., 2009).

In summary, although women contribute significantly to the development process, the benefits rarely trickle down fairly to them, although the costs negatively and significantly impact them both indirectly and directly. This is at least partially the result of inadequate gender awareness in the policy and planning processes for national development.
2.22 Thai Women in Management

Over the past two decades, women’s participation rate has been relatively high at more than 60 per cent. Women’s overall status in Thailand has improved significantly, particularly in terms of health and education (Yukongdi, 2005). On the legislative front, changes in legislation to promote greater equality in employment and education has led to a dramatic increase in demand for managers and professionals (Phongpaichit, 2000). The question is raised whether economic growth and changes in legislation contributed to increased managerial career opportunities for women in Thailand or not.

Little is known of women managers in less industrialised countries, such as Thailand, as most of what we know is drawn from research on women managers in industrialised countries. An extensive search of the literature found there is a scarcity of empirical research examining women in management in Thailand, especially in the Bangkok area. The majority of the studies pertaining to women managers in the past may no longer be relevant today. This study considers individual, organisational, societal and institutional variables focusing on one level as insufficient to fully understand the impact of the multiple influences on Thai women’s present managerial status. Rather, this research seeks to focus on the barriers Thai women managers face in organisations and what roles gender and social status play in explaining women’s progress in the workplace. The following are three proposed perspectives to generally understand women in management.

The first approach is gender centred (person centred) (Horner, 1972; Riger and Galligan, 1980). It argues that gender influences the way men and women think and act. According to this approach, any differences in behaviour, attitudes and traits are attributed to the socialisation patterns or biological predispositions of men and women (Powell, 1988; Riger and Galligan, 1980). According to this approach, the variance of women’s behaviour from male norms accounts for the limited representation of women in managerial position (Yukongdi, 2005).
The second approach is the organisational structure perspective. It argues that the behaviour and attitudes of men and women are a function of the differences in structural and situational factors in the organisation (Kanter, 1977). Relative to men, women are few in number in managerial positions, assigned to positions with low job mobility or opportunity and are given limited organisation power. This perspective argues that men and women behave differently because of situational differences in the workplace (Kanter, 1977; Mainiero, 1986; Yukongdi, 2005). In the gender-centred perspective, the solution for women is to imitate men’s behaviour. But research findings have found that even when women are as qualified as men, they remained under-represented at higher organisational levels (Cleveland et al., 2000). Similar to the gender-centred perspective, the organisational structure perspective ignores situational variables, such as laws, policies, gender role stereotypes, expectations, ideologies, cultural values and histories (Fagenson, 1990, 1993; Martin et al., 1983; Yukongdi, 2005). Therefore, women’s position in management can only be understood by taking into account the complex interactions between the individual, the organisation and the wider society.

The third perspective is the GOS approach (Fagenson, 1993). This perspective encompasses the two previous approaches and further assumes that individuals and organisations cannot be understood separately from the society or culture in which they function. This approach will lead to changes in the other components. The organisation includes not only the number of individuals, power and opportunity structure, but also organisational policies, history, culture and structure that influence the individual’s behaviour. According to this perspective, changes are a result of complex interactions among different factors, such as individual behaviour, organisational policies and practices, societal beliefs and values, politics and government legislation. Therefore, the progress of women in management will not be uniform, but different in each country.

According to Fagenson (1993), opportunities for women in management result from the interaction of a number of forces and not from a single, isolated event. Consequently, equity for women managers can be achieved through some adjustment, among the various forces by the individual, the organisation, society, government legislation and politics. This framework suggests that to understand the
experiences, actions and the status of women, several levels of analysis are required, such as individual, organisational and systemic. Each level of analysis alone is insufficient to explain the under-representation of women and their under-utilisation in managerial ranks (Adler and Izraeli, 1994). In Chapter 4, the analysis chapter, the GOS perspective will be adopted as it allows for the exploration of a range of issues and a consideration of these factors that make the situation in any country unique.

2.23 Role of Women in Economic Development

2.23.1 Thai Development Model

In 1857, in order to maintain its independence, Thailand partially opened up to the world market and this eventually led to a Western influence. The Thai economic miracle of the last few decades is based largely on the participation and exploitation of women, who produce most of the industrial value, an aspect that is not developed by many studies. This intensified the differences between the areas, the social classes and the sexes and privileged urbanisation (Onozawa, 2001; 2000).

The economic development model is based on patriarchal capitalism, the market economy, globalisation with the opening of the borders to trade and foreign investments, the reduction in the role of the government limited to major macroeconomic equilibrium, an industry and an agriculture initially turned towards export, the importation of raw material and goods of equipment, the development of tourism and services as a significant source of income (Picavet, 2005; Onozawa, 2001; 2000). Women working in the services, trade, tourism, education and the pharmaceutical sector are more numerous than men and also play a significant role in these fields in economic development.

The majority of women remain employed in low qualified jobs in agriculture or industry. Women are often considered not so much as independent but rather as dependent on men and easy to manipulate, dissatisfied and jealous. However, in management, especially for foreign companies, women are considered better workers because they are generally more motivated, harder-working and more flexible because of the need for financial independence. Men, on the other hand, are
considered to be unstable and prefer to work for themselves. In a great number of manufacturing industries and services, foreign managers work more easily with female personnel (Alessio and Andrzejewski, 2000).

2.23.2 Wages, Responsibilities, Promotions

Today, women are beginning to share economic responsibility, have access to all forms of education and may be found in every sector from social workers and taxi drivers to nurses, soldiers, pilots, engineers, professors, doctors, managers, businesswomen and members of political parties. Women are very often regarded as equal to men in the manufacturing industry, services, administration and business. However, especially at the moment of recruitment, in terms of wages, responsibilities and promotions, the chances of concretely moving up the ladder will be slower depending on sectors (Bell et al., 2002). Conversely, equal opportunities in foreign firms are more real. In the trade unions, as in the administration and politics, women are few and far between in executive posts and leadership often remains male because the women have family responsibilities, which make the tasks of organising meeting more difficult. In contrast, there are an increasing number of stories of women managers in Bangkok who have gone through family and social issues of their own to become successful executives in an organisation (Yukongdi and Rowley, 2009).

2.24 Literature Gap in Thai Women’s Career Progress in Management

In the past two decades, there has been a growing interest in the study of women and how their careers have progressed relatively to men, particularly in managerial roles (Davidson and Burke, 2004; Rowley and Yukongdi, 2009). Numerous journal articles and academic commentaries have reported on the different demographic representation in the labour market. In Thailand, despite the full access to education for women, the society still remains conservative and stereotyping in the way that women are expected to take the role of staying at home and looking after children and family members (Yukongdi, 2005). Although Thai women’s social, educational,
political and economic opportunities have improved in recent decades, they still face significant gender bias in virtually all spheres of activity (Benson and Yukongdi, 2005). Despite Thai women’s higher levels of education and consequent social and political involvement in recent years as compared with the past, they continue to be impeded by deep-seated traditional gender-based values and have not participated in significant numbers in management at the highest levels, where they could have direct influence upon national policies related to gender equity in all fields. In recent times, women’s status has improved, but inequality between females and males still exists in several significant aspects (Weyer, 2007; Yukongdi, 2005; Onozawa, 2000).

Thailand is known as one of many fast-growing economies in the Asian region (Niffenegger et al., 2006) and this study is interested in how much the Thai workplace is ready for a discrimination-free society along the lines of other Asian and Western countries. This study examines career progression, family support, education scholarships, training programs and discrimination protection of any kind readily available for their female employees compared to what has already been available for male counterparts. The impact of gender awareness on social, educational and economic policy formulation, implementation and evaluation in Thailand is also examined.

2.25 Summary

Culturally, the effect of stereotyping gender roles in employment practices and legislation persists in Thai society (Yukongdi, 2005). Stereotypes and assumptions on the roles of women and men continue to be a barrier for women’s advancement to managerial positions. Overall, the findings suggest that social class may be another important factor to consider apart from culture, gender and education in predicting women’s advancement in management in Thailand.

Socio-cultural attitudes towards women in Thailand have gradually changed as the country undergoes modernisation and Western ideas invade Thai society. National interest in women’s human rights, equality in employment and equal access to
education appears to be triggered by international agendas for the advancement and empowerment of women and Thailand’s participation in the UN First World Conference on Women in 1975. Thailand started from a low base of legal rights for women and has made significant progress over the years. Recent official statistics show that women are under-represented in the top management positions in both private and public organisations, despite continuing improvements in educational achievements. Time is needed before the impact of the amendments to legislation, the withdrawal of five of the seven reservations that support greater equality for women in employment and education become obvious as more women in junior and middle management positions move into executive levels. Discrimination against women is widely reflected in both laws and customs. Even if there is legislation that supports the position of women, social norms and customs may take precedence over legislation that is poorly enforced. This will remain a challenge for policy makers who will need to take active measures to overcome this problem.

The government’s effort to promote equality in employment opportunities for women will not be effective if the prevailing attitude among the Thai people is that discrimination does not exist. This is a barrier that will be difficult to tackle. The broader society operates significantly on the basis of deep-seated attitudes towards the social roles and behaviour of men and women. In Thai culture, the stereotyping of gender roles appears to be accepted by society. At this stage, affirmative action programs, if implemented, would be viewed as discriminatory, favouring women. This could be demoralising for women who succeeded because they worked hard to develop their skills and educate themselves. The public will need to be educated to change the way in which discrimination is interpreted in the Thai context. A change in mind-set can only be brought about through education to raise awareness and understanding of gender issues and by national policies aimed at promoting equality within the family, in schools and the broader society.

Organisations can also take active measures to reduce existing inequalities. Organisations should promote objective and unbiased recruitment and promotion policies, implement human resource strategies that are gender-sensitive and promote equality. The advancement of women in management should aim at improving women’s educational institutions and training, as well as raising awareness and
understanding of gender issues by implementing national policies and programs. Gender inequalities persist because of discriminatory social norms and customs, legislation and regulations. These are extremely difficult to change, so public action is critical. The position of women in management in Thailand in future will depend on the effectiveness of organisational practices and policies that are in place to eliminate discrimination in the workplace and the role of the government in regulating the social environment and ensuring that it promotes gender equality.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in this study. Acknowledging the gap in the literature in regards to female perspectives on Thai gender equality in the workplace, this study used an empirical, qualitative design to compile data on the experiences of female managers in their own voice and relative to their role as leaders compared to their male counterparts. Phenomenology is also utilised as it facilitates qualitative methodology. This chapter provides a description of phenomenology as well as a rationale for selecting this approach to guide the research. The chapter also provides the researcher’s effort to group personal beliefs and biases and describes the processes used for data collection and analysis.

As stated in earlier chapters, the purpose is to investigate the career experience of Thai female managers in Bangkok and the way they perceive their career progression. Further, the research examines gender discrimination and the glass ceiling, and whether it exists in Thai workplaces in both private and public sectors. If it does exist, this study asks how Thai female managers strategise to deal with this challenge. Dual roles (i.e., family obligations), gender inequality practice in organisations, education and work training qualification are main factors hindering women to progress in their career (Yukongdi, 2005). Specifically, this study seeks to identify:

- difficulties in terms of gender inequality for highly qualified Thai women to break through to management
- are family roles hindering Thai women progressing in their career
- do legislative initiatives help Thai women deal with the glass ceiling
- will women feel supported in getting a promotion to management level.

During the data collection, it became clear that the last area of inquiry was too specific, so it was revised to:

- do organisations provide enough support or protection from any problems Thai female managers might be experiencing.
3.1 Phenomenology

This qualitative research is influenced by the phenomenological approach. Phenomenology neither intends to provide solutions nor does it aim to present strategies or technique. Rather, a phenomenological approach provides a description (the what) of the experience rather than explanations (the why) of the experience and will explore the meaning individuals develop from their experiences (van Manen 1990).

As described by Thevenez (1962), phenomenology is a discipline that has its foundation in the philosophical traditions of Edmund Husserl. Husserl describes phenomenology as the way that knowledge comes into being, which is from an individual’s experience with the phenomenon. Phenomenology brings focus to the assumptions on which the individual’s knowledge and understandings are based. A phenomenological research method is designed to explore the conscious experiences from the subject’s point of view and provides an opportunity to show what characterises these experiences. Phenomenology literally describes the way things appear to us in our experience, which helps to produce the meaning of things that happen in our experiences or the meaning we assign to different occurrences (Smith, 2005). The meaning of any given experience lays the conjunction of an individual’s perception, thoughts, ideas, memory, emotions or desire to act (Thevenaz, 1962), in the sense of recommending that an understanding of these thoughts, ideas and emotions would provide insight into events in their life. Husserl also believes that phenomenology is the only way to a true description of the human experience, without the researcher’s prejudice, beliefs and ideologies that would bias understanding (Thevenaz, 1962; van Manen, 1990).

Max van Manen (1990) argues that individuals develop a perspective or a view that is determined by their environment, which includes the people themselves, their situation and their culture. An individual’s view may also be determined by superstitions, old-societal perception, judgement and prejudices as much as by scientific knowledge and real life experience. However, it grows out of a reflection on the environment and the accompanying experience until the individual
consciously expresses a view. The Thai female managers and executives in this research are no exception. Van Manen also points out that phenomenology allows individuals to express their own view of life, even though some views may be culturally influenced. Phenomenology in this study develops the views each of the research participants held about her experiences regarding the gender issue. A phenomenological approach develops the essence of the phenomena from both textual and structural descriptions of how individuals make sense of their experiences in their daily routines (Moustakas, 1994).

The textual description in this research describes the ‘what’ of the experience, stating its every aspect and giving each detail equal attention. The structural description in this research requires reflection to describe the ‘how’ of the experience. According to Moustakas (1994), the obvious and the underlying come together to create a fuller understanding of the whole principle of a phenomenon in the phenomenological description. Some approaches have sought to observe, investigate, analyse and translate human behaviours but they do not address the question of meaning associated with the experience. Phenomenology makes it possible for this research to gain a complete view of the general themes and essence of individuals’ experiences in order to understand what it means for them to have had those experiences. This is to counteract the notion that sometimes qualitative methods are criticised for being imprecise in reaching quantifiable conclusions (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

3.1.1 Epoch

Phenomenology emphasises epoch, which is described by Moustakas (1994) as the process researchers involved undertake to set aside personal prejudgements or preconceived ideas they have about the phenomenon in question and then allowing things, occurrences and people to input fresh ideas into their consciousness and to look and see them again as if for the first time. In the process of inquiry, it seems to be a natural tendency to pay attention to some aspects of information while seemingly appearing to ignore others. Since it is unlikely that one can forget any personal preconceptions about the phenomenon, van Manen (1990) suggests that researchers set aside their own understanding, beliefs, biases, theories and assumptions by exposing them and then make it clear and understood. The epoch
process allows researchers to gain more accurate insight into these experiences (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994) and an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon from the participants’ own words.

3.1.1.1 Researcher’s Epoch Process

To begin an epoch process, the researcher set out thoughts and reflections to identify personal preconceptions based on prior experiences, related literature and existing biases that came out of gender ideas. Preconceptions included:

- Thai female managers have long been struggling to make it to the top management ladder.
- The ability of Thai female managers and executives to break through challenges and get to where they are makes them admirable and highly regarded.
- Thai female managers and executives normally operate from a fragile position in the higher ranks.
- Thai female managers and executives are emotionally inaccessible because they are always protected from their position.
- Gender inequality still plays its role in promotion to higher management positions judging by the number of female executives in various organisations.
- Dual roles are a major obstacle to climbing up the management ladder.
- Time and situations have changed. Society has opened up more about gender equality; however, old perceptions of female roles still live on.

Reviewing this list prior and during the data collection process allowed the researcher to have an ongoing awareness of their own preconceptions. Therefore, the researcher intentionally guarded against over-analysing or overlooking statements from the research participants that supported preconceptions and chose instead to investigate this topic matter in order to gain clarity and allow the participants’ own meanings to surface. To reinforce the purpose of the epoch process, validity checks were also used, which are discussed later on in this chapter.
3.1.2 Minor Departure from Phenomenology and Conceptual Framework

It is important to note that phenomenological research often stays away from including a conceptual framework and may apply interview protocols that are different from those shown in the appendices of this research. With regard to the conceptual framework, van Manen (1990, p. 29) argues that this method of inquiry tries to guard against any possibility towards building a predetermined set of fixed procedures, techniques and concepts that would direct this research project and therefore should be ‘pre-suppositionless’. A conceptual framework contradicts the concept of the research being pre-suppositionless. Similarly, interview protocols for phenomenology allow a researcher to examine participants’ day-to-day experiences and stay away from presuppositions, relying instead on investigating into the response of the research participants (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 1998). As supported by Seidman (1998) and McCracken (1988), while it is acknowledged that there are diversities within phenomenological forms of inquiry, the forms of inquiry join in their goal to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The interview protocol included in this research sought to stay close to the fundamental question as advised by van Manen (1990) and the researcher also allowed themselves to be guided by each participants’ responses. However, the quantity of predetermined questions suggests a departure from phenomenology. This research will investigate whether a phenomenological approach was incorporated into the broader qualitative interview protocol to explore how the participants’ lived experiences were situated. The remainder of this chapter presents the methods used in gathering, analysing and presenting the data, and the steps that were taken to ensure integrity, confidentiality, validity and reliability that were consistent with a phenomenological approach, as well as limitations of this research.

3.2 Overview of Research Design

This research is an exploratory study to investigate new insights into the glass ceiling phenomenon. A qualitative research method was chosen as it provides a method of inquiry into a social or human situation, which is the experience of Thai female
managers in this study. Qualitative inquiry is best utilised when the goal is to gain additional insight into a topic that needs to be explored, as well as to study individuals in their natural setting (Creswell. 1998). A qualitative approach also makes it possible for participants to express themselves and offer their views and their perspectives, therefore allowing the voice of participants to emerge and offer a complete picture of their realities. In-depth interviews made it possible to deliver detailed descriptions of the managers’ experiences to the researcher.

3.3 Research Design

Figure 3.1 presents three major phases that guided this research study. The figure is meant to suggest a general rather than a rigid process and some phases. Importance was equally given to selecting the participants as to deciding on the right methodology for gathering the accounts of their experiences.

Figure 3.1 Outline of research design process

1. Defining research interest
   - State research purpose
   - State research problem
   - Conduct literature review
   - Develop conceptual framework
   - Identify sample population
   - Develop interview protocol

2. Collecting and organising data
   - Invite participants to research
   - Revise protocol
   - Schedule interview appointments
   - Conduct interviews
   - Transcribe interviews
   - Verify interview transcripts

3. Conducting analysis and presenting findings
   - Conduct first level interpretive analysis to capture the essence of the story
   - Develop thematic patterns from interview transcripts
   - Address research questions
   - Compare analysis to relevant literature
   - Present conclusions
3.4 Sample

Criterion sampling was used in this research for selecting research participants. It is the method of selecting participants for phenomenological research, which is the process of choosing participants who meet specific criteria. It was essential that the participants had experienced some workplace inequality since this research was focused on this phenomenon (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). With that in mind, it was the original intent that participants in this research met the following criteria:

- Thai female middle managers or executives in corporate settings operating on one to three levels from the corporate CEO.
- At the time of the interview, they would still function in those leadership roles.
- They would make themselves available to participate in the interviews.
- They would grant permission for the researcher to conduct the interviews.

Based on Creswell’s (1998) recommendation for the sample size of phenomenological studies, it was also the original intention of this research to contact 30 participants with the goal of identifying approximately 20 participants willing and able to participate in this research. The process of identifying potential participants who met the criteria was relatively easy. However, securing their participation in the study was difficult. What quickly appeared was the challenge that commonly occurs to researchers attempting to interview managers and executives—inaccessible time and availability. After reaching out to 30 corporate managers and executives in big companies in Bangkok, 18 granted permission for an interview. It became clear that although individuals wanted to be part of the research, their schedules were not always as accommodating. The researcher needed to work on time and place to suit some of those executives because of their interesting experiences. Participants in this research came from corporate and non-profit sectors and a more in-depth description of them is presented in the next chapter.

The organisations from which the managers were selected and randomly chosen were within the public and private sectors across all major industrial divisions. Where possible within each organisation, female managers were chosen from similar management levels on the basis that they were achieving managers who were
interested in promotion. In order to focus specifically on promotion in management, professionals working in their own profession, self-employed managers and supervisors were excluded from the study unless they were a result of gender inequality and chose to be their own boss or a view of entering into a management area was not on their mind because of this gender issue.

3.5 Methods for Data Collection

This section provides a description of the data collection method used in gathering the participants’ stories and gaining insight into their understanding of their experiences. This research consisted of a qualitative research study that drew on a phenomenological tradition. It applied descriptive semi-structured questions that followed Seidman’s (1988) three-part, in-depth interview protocol, which was adapted to suit each participant’s limited time and availability. Seidman’s approach guides interviewers to use primarily open-ended questions. While open-ended interviews offer an exploratory approach to uncovering information, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue that the approach can just as easily result in a shift from the original focus of the research. The purpose of this research was to have the participants reconstruct their experience within the topic under investigation, which in this instance is leading at an executive level and as such, this research modified recommendation and applied a semi-structured interview protocol. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask the same general questions of all participants while allowing participants the flexibility to drive where emphasis ought to be placed in their own narrative (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

As Seidman (1998) recommended, the first part of this interview aimed at establishing rapport and gathering the individual’s life story. The second part of the interview aimed at allowing participants to reconstruct the details of their lives by focusing on tasks and activities that comprise their responsibilities for the role. The goal of the third part of interview was to guide participants through the process of reflecting on the meaning their experience holds for them. In addition, the interview also included an opening question aimed at creating an atmosphere where participants could feel comfortable with the interview process and be able to share
personal experiences. As the data collection process began in August 2012, participants were reminded that their involvement in the research was entirely voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time during the interview. A pilot study was important to this study in the way it helped refine the interview process. Seidman (1998) suggests that pilots are used by the researcher in order to reflect on and revise the data collection methods. Given the limited number of individuals who met the participant criteria for this research study, as mentioned earlier, and given the emerging nature of the interviewing process in this research, only one pilot was conducted.

Moustakas (1994) points out that phenomenological research often produces extensive data and that the reduction of such data helps to organise enormous amounts of information into manageable bits. Data were reduced into categories and themes and stored electronically as well as in hard copy with each participant’s interview transcript. The purpose of qualitative studies is to describe a phenomenon from the participants’ points of view through interviews and observations (Orb et al., 2001). The intention of the researcher is to listen to the voice of participants or observe them in their natural environments. The researcher’s interpretation of these experiences is usually described as an emic perspective (Field and Morse, 1992).

The sample consisted of a total of 18 female managers occupying middle and senior managerial positions in medium to large (greater than 100 employees) organisations. The shortage of women managers in some industrial sectors meant that the numbers were supplemented by personal referral in a few cases. Interviews were conducted according to a semi-structured format using open-ended questions that encouraged wide-ranging as well as further discussion on the topic.

The data collection used an alternative approach, which is often found in qualitative research, and that is to use systematic, non-probabilistic sampling. The purpose is not to establish a random or representative sample drawn from a population but rather to identify specific groups of people who either possess characteristics or live in circumstances relevant to the social phenomenon being studied (Mays and Pope, 1995). With the approach, the researcher can identify participants with a particular aspect of behaviour relevant to the research. It also allows carefully inclusion of a
wide range of types of participants and also selection of key participants with access to important sources of knowledge. This sampling is called ‘theoretical sampling’. It is a specific type of non-probability sampling in which the objective of developing theory or explanation guides the process of sampling and data collection. In this process, the researcher makes and initial selection of informants; collects, codes and analyses the data; and produces a preliminary theoretical explanation before deciding which further data to collect and from whom. Once these data are analysed, refinements are made to the theory, which may in turn guide further sampling and data collection (Mays and Pope, 1995).

Before conducting the interviews, a consent form was sent to the participants consisting of the participants’ rights during the interview so that they knew what their rights were and what protected them. Further, they could stop the interview anytime if they felt uncomfortable due to physical and mental condition without giving any reasons. The acceptance of the statement meant the researcher recognised that participants were independent people who share information willingly (Orb et al., 2001). However, the interviewees had rights to ask the researcher to omit some parts of the interviews, which could affect their reputations, law and the organisation’s image. A list of questions were also sent with the consent form in order to help justifying their decisions whether they wanted to give an interview or denied it. It could also help preparing the relevant and proper answers for the research.

The interviews were recorded by mp3 player in combination with a note-taking method in individuals’ private offices or where interviewees saw suitable. The advantages of note-taking and recording sound clips were the researcher could list the key points of the interviews and repeat the recordings to make the most efficient data analysis. The open-ended questions used offered the chance for the interviewer to ask further clarification on the interviewees’ answers and observe true feelings and reactions of the interviewees in order to comprehend the attitutes and answers more efficiently. The final question of the list was a closed question. This helped the researcher to conclude the exact intention of the interviewees and ask directly if the female executives thought there was a glass ceiling in their organisations or not.
3.6 Methods for Data Analysis and Synthesis

Data analysis proved to be one of the more challenging phases of this qualitative research. Berg (2004) notes that during the analysis phase, a researcher can expect to be deeply submerged in data of a tremendous quantity, and so to reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed, the data analysis process occurred concurrently with data collection for each participant (Creswell, 1998; Maxwell, 2005). In many forms of qualitative research data, the raw data are collected in a relatively unstructured form such as tape recordings or transcripts of conversations. The main ways in which qualitative researchers ensure the reliability of analyses is in maintaining accurate records of interviews and observations and by documenting the process of analysis in detail.

The audio recordings of participants’ narratives were transcribed to more than 100 pages of raw data for analysis. The data were compared against the original recordings for accuracy. Participants were grouped into four big groups by their similar opinions. Phenomenological analysis allowed the research to identify from common themes or phenomena that emerged from these experiences (Creswell, 1998). This approach provided the final lens through which the participants’ experiences were examined and the themes, the issues and the ideas allowed to emerge. The analysis for this research was informed loosely by the coding approach of Miles and Huberman (1994).

During the first phase of analysis, the researcher reduced some collected data for the ease of listening and re-reading the interview transcripts to identify important statements and themes. The themes were incorporated into an inclusive description of the meaning of the phenomena and shared with participants in order to confirm the meanings of their experience and then provide an opportunity for feedback regarding the quality and authenticity of the results.
3.7 Validity and Reliability

This research sought to understand the meaning that Thai female managers and executives derived from their experienced. In doing so, it was important to ensure that the research sought to avoid judgements regarding its authenticity and accuracy (Berg, 2009) and remained both valid and reliable (Creswell, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Validity in qualitative research is defined as the extent to which the data are credible and reliable (Creswell, 1998; Maxwell, 2005) and can be defended when challenged. As stated before, validity addresses the concern of whether the research findings are accurate, therefore, in order to achieve this accuracy, the interviewers were digitally recorded and transcribed and the interview transcript was subsequently compared against the original recording for validation. A final measure that this research applied to ensure validity was based on Seidman’s (1998) suggestion that the researcher ensure there was consistency throughout the various pieces of each participant’s narrative. To that extent, the research read each transcript and found consistencies that suggested the accounts of their experiences were in fact valid.

With regard to reliability, Maxwell (2005) describes it as the degree to which the results are an accurate representation of the participants under study. In other words, a primary concern with research reliability is the likelihood of obtaining the same data and arriving at the same results, if the research were to be repeated. Phenomenological research requires individuals’ ability to reflect on and make meaning of their experiences. Husserl (as cited in Moustakas, 1994) argues that it is important to revisit and re-look at one’s experience. Brew (1996) points out that revisiting one’s experiences provides an opportunity to gain a better knowledge or understanding of the experiences and allows the possibility of seeing them differently. Also, it allows the researcher to re-think and revise our perspectives and the way we think of our experiences.

As such, the emphasis on this research must be in the same direction as on the data collected and specifically on the events that mark these managers’ experiences, rather than the way they make meaning of those experiences. The research applied
external audits (Creswell, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994) to ensure its rigor and reliability. The researcher invited two disinterested third-parties to audit the interview transcripts with the hope of identifying emergent themes. Feedback from third-parties further verified the reliability of the data.

3.8 Research Limitations

One limitation of this research, which is also common to a phenomenological approach, is that the main source of data was participants’ self-reports. This research sought to understand participants’ belief, perceptions and feelings about their gender inequality experiences. Maxwell (2005) asserts that this realist approach, which is based on informants’ beliefs and feelings, is just as valid as those approaches that are quantified. The nature of qualitative research makes it unreasonable to include large numbers of participants. A large number size might have added a convincing case for generalising the research findings. However, due to the nature of this inquiry, this research makes no attempt to generalise these results to other Thai female managers and executives outside Bangkok.

This research is limited by the expected outcome of using a specific methodology. This research is not a psychological analysis, nor is it intended to develop or produce strategies for becoming managers or executives in organisations. A qualitative research of this nature can be quite demanding and imposing on the sample population, especially given their role and level of responsibility. The research relies quite heavily on one-on-one interviews that make demands on individuals’ time. Individuals are asked to give of their time and answer questions about their experiences and the meaning they make of those experiences with a researcher with whom they have little personal knowledge. As such, this research requires participants who are willing to give of their time to speak of their experiences and take part in this research. Given these factors, this research may contain an inherently positive bias towards the type of participants who actually participated in research of this nature.
Finally, as the primary instrument in this study, the researcher is a Thai female herself and had the potential of intervening with personal perceptions and blinding herself to certain observations. Validity and reliability checks were used to diminish the effects of this research bias.

3.9 Methods for Assuring Protection of Human Subjects

As Berg (2009) points out, the nature of qualitative inquiry is such that it causes researchers to investigate the lives of their participants, and as such, there is an ethical obligation to protect the rights, privacy and welfare of the individuals in the research. The researcher obtained approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) to interview the participants. Participants were also assured that their names would be withheld from the final report, and to that end, aliases were used to protect their identities. Phenomenological research places emphasis on statements, themes or phrases that recur in participants’ narratives, since these are useful in describing the essence of their experience. However, in keeping with protecting the participants’ identities, unique identifiers were omitted except where critical to the telling of the story. In such cases, the participants granted permission to include such stories.

Informed consent (see Appendix A) was another ethical element aimed at ensuring that participants received sufficient information about the study prior to their participation and protecting participants from any consequences resulting from taking part in the research. Prior to participation and as recommended by several sources (Berg, 2009; Kantonwits et al., 2001), the researcher ensured that participants received full information about all aspects of the research study, including the purpose of the study, the intended use of data and requirements of study participation that would likely influence their willingness to participate. As such, successive communication with participants was aimed at providing written information of the real purpose and nature of the research study with a request for their written consent indicating their willingness to participate.
According to Berg (2009), retaining the research’s integrity by way of providing accurate findings and analysis easily supported by the data collected is part of the process of protecting the participants. The original recording of each interview was stored along with electronic and hard copy transcripts of the interviews, as well as documentation, such as informed consent, that was essential to the participants’ participation. Ethical issues are existent in any kind of research. The research process generates pressure between the aims of the research to make overviews for the good of others and the right of participants to maintain privacy. Ethics concerns doing good and avoiding harm and conflicts. Harm and conflicts can be prevented or reduced through the application of suitable ethical principles. Therefore, the protection of human subjects or participants in any research study is vital (Wiles et al., 2006).

The nature of ethical problems in qualitative research is sensitive and different compared to problems in quantitative research (Orb et al., 2001). For instance, potential ethical conflicts exist in regard to how a researcher gains access to a community group and in the effects the researcher may have on participants. Qualitative researchers focus their research on exploring, examining and describing people and their natural environments. On the other hand, Batchelor and Briggs (1994) claimed that the failure of researchers to address ethical issues has resulted in those researchers being ill prepared to cope with the unpredictable nature of qualitative research. Included in qualitative research are the concepts of relationships and power between researchers and participants. The desire to participate in a research study depends upon a participant’s willingness to share his or her experience. Qualitative studies are frequently conducted in setting involving the participation of people in their everyday environments. Thus, any research that includes people requires an awareness of the ethical issues that may be derived from such interactions (Orb et al., 2001).
3.10 Summary

This study undertook qualitative research on the phenomenon of Thai female managers’ experiences in their career progress. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 Thai female managers.
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.0 Introduction

All countries have unique cultures, and so the experiences of women around the world are unique in experiencing their life relevant to their gendered status. The participants in this research shared new information as to the experiences of a group of accomplished women in service and manufacturing industries in Thailand. Common themes related to hard work, confidence, excellence, disparity, the responsibility that they associate with their leadership role, issues related to loneliness, emotional distress and concerns regarding the future of the next generation of leaders. The women in this research spoke of forming their own philosophy of leadership and management strategies, described their self-image and discussed the personal cost associated with their career choice and contradictions in their leadership and career aspirations. With humour and passion and in some cases a hint of disappointment, 20 professionals shared a part of their story. The findings from this research, which will be expanded throughout this chapter, suggest that Thai female managers’ experiences touch on themes of learning and building knowledge, their perception of their career opportunity, the importance of their relationships and the role of identity.

The aim of the study is to contribute to the limited stock of large-scale empirical studies examining in detail how occupational sex segregation in the labour market affects female workers’ career advances. Existing studies tend to focus on the presumed relative advantages faced by women working in male-dominated fields. In the current study, the analytical perspective is examined by women’s career opportunities in various sex-segregated occupational contexts, therefore studying potential gender disproportionateness in the consequences of minority and majority status. First, the idea that employment in male-dominated occupations can be seen as a barrier for women who aspire to within-organisation ascending of their career mobility. Second, the general applicability of gender promotion gaps, especially wide in male-dominated lines of work, as minority women in such labour market
contexts are subject to particularly contrary treatment. The latter assumption can be seen as a variant of the commonly discussed glass ceiling hypothesis.

In most of the literature, the term glass ceiling tends to be conceived as qualitative entities preventing women from reaching peak hierarchical positions in the labour market. However, during recent years, some scholars have come to treat the glass ceiling as a matter of degree rather than as a contradiction, and analyses have been extended from focusing on mobility to top positions only to examining upward job mobility in a more general sense. As indicated above, the share of existing research on occupational sex segregation and gender inequality in promotion chances is based on case studies. An obvious strength of case studies is that they allow for detailed investigations of the nature of actual job ladders and internal labour market arrangements. However, for the purpose of generalising knowledge to a broader labour market context, findings from analyses based on large-scale data are more useful. The current study makes use of a cross-cultural comprehensive longitudinal data set that allows for empirical assessment of career effects of occupational sex segregation in the Thai labour market as a whole.

The data set allows analysis of multiple job shifts for each individual. An obvious strength of analysing repeatable events is that promotion chances can be seen in light of employees’ mobility behaviour during earlier periods of working life. Studies of effects of cumulative events in individuals’ career attainment are limited in number due to the common lack of data permitting such analyses. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, no previous large-scale empirical studies have analysed effects of earlier mobility behaviour on women’s promotion opportunities in occupations with varying sex composition in Thailand. It should be pointed out that both the glass escalator proposition and the glass ceiling proposition rest on notions of discriminatory processes, positive as well as negative, taking place within the workplace. In similarity with most other large-scale data founding the basis for studies of gender inequality in the labour market, the current data set cannot measure these processes directly. Instead, individual-level and occupational-level data will be used to evaluate the applicability of the main predictions derived from the glass ceiling proposition and from the interpretation of the glass ceiling proposition. The sorting of men and women into different lines of work is a forceful and practically
all-embracing feature of the labour markets, as we know them. If the allocation of men and women to different labour market structures were unrelated to systematic disparities in opportunities and rewards, no one would treat sex segregation as a genuine problem of inequality. Furthermore, this research would never have existed.

People who have similar individual career-relevant resources but work in different kinds of occupations tend to face different opportunities structures in terms of career and wage growth. One clear-cut indicator of the sex segregation labour market is that typically male occupations generally offer greater advancement opportunities than do mainly female occupations. Sex segregation in the labour market is best conceived as being brought about by a multitude of mechanisms. Some have to do with individuals’ endowments, acquired qualifications, and preferences, whereas others pertain to gender-differentiated treatment in the labour market. Also self-selection plays a substantial role in sorting men and women into different occupations. For example, women’s educational choices show strong and lasting systematic disparities. People form their future labour market plans partly on the basis of what is socially appropriate and feasible to aspire to given their gender. The sex-segregated character of the surrounding labour market and changes thereof in turn influences these beliefs, in many instances stereotyped. People’s preferences and choices tend to change when opportunity structures in the labour market change. However, it is practically impossible to establish a clear-cut casual order between preferences and opportunity structures and consequently, they should be treated as dynamically interdependent.

4.1 Gender Inequality in Thailand

As a first step, in order to provide a context for the interviews, gender inequality in Thailand is evaluated using various related measures to check whether there exists an inequality between Thai women and men.
4.1.1 Indices Relating to Gender Inequality in Thailand

The following are the various indices that measure the gender inequality in Thailand. The value of HDI range between 0 to 1, with 0 being 0 per cent human development and 1 being 100 per cent human development in a country.

Table 4.1 HDI in Thailand

|                         |  
|-------------------------|----------
| **HDI for Thailand (2012)** | 0.690    
| **Inequality-adjusted HDI value for Thailand (2012)** | 0.543  
| **Inequality-adjusted education index**     | 0.491  
| **Inequality-adjusted life expectancy index** | 0.768  
| **Inequality-adjusted income index**        | 0.424  
| **Loss due to inequality in life expectancy (%)** | 10.1  
| **Loss due to inequality in education (%)**  | 18.0  
| **Loss due to inequality in income (%)**     | 34.0  
| **Inequality-adjusted HDI value**            | 0.543  

The IHDI will be equal to the HDI value when there is no inequality, but falls below the HDI value as inequality rises. The difference between the HDI and the IHDI represents the ‘loss’ in potential human development due to inequality and can be expressed as a percentage.

The values of GII range between 0 to 1, with 0 being 0 per cent inequality, indicating women fare equally in comparison to men, and 1 being 100 per cent inequality, indicating women fare poorly in comparison to men.
Table 4.2 GII for Thailand (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population with at least secondary education, female: male ratio</td>
<td>0.759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour force participation rate, female: male ratio</td>
<td>0.797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shares in parliament, female-male ratio</td>
<td>0.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GII</td>
<td>0.360</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The value of GGI range between 0 to 1, with 0 being 0 per cent equality, indicating women fare poorly in comparison to men, and 1 being 100 per cent equality, indicating women fare equally in comparison to men.
Table 4.3 Global GGI for Thailand (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Gap Subindexes</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Participation and Opportunity</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.699</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour force participation</td>
<td>0.830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage equality for similar work (survey)</td>
<td>0.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated earned income (PPP US$)</td>
<td>0.620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislators, senior officials and managers</td>
<td>0.310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and technical workers</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Attainment</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.989</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy rate</td>
<td>0.960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in primary education</td>
<td>0.990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in secondary education</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in tertiary education</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health and Survival</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.980</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex ratio at birth (female:male)</td>
<td>0.940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy life expectancy</td>
<td>1.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Empowerment</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.090</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in parliament</td>
<td>0.190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in ministerial positions</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years with female head of state (last 50)</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GGI</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.689</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Global GGI report 2013, World Economic Forum

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the gender inequality in Thailand, in particular, for legislators, senior officials and managers, is about 0.69, indicating women fare about 69 per cent equally in comparison to men.
4.2 Analyses of Data Collection

The 20 participants for the interview were recruited using a snowball sample. They both worked in organisations for quite a long time, with job titles ranging from vice president to entry-level management positions. Their ages ranged from 30 to 60. All were college graduates and three had graduate degrees. Data, then, were analysed using basic descriptive information and statistics and a multi-step content analysis methodology.

4.2.1 In-depth Interview Procedures

Using the snowball sample method, the researcher recruited women who met the criteria in the categories. Further, the researcher attempted to recruit women from a variety of class background and different organisations to address the issue of gender inequality. Of the resulting interview participants, three were never married, one was married but no children and one of the women was divorced. The remaining were married to men and had children at the time of interview.

Interview participants were recruited using job titles and levels of experience to fill a set of specific question sections. The first section asked for general demographic information about participants. The next section asked about job title and main responsibilities. Number of years of work experience was also mentioned in this section. The researcher followed prior similar research, which has shown that most women in management do not encounter issues of discrimination until after the first five years in the field (Wright et al., 1991). Job title was included in this second category as it helped the researcher to determine level of responsibilities of participants. Job titles included non-manager or first level management; middle management ranging upward to levels just below officers, partners or owner; and owners, CEOs or managing partners. These three categories of titles represented the three levels commonly found in management department in corporate settings. Keeping record of the number of job titles categories to three also kept the total number of interviews to a reasonable level. Based on job titles and responsibilities, 20 separate participant profiles were created.
Table 4.4 Participants’ profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job title</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years in current position</th>
<th>Management level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Front Office Manager</td>
<td>31–35</td>
<td>3–5</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Executive Housekeeper</td>
<td>46–50</td>
<td>5–10</td>
<td>Top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vice President of Accounting Department</td>
<td>56—60</td>
<td>15–20</td>
<td>Top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Assistant Vice President of Human Resource Department</td>
<td>51–55</td>
<td>15–20</td>
<td>Top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Vice President of Customer Service Department</td>
<td>51–55</td>
<td>15–20</td>
<td>Top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Assistant Vice President of Accounting Department</td>
<td>56—60</td>
<td>15–20</td>
<td>Top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Vice President of Accounting Department</td>
<td>56—60</td>
<td>15–20</td>
<td>Top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Manager of Insurance Unit</td>
<td>41–45</td>
<td>5–10</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Assistant Manager for Broker Service Department</td>
<td>36–40</td>
<td>5–10</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Assistant Manager for Aviation Insurance Department</td>
<td>36–40</td>
<td>5–10</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Director of Public Relations Department</td>
<td>56—60</td>
<td>15–20</td>
<td>Top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Director of Human Resource Department</td>
<td>46–50</td>
<td>10–15</td>
<td>Top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Director of Employee Assistance Fund Division</td>
<td>46–50</td>
<td>15–20</td>
<td>Top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Director of Employee Benefit Division</td>
<td>46–50</td>
<td>10–15</td>
<td>Top</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Research Results

The results of this study are summarised in three sections that parallel the research questions: demographic information, job title and main responsibilities and career aspirations.

4.4 Section One: Demographic Information

Section one of the interview addressed the background of the female managers in the study. The study participants were asked questions related to their educational background, such as degrees attained, factors in school, additional education and training and subjects needing more emphasis in their education.

4.4.1 Degrees Attained and Factors in School

All 20 participants earned a bachelor degree in related fields of management. Ten of the study participants identified factors in school that assisted them in becoming interested in management: took management related subjects in college, participated in internships/co-operative education programs in college and were exposed to management related subjects in college. The study participants became interested in the management related subjects through their college time. They felt that they had positive learning experiences during there that which positively impacted their
attitude towards a corporate world. In addition to their college degrees and experiences, all of the study participants had obtained additional education and training to further their knowledge. The five subjects area most frequently pursued for additional knowledge included: leadership/executive development, project management, management development, technical skills and finance.

Table 4.5 Degrees earned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degrees earned</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor and Master Degree</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree only</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1 Degrees earned among participants

The findings reveal that the additional education and training obtained by the participants mostly related to leadership, business, technical skills and interpersonal skills. Education and training mostly took place through the participants companies, educational institutions, professional organisations and conferences.
Table 4.6 Additional training obtained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education and training</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical skills</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Management</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2 Additional training obtained

Although 15 of the study participants indicated that their education prepared them adequately for their careers, all 20 participants mentioned subject areas they would have liked to have emphasised more in their education. The six subject areas most frequently mentioned by the study participants as needing more emphasis in their education included: business management, interpersonal management (e.g., communication skills, human relations), presentation skills, finance, computers and negotiation.
Table 4.7 Subjects areas needing more emphasis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Negotiation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Computer</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Finance</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Presentation skills</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Interpersonal management (e.g., communication skills, human relations)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Business management</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.3 Subjects areas needing more emphasis

The majority of the subject areas identified by the participants related to business, interpersonal and technical skills. In addition, the participants indicated that they would have liked to obtain an MBA, so that they would have had a stronger business background. They felt that having a strong understanding of business would have assisted them in applying to management in a more knowledgeable way. Fifteen of the participants also felt that because new and young faces have entered this
management world, to be successful and stay in this area long enough, they need to continue learning throughout their career.

4.5 Section Two: Job Title and Main Responsibility

4.5.1 Work History and Training

Section two questions addressed the work history and the development of the women in management and executive positions. The work history of the study participants section addressed acquisition of current positions and job responsibilities. Study participants were asked to identify the positions they have held throughout their profession careers, starting with their current position title. The current position titles of the study participants included: front office manager, director of public relations, executive housekeeper, director of HR, vice president broker of broker business unit, vice president and assistant for vice president of accounting department, director for benefit department for labour and social security department and independent business woman.

Figure 4.4 Number of job changes

Eighteen of the study participants have not changed positions since finishing their college or university degree. This means that they entered their current organisation soon after they finished their college degree. In this group, they started from the very beginning and made their way up to the top. The rest of the study participants have
changed positions maximum once or twice during their career. The major reason for changing positions was because of a promotion. Other minor reasons included: relocated, company separated the division, company was bought by another company, moved into a different business unit and moved into a different field. When asked about acquisition of current position, participants in the banking department acquired their current positions due to a particular examination set by the bank. The other half of the study participants acquired their current positions due to being approached by others (e.g., supervisor, CEO, vice president, director, recruiting firm). The participants who acquired their current positions by being approached by others indicated that in order to advance, support and recognition from management is needed.

According to the study participants, through their work, they continuously develop and implement strategies and improve the effectiveness of cost efficiency and profitability of their corporations. In addition to the responsibilities of participants in management areas, all of them have direct supervision over employees, which range from supervisors to project managers. The number of hours that the participants worked in an average workweek ranged from 40 to 60 hours. The majority of the study participants worked only on weekdays. On only rare occasions did they have to come and work on Saturdays if there were any urgent projects.

To address the area of development, the study participants were asked questions related to age when deciding to pursue a career in management, factors influencing career choice, career plans and areas needing improvement. The age study participants were when they first decided to pursue a career in management ranged from 20 to 25 years. The majority of the participants decided to pursue a career when they first got their job at their current organisation.

When asked about factors influencing career choice of the study participants, the most frequent factors given by the participants that influenced their choice to enter a career in the management field included: many different job opportunities, challenging field, interesting and high salary field. Several study participants were influenced to enter a career in the management field because they thought they did
not have a choice. Once they joined in, they fell in love with it and would like to pursue a career in this field. One particular study participant added:

I want to become a CEO of a company in the near future because I just want to know how it feels to be at the top and able to see things from every angle.

The study participants were asked if they had a career plan when they started their careers. Eighteen of the study participants did not and only two of the participants did have a career plan. The most frequent reasons given by the participants for not having a career plan when they started their careers included: not aware of their career options, did not have a future career focus, did not know career planning was important, lack of role models and had no context for career planning in the business world. One study participant who did not have a career plan stated:

When I started school, I chose accounting because it would be easier to get a job anywhere but I did not have a career plan beyond obtaining my degree and a good job that pays me enough for a living. Most likely, I never dreamed to become a manager because I knew that it would take a great deal of my energy to do it. So I just think that this might keep me from developing a career plan and dreaming further.

Another participant who also did not have a career plan explained:

I did not have a career plan or any role models. I did not know or was aware of any women in top level in organisations. As I reached new level in my career, which was sort of step-by-step, I realised my potential and where I could go in my career.

Eighteen of the study participants who did have a career plan when they started their career indicated that it was self-generated with help and assistance from a parent(s) and/or from managers who took an interest in their career progression. These individuals provided encouragement, support and advice on how to move forward in their career.
The study participants were also asked to identify the areas they think they need to improve in order to continue to progress in their careers. The areas most frequently mentioned by the participants as needing to improve in order to continue to progress in their careers included: interpersonal/social/communication skills, business skills, financial planning/management/investment, dealing with company policies, strategic planning and risk taking. The one area most frequently mentioned by study participants as needing to improve in order to continue to progress in their careers was interpersonal/social/communication skills. The study participants indicated that they needed to learn to communicate their thoughts and opinions to their executive groups in a more confident and effective way. They also needed to work on being more social within their companies and interacting and having conversations with certain influential people in the organisation. Still other participants needed to communicate and work more effectively with people from different cultures and mindsets.

4.6 Section Three: Life Experiences That Have Affected the Career Development of Study Participants

Section three addresses the life experiences that have affected the career development of the study participants. The 20 study participants were asked to identify events that they have encountered in their personal or family life that have hindered their career development and events that they have encountered in their personal or family lives that have been helpful to their career development. The study participants were also asked to identify personal sacrifices they had made for their career. Surprisingly, 8 of the participants could not identify events in their personal or family life that hindered their career development. Only 12 of the participants identified events in their personal/family life that hindered their career development.
The three most frequent personal or family life events reported by the study participants included: difficult balancing work and family, slowed down career progression to have children and marriage difficulties. The participants who identified having difficulties balancing work and family indicated that they had too many work and family responsibilities and sometimes they did not have time to accomplish everything effectively. To them, time management was the biggest challenge and trying to do everything well and not feeling guilty if something did not get done.

Table 4.8 Three most frequent personal/family life events hindering career progression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage difficulties</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slowed down career progression to have children</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult balancing work and family</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Five of the study participants also indicated that their careers were slowed down in order to try and have children. They deliberately turned down promotions so that they could reduce their time spent at work, reduce the stress at work and concentrate on trying to start a family. They stated that this slowed their career advancement, but they also indicated this was a conscious choice that they made, without regret. Having marriage difficulties created conflict between work and family for three of the participants. These marriage difficulties sometime resulted because of working tremendous amount of hours, having to relocate or not having time to socialise. Having to manage the effects of marriage difficulties and the demanding requirements of work made it extremely hard for these participants to continue to progress in their careers.
Apart from factors stated to hinder career progression, 10 of the study participants identified events in their personal or family life that helped in their career development. The most frequent personal or family life events reported by the study participants included: supported and encouraging parents, supportive and encouraging spouse, learning the value hard work and good work ethics from parents, parenting and raising children and supporting children. All of the study participants reported that having supportive and encourage parents has had a positive effect and in one case meant having a parent who assisted her in developing good

Table 4.9 Five most frequent supporting personal/family events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting children</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting and supporting children</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning the value of hard work and good work ethics from parents</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive and encouraging spouse</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive and encouraging parents</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.7 Five most frequent supporting personal/family events
work ethics by involving her as a child to work on projects around the house. In other cases, having supportive family or parents meant having parents who encouraged them to do well in school, helped them address personal barriers that they encountered in their lives, encouraged them to take advantage of opportunities that were presented to them and encouraged them to take risks. Participants also mentioned having a supportive and encouraging spouse. These participants indicated that their spouses were extremely influential in their careers and without them it would have been difficult to succeed. One participant explained:

During my newly promoted position, I had a long talk with my husband that this new position would require a lot of time of me at the company. He has been incredibly supportive and has taken more responsibilities at home. I felt grateful that he understood and appreciated his support.

The 15 study participants who were married with children identified that parenting and raising children as having a positive impact on their career development. They indicated that being a parent made them a more balanced person. The lessons they learnt from parenting in their personal life many times extended to their work life. Personal sacrifices made for career were also mentioned by the study participants. The five most frequent personal sacrifices made by the participants included: time spent with family (spouse and children), personal/free time, relocating, social time/friendships and travel too much related to work. Participants stated that the majority of the personal sacrifices made for their careers were made by choice, without regret.
The study participants were also asked to identify major challenges encountered in their career. The six most frequent major challenges reported by the study participants included: work/life balance, extremely difficult/challenging job assignments, dealing with interpersonal/people issues, dealing with company politics, gender discrimination and male dominance in management. The majority of the study participants indicated that balancing work/life responsibilities has been a major challenge in their careers. These participants indicated that it was difficult to achieve balance in work/life when having to put in so many hours at work to succeed in their positions. In many instances, the study participants believed that gender
discrimination was a major challenge in their careers. Several of the participants believed that because they were women, they had advanced more slowly, were not given promotions that they deserved, had to work harder to prove themselves, were not taken seriously or were treated with less respect and were banned from major job assignments across the country.

Table 4.11 Six most frequent major challenges in pursuing a career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major challenges in pursuing a career</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male dominance in management</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender discrimination</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with company politics</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with interpersonal/people issues</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult/challenging job assignments</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/life balance</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.9 Six most frequent major challenges in pursuing a career

Five of the participants indicated working in positions or assignments where meetings in long hours or with clients outside companies were difficult for them as
they had to stay up late and were surrounded by men. They also added that meetings might involve late night drinking with major clients and it was not comfortable for them to do that. However, their supervisors understood the challenge and sometimes told these particular participants not to go to those meeting for their safety. Apart from the challenges mentioned above, the study participants indicated another big challenge, which was male dominance in management. They added that having female role models to look up to and having the opportunity to talk and share the experiences with a female mentor was important for building self-confidence.

4.6.1 Factors That Have Assisted the Career Development of Study Participants

This section also addressed the career development of the study participants. Study participants were asked questions to indicate what the companies they work for have done to help them succeed in their careers. The five most frequent functions performed by the companies to help the participants succeed included: job/career opportunities/challenges (e.g., promoted, challenging assignments), training and development opportunities (e.g., internal and external programs), acknowledged/recognised skills and talents, provided supportive/collaborative work environment and provided mentors (e.g., support, encouragement and guidance).

Table 4.12 Five most frequent functions performed by the companies to help the participants to succeed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function performed by the companies</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provided mentors</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided supportive/collaborative work environment</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledged/recognised skills and talents</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and development opportunities</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job/career opportunities/challenges</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All of the study participants indicated that the companies they had worked for had helped them succeed in their careers by giving them challenging job opportunities, opportunities to develop different skills and advancement/promotional opportunities. In addition, the participants cited training and development opportunities as being helpful to their career development. They also cited opportunities such as leadership programs and other related courses, exposure to professional development conferences, seminars and women professional organisations as being helpful. The participants specified that their companies acknowledged and recognised their skills and talents. They indicated that this type of recognition increased their self-confidence and provided them greater visibility in and outside the company.

All 20 of the participants indicated that their companies provided them with a supportive/collaborative work environment. They indicated that their work environments relied on open, honest communication and the sharing of knowledge and information in all directions. They further specified that the interactions among employees were based on honesty, mutual respect and integrity. Participants also specified that their companies provided them with mentors, who gave them support, encouragement and guidance in their career development.
In addition, the study participants were asked to identify factors that they considered to have been the most important to their career advancement and success in the management field. The findings reveal that all the study participants considered demonstrated competency in the job (produced high quality work), hard work, willingness to take risks, mentors, educational credentials and continuous learning/training/development as the factors most important to their career advancement and success. Further, other factors that were frequently mentioned as important to their career advancement and success in management field included, being flexible/adaptable to change, interpersonal/people skills, focused on success/delivery of results and depth and breadth of knowledge about management and business.

Demonstrating competency on the job, producing high quality work, getting results, being accountable, knowing their job/field, willing to take risk and being consistently outstanding were mentioned by the majority of the participants as prerequisites for a successful management career. One participant said:

You are not going to work hard and put in a 60 plus hour per week, if you are not focus and really motivated.

The participants indicated that they had made job changes that were regarded as exceptionally risky. For instance, a move into an unfamiliar area of department or business, taking on new assignment, a huge leap in responsibility, a transfer into a lower level job that afforded a better shot at advancement or relocating to another area across the country. They reported having a high level of motivation, which was then related to working hard.

4.7 Definition and Presence of a Gender Inequality as Identified Through Factors Contributing to the Glass Ceiling

Although the women in this study sometimes initially disagreed that there is a glass ceiling for women in management, by the end of their interview, many had recalled their own experiences or the experiences of others that suggested otherwise. Experiences of gender inequality might not be similar to those in other parts of the world, but it represented the attitude of relevant people who are in charge of
promotion. This study identified two factors as possible contributors to the glass ceiling for women in management.

4.7.1 Factor 1: Gender Role Socialisation

The first factor contributing to gender inequality for participants in this study was gender role socialisation and resulting perceived gender differences. Women in the interviews connected their gender role socialisation to their later experiences in the workplace. Some women and men do not leave their gender role socialisation at the door when coming to work. One interview participant said that the attitude of a person is a key factor. A person might have a solid attitude and assume that women are helpers and this could restrict how men view women’s capabilities to lead and to manage the bottom line for organisations. At the same time, several women in the study mentioned that women are socialised to accept more limited views of success. They are taught to compromise in the way that they can achieve certain career goals, but only in certain fields or in limited job titles. However, the majority of the participants said otherwise. Gender role socialisation is seen as a role for them. As a manager, they dedicate their time and effort to make sure that their job is completed without flaws. At the same time, their job at home is done as well.

4.7.2 Factor 2: Historical Precedence

The participants in this study made it clear that they believe the cultures of their organisations are the key to the whole perception of women and promotion policies. Women in this study believe that corporate culture and maintenance of men’s power results in several unwritten rules: women are okay to hire, but only for certain types of jobs in certain areas, women will have to work harder than men in order to prove their capabilities, and because women are willing to work harder, they will be given more and more work.
4.8 Final Views from Participants on Inequality

The final research question addressed opinions for overcoming inequality. Women in the study mentioned the following strategies: mentoring, working hard, changing jobs, support from organisations, going out on your own, constant learning, demonstrating competence and efficiency, women taking control of their own futures and creating new cultures, being a problem solver and having patience. They added that women must go beyond basic performance guidelines to figure out the inequality of corporate culture. Working harder is what the women agreed on as the way to get ahead in the corporate world. One said that they have to consistently show exceeding expectations and adapt their working style to suit the culture.

4.9 Discussion

The findings from this study show similarities between female and male managers in terms of their current situation, work history and their perceptions of what has helped their promotional progress and success as a manager. All participants in this research had tertiary level education before or after joining their organisations. They also gathered relevant experiences along the way. However, the major factors perceived by female managers as being obstacles to getting a promotion to management were: direct support and training, personal skills and positive work attitudes. There was more variety in the factors perceived as hindering promotion. A major hindering factor for female managers was organisations’ attitudes to women in a male environment. Pressures on women to out-perform men in equivalent positions in order to be seen as equal is much cited in the literature (see Chapter 2, 2.8), and this is certainly part of the glass ceiling effect.

A number of findings from this study on female managers are quite different to previous findings in the literature:

1. The participants in this study attributed their progress to their own performance when compared with men. They added that other male managers were more likely to be awarded with a promotion if the opportunity came up. The more realistic assessment for these females in this study
showed that the reasons for them succeeding as managers were due to the fact that they were making attributions based on their own and not others’ performance, as well as having invested a lot of time and effort in their performance.

2. The findings showed that 18 of the participants had not had definite plans when they started their career in management or had placed little emphasis on the importance of career plans until a later stage of their life or until their children are old enough to look after themselves. However, they still managed to become successful in their career. These findings suggested that career planning might be of greater benefit to consultants than to the recipients.

3. The popular assumption that women managers have only marginal or casual attachment to their work was not upheld by this study. The participants indicated that work was central to their lives and that any interruptions to paid work were mostly of short duration. The problem of balancing home and work was discussed in the interview sessions; however, it could be argued that the women themselves when deciding that work was central had rectified the balance problem.

There is much to be done for action and reflection than a list of guidelines for engendering governance in restructuring a global political economy. However, certain issues are clear. Management is highly gendered and women’s participation in positions of authority with management structures at all levels is problematic. If one focuses entirely on formal positions of authority, the opportunities for altering this imbalance is minimal. The literature on gender, power and empowerment suggest the need for a different approach, one that acknowledges the fluid, relational and pervasive character of power and the need to interrogate the workings of gender and power at all levels of society. Women who are held hostage in family structures are scarcely going to be able to come together to effect change. Cultural practices that inhibit conscientisation about gender inequality often inhibit the chance that women and empathetic men may understand and feel inspired to act for change. With individual conscientisation and commitment, transformation of national and global management is unlikely.
At the same time, the researcher would like to know more about the other possible factors that enable women and men to press for change, to take the risks involved in fighting for a more gender equity community. Collective and individual actions at the community level, even in the poorest, more remote places, are key building block for engendering management. A political culture that demands gender equity and holds local actors accountable is essential for improved gender relations at all levels. Similarly, the national level is a place where gender, power and governance intersect in many subtle ways. It is not enough to count the number of women working in bureaucracies. It is crucial to understand the many ways women have pressured bureaucracies and political parties for more gender equitable practices and the many ways they have not.

The shortage of women in management is widely reported (Yokongdi, 2005). Therefore, women who enter management positions and aspire to long-term successful careers in management most likely need to attain adequate skills and knowledge through education and training. The findings of this study show that educational credentials were one of the most important factors in the career development/progression of the study participants. All of the study participants have earned a bachelor degree and half of the study participants have earned a master degree. The majority of the participants have earned their degrees in related fields of management. The study participants emphasised that having related business degrees was valuable for understanding the management field and how it relates to the functions of their organisation.

All of the women executives in this study have continued to pursue additional education and training to assist them in their career development and advancement. According to Burke and McKeen (1996), managerial women who participate in greater numbers of education and training activities are more organisationally committed, job satisfied and involved and have higher career prospects. Therefore, education and training seems to be of great importance to the career development of women executives. Constantly learning new things was a major reason given by the study participants for being satisfied with their careers, and being flexible/adaptable to change was mentioned as a factor most important to their career development. The
continued investment in education and training ensured that the women executives obtained the knowledge required to continue to progress in their careers.

Although the women managers and executives in this study are undoubtedly highly skilled in their area of technical expertise, many of these women indicated a lack of knowledge in business subjects (e.g., accounting, finance, negotiation and business management) and interpersonal skills (human relations, social and communication). Solely having a management background does not seem to be satisfactory for advancing in the management field in business companies. The literature supports this finding by specifying that companies are looking for professionals with a broader background and range of skills, including not only textbook knowledge, but also communication and other interpersonal skills (Wenting, 1997). The importance of teamwork skills are also emphasised, such as the ability to work with others who have diverse educational backgrounds, capacities or talents, values, ethnic backgrounds and cultures, to understand the function of each team member and to respect the strengths and limitations of others. This shifts from requiring workers to possess only sound management knowledge to those who can handle many different job responsibilities and work effectively with many different types of people.

The women participants of this study indicated that continuous, lifelong learning and continuously striving for success was a major factor in their career development. There were challenges/obstacles that they encountered that attributed to unforeseen barriers in their career paths. The feeling of being excluded (being an outsider) was seen as having a negative impact on career development. In addition to exclusion, there were also obstacles such as work/life balance, company politics and non-supportive bosses, which, in this case, were only minor obstacles. Nevertheless, the participants from this study recognised, identified and verbalised that the glass ceiling does in fact exist in their organisations.

Organisations have the opportunity to play a key role in the career development of women in executive positions in management. Organisations can create environments where women have the opportunity to advance, receive equal treatment and access to information and opportunities and remove barriers such as the glass ceiling that might hinder their development and provide support through
role models/mentors. In addition, the challenge of balancing work and family produces barriers for women in executive positions in management. The demands of work coupled with the demands of family can become problematic for some women in executive positions as they seek creative ways to continue maintaining their family structure despite increasing demands and pressures arising from their work. Some of the participants of this study acknowledge that being a woman in an executive position in management often means having to make personal sacrifices (e.g., time with family/spouse/children, personal time, relocation, social time with friends and long work hours) for their career. They did not specifically term these personal sacrifices, however, but saw them more as choices without regret. These choices were seen as necessary in order to progress in their careers and reach executive level positions in management.

Due to the shortage of female executives in most management departments in Bangkok, together with the diversification of management occupations, there are great opportunities for women to enter the management area. However, if the organisations want to attract and retain talented women in their workforce, they must have an understanding of the personal and work environment factors that affect women’s career development in management. The acceptance of women in management as permanent and valuable additions to the executive ranks is a necessary step to the unlocking of their full potential. Once organisations recognise that women are in the workforce to stay, the value of investing in their development will be self-evident. It will then be only a question of how quickly the obstacles to their growth can be removed in order to further their upward mobility and increase productivity. A small number of women, such as the ones in this study, have already achieved a high enough level to demonstrate the contribution women can make. Now it is time to identify and understand their needs and concerns, to address the problems they are facing and to initiate an honest and straightforward analysis of how these problems can be solved. Organisations have it in their power to profit from women’s motivations and aspirations, they can create a climate where men and women can communicate freely and with ease and they can reward the aggressiveness and competitiveness in women and men equally. Ultimately, they will find that the time spent on this effort will be worthwhile compared to losing their talents, contributions and potential entirely.
4.10 Implications of Findings

The research provides a glimpse into the psychology at work in experiencing inequality in terms of gender. If the inequality creates conflict for women in the workplace and if they wish to continue to work in that environment, then they must deal with and resolve this disagreement in some way. This study attempts to begin the formation of a new perspective relative to experiences of participants for a way to better understand gender inequality in Thai society. The women in this study were asked about their journey to where they are now. Questions related to gender inequality were asked, however the majority of the participants felt that they have been treated fairly by their organisations. The theory of an adaptive approach can explain this finding. Both men and women are led to believe that things are improving for women because women truly have all the qualities needed for the job at the same level as men. For women, an adaptive strategy such as patience is not only preferable, but also very useful.

The challenge for this gender inequality research in management is to keep the issue on the research agenda. The very forces working to minimise concerns about the inequality help to include this topic in other related research interests and workplace concerns. Gender inequality is still very real, especially in management areas, and is a hidden phenomenon. Gender researchers in feminism must continue to work hard to develop new theories that help to explain why gender inequality still persists. The next generation of feminist scholars have a special obligation to carry on gender research in the tradition of those who have paved the way. Universities, foundations and funding sources have a special obligation to support such research to help make a profession that has promised women opportunity one that delivers on that premise.

The lessons of history allow us to learn from the past and to construct a new future. Past experiences, the stories and strategies from struggles for gender equality at all levels can inspire action as well as warn against easy promises and quick fixes. For example, gender mainstreaming is often presented as the solution for more gender equitable management. The lessons of the past call for critical assessment and in-depth analysis of the successes and limitations of this solution. Moreover, a more
fluid, relational notion of power also helps to move beyond simply counting numbers of women in institutions to a more creative and distinctive evaluation of policies such as gender mainstreaming (Gibb, 2001; O’Brien et al., 2000). Often empowerment happens in unexpected and apparently trivial ways. Yet, it can make a difference.

Globalising issues of management, as well as networking globally to challenge institutional policies within the local or national space, are also critically important elements in the struggle for women’s empowerment. Some women have gained opportunities and power through their position in the global economy. Their skills and connections have provided an avenue of advancement. Yet many women are stumbling in an increasingly competitive world economy, their lack of skills and connections is leaving them even further behind. Efforts to empower women that ignore the way women are situated in an increasingly global world economy are bound to fail (Rai, 2002, 2000). Some can challenge global restructuring on their own. Others must work together in groups and some need assistance to discover both their own knowledge and ways of mobilising to effect change.

Nevertheless, none of these efforts can be understood separately. Gender struggles occur in many places—in the home or in the community, in institutions such as the media, schools and churches or temples, in the workplace and in national and global structures. While the limits on personal and institutional energies often constrain action to particular arenas, it is essential that all efforts to challenge gender hierarchies understand the multi-levelled nature of the struggle. Only then will we begin to discover ways to bring about more gender equitable, accountable management structures and practices at all levels of society. This is a challenge facing all of us who believe that governance that ignores gender equity is not an acceptable strategy for achieving a fairer, more accountable world.

The research suggests that, overall, women’s unequal workplace experiences result because women are crossing over laid-out ideological boundaries of which sphere is appropriate for women and which sphere is appropriate for men. Women’s unequal workplace experiences cannot be reduced to women’s and men’s differential gender identity and consciousness, how they do gender or how institutions constrain them to
gender appropriate behaviour. Therefore, this suggests that structural barriers, stereotypical assumptions, individual choice and work/family conflict are broader, power-implicated, ideological forces. The results of this study confirm a statement made by Williams (1995) that gender differences may be a conceptual narrative, but they have very real material consequences on related gendered issues.

One dilemma for this study, which employs gender as the foremost theoretical starting point, is that the categories of race and class are also relevant. Gender is but one social structure that individuals engage in at micro and macro levels within their everyday lives. Women’s and men’s everyday life experiences are also implicated in the social structures of class. Indeed, it is because individual experiences of inequality are also class informed that their experiences of gender in normative constraints are not universal. This study, however, does not adequately represent the intersectional of class and gender. While it is not explicitly stated in the literatures selected for analysis, the emphasis on gender alone as a guiding theoretical viewpoint is a limitation of this paper. On the other hand, the fact that the analysis demonstrates a lack of up-to-date literature that emphasises professional women’s gender and class as factors relevant to their experiences of inequality in the workplace is also strength.

A major finding of this study is that gender as a social structure is constantly being shaped and reshaped in ways that have profound implications for women’s inequality in the workplace. This is especially the case with respect to how our understanding of this problem and our institutional and policy responses to it are shaped by its representation in the literature. Possibly more of the researcher’s theoretical attention needs to be placed at the ideological level of gender as a social structure in the workplace and how it is intermeshing with power plays as key role in the perpetuate of gendered and unequal workplaces, even despite recent efforts at creating equal workplaces through pay equity and family-friendly work policies. Care should be taken in making gender policies and programs sensitive to the unique needs and vulnerabilities of women and men, especially during regional integration and economic intensification, to advance welfare gains and to minimise reversals in opportunities.
The mapping of inequality indicators not only provides a snapshot of where women are in relation to men in the range of development outcomes, but also signifies the range of regional integration policies and programs whose gender impacts need to be anticipated and corrected, where these entrench inequality, disadvantage and exclusion. Trade intensification and regional integration are not gender-neutral. This makes a strong case for gender analysis to be as robust as the usual socio-economic methodologies used to measure benefit incidence and welfare gains. While the foremost challenge is to formulate and implement appropriate gender-informed policies and programs, there is a strong case to prompt Thailand and other Asian countries to commit to common gender indicators to track women’s advancement in the region. Access to regular, adequate and reliable gender information is necessary to inform policy dialogue and enrich policy options that uphold gender equality in regional integration.

4.10.1 Practical Implications

One important practical implication of this study is that women in this study find the corporate environment more adaptive to them than the public environment. Management educators should urge young women to start a self-assessment process early in their careers in order to help them better select a workplace that matches their goals. Educators must also address gender role development and its importance in the Asian culture as well as other cultures for comparison with respect to adjustments. Working within the system, supporting non-discrimination legislation or mentoring younger women may provide the means for them to effect change in a satisfying and productive way. The synergy of a more passionate approach combined with a within the system approach may be what ultimately brings about necessary change.

The research strongly suggests that organisations need to understand, recognise and support women’s careers and relationship priorities in order to retain talented professional women. Nevertheless, in this study, it is found that while many organisations may agree on the importance of that support, they often fall short in practice, resulting in a lack of women who reach the higher ranks of management. Better organisational efforts and determination are needed to ensure that women
receive constant coaching, mentoring and support throughout their development as well as have access to organisational resources and relevant opportunities to develop their skills. Further, it is equally important that they are given challenging assignments and, most importantly, are acknowledged for their unique talents and contributions. It is essential that organisations match resources to women’s changing needs in order to allow women to continue contributing meaningfully during each step of their careers.

Evidently a critical need for women is a better integration between work lives and non-work lives. Organisations can support this by offering reasonable career paths and options and providing a climate of acceptance and support for the many responsibilities women have and the many choices they face. Organisational policies supportive of women being active contributors in all phases of their lives are vital requirements for facilitating this integration. For instance, women in the pragmatic endurance career phase may need flexible work hours, work arrangements and job restructuring to assist them in mediating the critical stages of many different roles they play in their lives. They also need challenging assignments, mentoring and good management. Without recognition and support for their multiple life roles, they may find themselves unable to fully embrace their work responsibilities. Managers must recognise that the careers of these women are embedded in their larger life contexts and work with each individual to identify the necessary resources that will allow them to do their best work. Organisations that create work environments that do not disadvantage women wanting to lead integrated lives will clearly have a competitive advantage in keeping their most talented employees.
Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction

This chapter puts forward the major conclusions of this research and makes recommendations for practitioners. The growing interest in the study of women in management is triggered by the increasing role that women are perceived to have in the labour market. Over the past few decades, changes in demographic, social and economic forces have resulted in a large increase in the number of women in paid employment around the world. In line with the increasing roles of women in the economy, more women globally are pursuing careers in management (Yukongdi and Benson, 2005; Adler and Izraeli, 1994). Asian countries, including Thailand, are believed to still have high levels of gender issues for women in management. However, evidence and reports on the issues are out-dated and often no longer relevant to the development of the society as a whole.

This qualitative study explored the experiences of a group of accomplished Thai female managers and executives in the management area. The result of this research was to gain an understanding and awareness of their experiences in the form of major themes regarding their sense of wanting to progress in their career, their approach to get there and the way they came to acquire knowledge. The purpose of this research was to investigate whether there was any gender discrimination against women in Thai workplace that would prevent or pose a barrier for them to get into management territory. It is hoped that these findings will inspire women whose career goals are in management and gaining leadership and have a place in HR literature, educational programs and future research.

The experiences of Thai female managers and executives are strongly influenced by a history of female perception in Thai society, the details of which these women in the study have memorised, recalled or are reminded of what they have come to. However, these experiences have served to lay a basic foundation for their courage, belief, survival, values and passion to succeed. They have overcome predicted challenges that come with working at the manager and high executive ranks. This
research recognises that Thai female leadership is in itself a phenomenon that speaks of strong determination, persistence and an abiding belief in their ability to succeed, along with wit, professionalism and conclusive talent.

5.1 Aim of the Research

This study aimed to answer the following research questions shown in Table 5.1 as they relate to the lives of 20 Thai women in management positions.

Table 5.1 Research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The research investigates the following:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do Thai women with high qualification have difficulties in progression to management?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does marriage and taking time off to raise family block Thai women to progress in their career?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are Thai legislative initiatives helped to Thai women in advancing their career through to management levels?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do Thai women think that they will have an equal chance with men to progress through to higher positions in management?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 Experiences of Career Resistance

The participants’ identification specifically with gender and devoutness has a great impact on the quality of their experiences, their understanding of the experiences and their strategies for dealing with these gender experiences. Gender is the most visible part of the managers’ and executives’ identities, but these identities are also the most susceptible to negative perceptions, unjust forces and damaging stereotypes. Depending on organisations and types of work that they are dealing with on a daily basis, experiences in gender issues vary. Women appear to have progressed within their organisations as the proportion of female managers is now in line with the female student intake; however, an inequality in senior positions reliant on gender has been evident (Yukongdi, 2005). This raises the question of whether this
inequality is simply a function of a time delay before women reach the more senior positions. The literature identified the complexity of inter-related barriers of both a contextual and attitudinal nature that might prevent women from reaching the top. It also highlighted societal and organisational changes that could contribute to the breaking-down of the glass ceiling.

The results from this study are discussed in terms of the difficulties in progressing to management, then followed by a consideration of the impact of taking time off to look after family in conjunction with the career progress of the women. Legislative and gender inequality issues, which focus on the traditional family unit, are also incorporated into this discussion in this final chapter.

5.3 Difficulties in Progressing to Management

Societal culture transcends both the societal context in which women function and the societal attitudes and expectations of the female role that underpins female self-perceptions. Societal changes have taken place in relation to women both marrying and having children later in life. The evidence from this study repeats this trend. The younger female managers were getting married and starting their family slightly later than their older colleagues, or younger female managers chose not to have children after marriage or not getting married altogether. The data collected from the interviews with the older women managers in relation to marriage and children support the view that it was necessary to place their personal lives on hold or postpone having a family until they had reached their ultimate career goal. For younger women managers, there was clear evidence that it was possible for them to balance a marriage and a family with a career at the top, which contradicts much of the earlier work in gender within the professional arena.

Some interesting work patterns show differences between older and younger women managers. The younger women were generally less motivated to have career breaks than the older group, who tended to either have a career break or return to work after a very short maternity leave. This suggested that there have been some cultural changes within society, whereby it was far more acceptable for women to return to
work. Taking the full legal maternity leave was no longer regarded as a lack of
commitment on behalf of the female.

Internal and external attitudes and expectations of women stem from children’s
education and upbringing. Societal changes in relation to education, designed to
explore gender images rather than reinforce gender appropriate teachings, have
resulted in improved expectations and career performance of women and blurring of
the traditional gender roles within society (Bower, 2001; Tinken et al., 2001; HESA,
2002). However, parental views have a strong influence on gender interpretations
and if parents act in accordance with their own upbringing, gender stereotyping in
many facilities is reinforced. Consequently, change is likely to take time to solve that
women have minimal expectations, a low view of their own abilities and a fear of
success (Gutner, 2002).

The results from this study support this view as the women who participated in the
interview perceived themselves in a different way to their male colleagues. The
interviewees were generally of the view that managers in their organisations
displayed the same characteristics, irrespective of gender. The self-perception of the
women in this study was commendable as being hard working, loyal and dedicated.
However, some of them, excluding young female managers, lacked the self-viewed
qualities afforded to the males of being confident, ambitious and career oriented.
Despite the changes in the traditional family environment and in education that has
resulted in a change in attitudes and expectations (Blatten-Mink et al., 2000;
Dowding, 2001) and an increase in academic performance (Bower, 2001; Tinken et
al., 2001; HESA, 2002), little progress had been made in respect to women’s self
perceptions. Arguably these changes are likely to take time to progress due to deep
seated parental perceptions, but this is an area where women who have succeeded in
reaching partnership could have a role to play in nurturing and motivating aspirant
female colleagues.

As far as external attitudes of others towards women, the female participants in this
research did not believe that they were treated differently compared to their male
counterparts, although there was evidence of positive modified behaviour in certain
circumstances. Some instances of gender stereotyping were cited, although this
appeared to focus on particular individuals, as opposed to cultural issues within the firms. Issues were highlighted that emanated from problematic and negative cultural issues of women interacting with men within a business context, although the impact of this was diminishing as a younger generation came through the organisation, which will be discussed further under organisation culture.

5.4 Family Commitment Hindrance

The organisational culture is concerned with the demands and expectations associated with the working environment. It underpins the process of promotion and provides the environment in which organisational relationships are developed. Women’s participation in the labour force is increasing worldwide and that the demand for managers in Asia, particularly in Thailand, is increasing dramatically over the past decade (Yukongdi and Benson, 2005). However, much of the research regarding women managers is drawn from developed countries (Omar and Davidson, 2001), and in many cases, does not attempt to place the findings in a wider social, historical and institutional context. Further, the limited research available on Asian women has shown mixed results and is dated. That research showed that more women have moved into management positions, but remained under-represented and disregarded. The individual contributions included in this research have tackled this issue from a variety of perspectives.

5.4.1 Working Environment

The requirement for flexibility by women to fulfil family commitments may interrupt their ultimate career progression (Mavin, 2000). There was evidence of extended working hours for the participants, where 58 per cent of the full-time employees normally worked in excess of 40 hours per week and the larger the size of the office and the higher up the promotion ladder an individual progressed, the greater the likelihood of longer hours. Despite the potential benefits that can accrue to businesses that have attempted to provide an acceptable work-life balance for their staff, generally executives or middle managers have maintained their ‘macho’
culture in respect of long hours, which is problematic for a woman trying to balance career and private life.

5.4.2 Process of Promotion

The literature suggests that women are being pushed into less prestigious, more routine functions of careers and this makes it difficult to demonstrate reasons becoming an executive. However, women partners can reach their ultimate career goal within a restricted functional scale but they need to display a broad range of skills for promotion as opposed to a reliance on technical specialism and knowledge. While many of these more general business skills are not traditionally associated with women, women do display many of these attributes, such as being persuasive, although they also need to have the ability to grow the business through successful business networking and managing (Kirchmeyer, 2002).

5.4.3 Organisational Relationships

Relationships issues within the organisation such as mentoring, networking and lack of role models can also be a problem. Exclusion from the ‘old boy’ network was cited a barrier to progression for women (Davidson and Burke, 1994; Okanlawan, 1994; Linehan et al., 2001), but the majority of the female employees in this study, irrespective of age, did not feel excluded from the social networking within their offices. However, informal male networks that operate within firms are more dominant than informal female ones. Further, potential for developing client relationships can be either miscomprehended or deemed inappropriate and this can also extend to work colleagues. This was one barrier identified out of the participant interviews in respect to gender being a hindrance to career progression.

5.5 Legislations and Career Opportunities for Women

Legislation reform constitutes an important component of any strategy to achieve equality in employment. In all interviews with the participants in this research, questions regarding legislative mechanisms were asked to raise awareness among
women in terms of implementation of such legislation to protect and advance the
position of women in employment. All of the participants thought that legislation
about gender inequality in Thailand had nothing to do with them getting to the point
where they are now. Nevertheless, education towards the value of such legislation
should not be undervalued. Although legislation alone cannot provide a quick
remedy and it can lead to numerous informal methods to avoid the direction of such
legislation, legislation can set a community standard and serves to illustrate what is
acceptable behaviour.

Participants admitted that opportunities were given to them because of their own
qualifications and trust from their supervisors. The first of these opportunities is the
increased access to education. Yukongdi (2005) notes the significant increase in
women undertaking tertiary level studies in Thailand over the past 30 years and this
parallels the increased number of women occupying managerial positions. Other
opportunities were the increased marketisation of childcare and domestic work.
Although traditionally in Asia, especially in Thailand, some domestic help came
from members of the family or through a system of private domestic support (i.e.,
paid nannies or recruiting help), most participants with children identified the
problems concerning the division of domestic labour and the role expectations
placed on women. Outside assistance could not solve all these problems and would
impose additional costs on women. On the other hand, the increased range of
governmental and organisational support mechanisms will go some way to assisting
women to establish a more reasonable balance between work and family
responsibilities. Further, the conflict women experience between their domestic and
professional responsibilities will only be alleviated when more significant social and
attitudinal change occurs within society (Omar and Davidson, 2001).

Legislative changes may lead to an improved situation as will women’s increased
education levels, sectoral shifts in the economy, changing approaches to HR
management and a growing awareness of the insufficiencies and sub-optimal levels
of organisational performance created by gender inequality. Until there are major
shifts in the perceived role of women by individuals, organisations and society, it is
likely that change will occur gradually and women will remain disadvantaged and
under-represented in management.
Future Research Recommendations

The career experience of Thai female managers and executives and also evidence from the review of literature has indicated that the experiences of women in management across national metropolitan boundaries in organisations are similar to a certain extent. Women globally are given better opportunities in organisations and more of them are today pursuing managerial careers. These women are also reporting having experienced some form of career block and discrimination in their roles as managers. Nevertheless, the literature and the findings point to some clear differences across national boundaries due to locality uniqueness. Women in Asia, for example, may face greater challenges due to the more traditional orientations of societies within the Asian region, including Thailand. In many cases, the literature indicates that Asian women have no real choices between having careers or families, as marriages and motherhood are social imperatives. In short, in the study of women as managers, culture does matter.

For women in developed countries, the literature suggests the need to break the glass ceiling that has prevented many women from securing senior level positions in organisations. For women in industrialising countries such as Thailand, the challenge in management may be different. Little is known about the specific challenges that Thai women managers have encountered, apart from perceptive roles. Given the increase in gender diversity in the workplace, it is critical that women feel assured of an equal opportunity to reach top management positions. It is not only important for the success of the organisation but also for the improvement of society as a whole that women are involved in strategic business decisions.

Policy makers need to be aware of women’s issues and women’s unheralded role in the maintenance and health of society in order to help them better strategise ways to relieve the pressure women feel (MacRae, 2005). Financial solutions, particularly welfare reforms, need to be upgraded and expanded to help families with young children, especially those at poverty level and seek to help women live out their retirement years in some degree of security and health. The wealth of skills and wisdom accrued by older women needs to be implemented in new ways that will
both further the social agenda and endorse their efforts. Service credit programs for women volunteers need to be expanded as they help society and benefit those involved elders. More holistic treatment of upcoming regiments of women also needs to occur.

Women, when faced with sex discrimination in the workplace, can get mad, fight back, tolerate it and work to change things or resign themselves to accepting discrimination. Some opt out and start up their own businesses. Others move job to job. However, some stay on, believing that hard work and competence will get them noticed and promoted. One clear finding of this study is that hard work and competence are usually not enough to guarantee promotion within the context of male-dominated power structures present in most corporations. Even so, many women seem to hang onto the notion that they will be promoted if they just work hard enough. The next generation of feminist scholars must continue this research agenda and rekindle interest in these issues if real change is to come about. This will improve the field for everybody and create a new kind of work culture that is inviting to women, all women.

The baby boomer generation is and will be more demanding about options available to them as they age. The newer generations, such as the Y generation, will be, hopefully, more insistent on genuine equality in the workplace and assistance from their partners with childcare and household tasks and acceptance of the choice not to become mothers. The challenges of minority women need to be addressed with enthusiasm and sensitivity so that society can benefit from their skills and experiences. Resolution of these concerns will do much to promote the health and occupational well-being of all our citizens.

5.7 Summary

Women in this study used a variety of concepts to talk about the gender inequality in their own way of understanding. They also were able to connect the concept and recall experiences, they or women they knew, had relative to the inequality in the workplace. The researcher accepts the stories of these women and their interpretation
of what the glass ceiling might be as valid reporting of what is going on in their workplaces. Therefore, the researcher believes that gender inequality for the women participating in this study is a concept that is personally held by each woman, but understandable to each one and relevant, with variable degrees, to their life experience.

This study has attempted to gain insight into some of the factors responsible for women’s under-representation in senior management positions in Thailand, both in absolute terms and in comparison with other developed countries. The main personal factor identified by the study is the generational delay in women’s access to senior jobs, even though female executives are more qualified, come from better educated families and are therefore better equipped to develop the right skills for corporate management and decision making. At work, the study found evidence of the difficulties women encounter on the way to senior management positions. In particular, women tend to lack mentors or role models because mentoring networks—that is, established senior executives in the same company—are predominantly male. Therefore, female executives are less well ‘connected’ at work, while also having less experience and seniority in the job.

Although men and women face the same demand in terms of flexibility and mobility, women spend fewer nights away from home on business travel and work more variable hours than men. Also, since female executives earn less than their male counterparts, they feel subjected to discrimination in comparison with men having similar qualifications or skills. At home, male senior executives have as many family responsibilities as their female counterparts—if not more—but the burden of such responsibilities is accepted mostly by their spouses or partners, who typically have fewer work commitments than those of female executives. The latter tends either to resort more to paid domestic help in order to reconcile work and family or to remain single or childless.

The invisible barriers that make up the glass ceiling or gender inequality in the workplace include numerous attitudes and beliefs inter-related with situational barriers that emanate from the societal and organisational culture in which women operate. Therefore, although there is some apparent evidence to suggest that progress
has been made in some areas, other aspects continue to unite against progress. While there have been cultural changes in respect of women’s responsibilities in times of family crisis and changes in maternity leave and the utilisation of external childcare arrangements, little progress has been made elsewhere. Firms continue to adopt a ‘masculine’ culture, particularly in relation to the working week, and this restricts female choice as it is deemed impossible to achieve an acceptable work-life balance within the environment of a professional organisation or as a whole.

Further, women in this study believe that little progress has been made in respect to women’s self-perceptions, with a lack of confidence and ambition that will probably result in the continued and persistent absence of women from the senior position levels. These women are necessary to act as role models to motivate and engage younger generations of women managers to thrive in management. Although more flexibility is being offered than ever before, working less than a full week is generally viewed in a negative manner from most employers’ perspectives. Without some culture change in the future to the working environment that could be of benefit to all employees, it is difficult to foresee a situation whereby women managers will progress to top executive positions like their male colleagues (Blair-Loy, 2003).

Despite a move towards more equality within society in terms of household and family responsibilities and a society that offers women some sort of choice, the progress has been limited because of the persistence of individual gender role attitudes and institutional barriers making it difficult for women to make full use of their capabilities. A pessimistic conclusion therefore seems inescapable, that is, women’s educational achievements, their greater freedom from family responsibilities and their lower pay ought to make them more attractive in the market for talent, obligation and value for money, but initiatives to promote their employment come up against cultural and institutional barriers that prevent their huge pool of human capital from being fully recruited. In the future, it is hoped that all individuals, regardless of gender or any visible differences, will have equal opportunities in their career progression in any industries they are pursuing.
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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Research and interview questions

Interview Questionnaire

“A study on Gender Inequality in Thailand: Experiences of Thai female managers”

Research Questions

1. Do Thai women with the requisite qualifications have difficulties breaking through to management?

2. Does taking time off to raise a family hinder Thai women to progress in their career?

3. Do any Thai legislative initiatives help Thai women overcome the glass ceiling?

4. Which one is more women friendly industry – Manufacturing Industry vs. Service Industry?

This semi-structured interview consists of 4 sections.

Section A: General information and socio-demographic characteristics of participants.

1. Age:
   - □ 26 – 30 years
   - □ 31 – 35 years
   - □ 36 – 40 years
   - □ 41 – 45 years
   - □ 46 – 50 years
   - □ 51 – 55 years
   - □ Above 56 years
2. What level of education have you completed?
☐ High school graduate or lower
☐ College / Vocational / Diploma
☐ Bachelor degree
☐ Master degree or higher

3. Where did you mostly get your education?
☐ In Bangkok
☐ From hometown
☐ From hometown and in Bangkok
☐ In Bangkok and Abroad
☐ Abroad

4. Marital status:
☐ Single
☐ Married
☐ Separated
☐ Divorced
☐ Widower

5. Occupation:
☐ Government employee
☐ Private sector employee
☐ Own business / Self-employed
☐ Freelance
☐ Others (please specify, ________________________________)

6. Monthly income:
☐ Less than 25,000 Baht
☐ 25,001 – 35,000 Baht
☐ 35,001 – 45,000 Baht
☐ 45,001 – 55,000 Baht
☐ 55,001 – 65,000 Baht
☐ More than 65,001 Baht
**Section B:** Interview guide and questions aim to understand and investigate their roles and responsibilities

1. What is your position or title in this organisation?

2. What are your main responsibilities for your position?

3. How long have you worked for this organisation?

4. Do you think you have the same workload as your male colleagues?

5. Do you think your male colleagues at the same level as you are being assigned the same responsibilities?

**Section C:** Interview guide and questions aim to investigate participants’ career path and their strategies to deal with the possible discrimination challenge

1. When you first started off at this organisation, did you want to progress to upper levels? Why?

2. Do women face hurdles in gaining management positions in your industry? If so please elaborate on these hurdles.

3. Do education and qualifications play a major role in assisting women into management roles?

4. Do you think ‘gender equality’ exists in Thai workforce?

5. Do you feel that ‘gender inequality’ might exist in your organisation?

6. Are you aware of ‘glass ceiling’?
7. Do you think or feel that you have reached the glass ceiling and had no choice but to break it off?

8. Have you ever felt that at some level you are mistreated?

9. Do you think you could have been treated better at other organisations?

10. Do you think taking time off to have a family hinders your career progress and if so, how?

11. Did you think taking time off was not your choice because you could not afford not working?

12. Do you feel like you have to work twice as much than your male colleagues?

13. Do you think or feel comfortable raising this issue in the organisation?

14. Do you think legislation has a role to play in assisting women to progress into management roles?

15. Do you think your organisation provides you enough support both at work and at home to progress into management positions?

16. Are you happy the way things are or you think you could have done better if there was enough support?

**Section D:** Final comments or additions.
Appendix 2 – Consent form

The Consent Form is given to and retained by the Southern Cross University researcher for their records. The Information Sheet is kept by the participant.

The participant may request a copy of their consent form.

Title of research project: A study on Gender Inequality in Thailand: Career Experience of Thai Female Managers
Career experience of Thai female managers

Approval number: ECN-12-147

Name of researcher: Patcharin Hansatit

Tick the box that applies, sign and date and give to the researcher

I agree to take part in the Southern Cross University research project specified above.  Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand the information about my participation in the research project, which has been provided to me by the researchers.  Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher.  Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree to allow the interview to be *audio-taped and/or *video-taped.  Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree to make myself available for further interview if required.  Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree to complete questionnaires asking me about glass ceiling and gender discrimination in workplace  Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and I understand that I can cease my participation at any time.  Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that my participation in this research will be treated with confidentiality.  Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that any information that may identify me will be de-identified at the time of analysis of any data.  Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that no identifying information will be disclosed or published  Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that all information gathered in this research will be kept confidentially for 7 years at the University.  Yes ☐ No ☐

I am aware that I can contact the researchers at any time with any queries. Their contact details are provided to me.  Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that this research project has been approved by the SCU Human Research Ethics Committee  Yes ☐ No ☐

Participants name: ________________________________________________________________

Participants signature: ________________________________________________________________
Appendix 3 – Information Sheet

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NS)

Chapter 2.2

Guidelines

2.2.1 The guiding principle for researchers is that a person’s decision to participate in research is to be voluntary, and based on sufficient information and adequate understanding of both the proposed research and the implications of participation in it.

2.2.2 Participation that is voluntary and based on sufficient information requires an adequate understanding of the purpose, methods, demands, risks and potential benefits of the research.

Therefore, participants must be presented with an information sheet about the research and a consent form, if written consent is necessary.

Consent can be written and can also be implied or verbal. When consent is implied (e.g. by return of a completed questionnaire) or verbal, then a written consent form is unnecessary.

Information sheets and consent forms MUST be separate documents.

The information sheet is kept by the participant.

The consent form is returned to the researcher. A copy of the participant’s consent form can be provided to the participant, if requested by the participant.

Please ensure that the Information Sheet and Consent Forms are designed to suit your individual research. Do not just copy everything on the sample forms as some sections may not apply to your research. The information sheet should be polite, fully informative, while also being as concise and brief as possible, and in language that is understandable to the participant.

The following give an idea of how researchers can structure their information sheets and consent forms.
INFORMATION SHEET

Name of project

A study on Gender Inequality in Thailand: Career Experience of Thai Female Managers

Approval number ECN-12-147

Introduction

My name is Patcharin Hansatit. I am studying for a Doctor of Business Administration in School of Business at Southern Cross University, Australia. I am conducting research as part of requirement for a Doctor of Business Administration program. My research project is titled “A study on Gender Inequality in Thailand: Career experience of Thai female managers”.

What is this research?

The main purpose of this research is to study and investigate Thai female employees’ progression to management positions in organisations operating in Thailand. The investigation aims to discover whether gender inequality exists in Thailand and if it does, how Thai women strategise to deal with this challenge. The research will also attempt to determine whether workplace discrimination and glass ceiling related issues exist in the context of Thai and the Thai workplace. Dual roles (family obligations), gender inequality practice in organisations, education and work training qualification are main factors hindering women to progress in their career (Yukongdi, 2005). Much research has been conducted to investigate women’s participation in the labour force and the number show a rise of women employment in most developed countries including in the Asian countries (O’Neil et al., 2008). However, there is very little investigation in the Thai context, especially in management and the purpose of this study is to fill this gap. Further, the research is confined to manufacturing and service industry because of the time and resource constrained faced by the researcher.

What does this research involve?

The research uses a semi-structured interview for purpose of gaining rich information. Researcher will use a semi-structured interview protocol with questions to stimulate an open-ended conversation between researcher and participants. Participants are expected to answer and describe the questions following the interview instrument. The questions asked to the participants are divided into 3 sections. These sections include section A – general information and socio-demographic characteristics of participants; section B – aims to understand the overview their career; section C – aims to gain insights into participants’ career path and their progression to management positions in organisations.

The process of interview will be only one participant at a time in an interview session with the researcher. The interview process will take place in the interviewees’ offices or a public place or at their convenience. The interview procedure will take about 45 minutes to 1 hour and each participant will be informed prior to the commencement of each session. Information from the interview will be recorded in a digital device such as digital recorder if participants agree. Researcher aims to investigate whether gender inequality exists in Thailand and if it does, how Thai women strategise to deal with the challenge.

My responsibilities to my participants:

Any information that is obtained in connection with this research and that can be identified with subjects will remain confidential and anonymous. Interviews will be tape-recorded only after obtaining your approval. Tapes and transcription will be locked in a secure and safe location. The tapes will be erased and transcriptions will be shredded in the time prior determined by the ethic committee of this university. Finally, the researcher must respect the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of subject, and protect the confidentiality of any sensitive information.

Your participants’ responsibilities for this research:
Reseacher would appreciate if you could fully disclose any information, which could affect the value of the research. If you decide to participate you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue the participation at any time. As this study is of a voluntary nature and as a participant in the research you have decided to volunteer your time and assist in the research. The interview process will take around 45 minutes to 1 hour and you may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue. Any audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

The likelihood and form of dissemination of the research results, including publication.

The results of this study may be published in a peer-reviewed journal and presented at conferences, but only group data will be reported. Data obtained from this study will be kept in the researcher office and will be disposed of after 7 years retention as a University research material.

Participant’s Consent – Is consent to this research implicit or explicit?

All participants are required to return the consent form to the research before the interview is conducted.

Inquiries

If you have any questions, we expect you to ask us. If you have any additional questions at any time, please ask:

Supervisor
Dr Veerappan Jayaraman
Vjayaraman@sierp.com.au

Researcher
Patcharin Hansatit

Phone (61) 4 01 448 798 or p.hansatit.11@student.scu.edu.au

Feedback

All participants are entitled to receive feedback from this study. If you intend to receive a summary of this study, please provide your email and address on the consent form

Has this research been approved by Southern Cross University? (include the following statement)

This research is conducted as part of the requirement of DBA program.

Complaints about the research/researchers

If you have concerns about the ethical conduct of this research or the researchers, the following procedure should occur.

Write to the following:

The Ethics Complaints Officer
Southern Cross University
PO Box 157
Lismore  NSW  2480
Email: ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au

All information is confidential and will be handled as soon as possible.
Appendix 4 – Invitation Letter

Participant Invitation Letter

Dear Madam,

My name is Patcharin Hansatit. I am a Doctor of Business Administration candidate at School of Business, Southern Cross University, Australia.

As part of my doctoral program, I am conducting research on the topic of “A study on Gender Inequality in Thailand: Career Experience of Thai Female Managers”, approval number ECN-12-147. This is part of my candidate fulfilment to obtain my degree. This study is concerned with journey of Thai female managers and their career path from the beginning until where they are now. The main purpose of the research will investigate whether gender inequality exists in the context of Thai and the Thai workplace. If it does, how Thai women strategise to deal with the challenge. In order to explore this study, I would like to conduct a semi-structured interview. The interview process will take about 45 minutes to 1 hour and it will take place in the interviewees’ offices, a public place or at their convenience.

I would very much appreciate your assistance in my research and I strongly believe that your experience can contribute greatly to this study and they will be valuable to the successful completion of my degree.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly. If there is any further query or need more information, please feel free to send me an email at p.hansatit.11@student.scu.edu.au or contact me at +61 401 448 798. Thank you for your time.

Yours Sincerely,

Patcharin Hansatit