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A Workable Balance: Maternity Leave and Female success in the Workplace in Finland and the United States

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the United States

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Directed by Dr. Juliana Svistova

   The Family and Medical Leave Act was signed into law in 1993. *FMLA*, allowing for

a few exceptions and criteria, provides unpaid leave for certain health conditions or for the

birth or adoption of a child. While the United States offers a gender-neutral policy unlike

most other nations, the leave is not required to be paid. This can have enormous impacts on

not only a female's decision to return to work after the birth of a child but her continued

decision to pursue leadership roles within the workforce. The purpose of this study is to

examine the relationship between female leadership and compare the paid and unpaid

parental leave policies in the US and Finland. Additionally, this study will explore the

relationships between additional barriers to female leadership and parental leave policies, as

it exists within the two countries. Utilizing a qualitative research methodology the findings

suggest that motherhood was found to lead to substantial changes in each woman's life on

both personal and professional level. Finnish women reported a more positive overall

experience with motherhood, leadership and paid leave. Women in the United States

however reported very different experience to include feelings of struggling, issues with

balancing work and childcare needs and a feeling of inadequacy and guilt when it came to

taking time off after the birth of their children.

Key Words: Paid maternity leave, female leadership, Finland, United States

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rights, including the right to be respected in their homes, their workplaces, and in their choices. I hope she learns to fight like a girl and is proud of herself and who she is. I know I am.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Maternity leave policies tell an intimate story about if and how societies prioritize

motherhood and families. Currently in the United States, the lack of paid maternity leave

tells a bleak tale: starting a family is not valuable because it is interruptive of career and

expensive for the household. Women face an impossible juggling act; they know the

incredible effort needed to excel at work and attain a leadership position, and they also know

children and families thrive when a mother is supported. After decades of progress for

women in the workplace and in leadership, despite so many setbacks, it is time to break

through the glass ceiling and build a better framework that supports women and success,

specifically mothers in leadership positions in the United States.

The idea that there is a single barrier to women's leadership is no longer a valid. The

simple, outdated idea of a glass ceiling implies that an absolute barrier exists at a specific

level in organizations and negates the fact that women do continue to attain leadership roles.

No doubt that woman have been able to achieve numerous positions as chief executives,

university presidents, state governors, and presidents of nations, however their individual

successes do not prove that hardships do not exist. The glass ceiling metaphor also implies

that these women had equivalent access to those leadership positions and that is merely not

the case. In truth, women are not only denied access to leadership positions; but they face

barriers at every rung as they attempt to ascend their way up the corporate ladder.

Notably, the United States is the only developed nation without paid leave for mothers.

In recent years, public support for paid family leave has gained momentum. It is clear from

recent studies that many Americans still struggle with the idea that a work-life balance is possible when faced with the choice between working and caring for their children (Debebe, Anderson, Bilimoria and Vinicombe, 2016). There continue to be little improvements in the last decade in regards to gender barriers within the workplace, and American job structures are largely based on the notion that one parent will stay home with the children. Given the situation of workers and families in the United States, it has become clear that since 1993, despite the implementation of *Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)*, taking unpaid time off due to the birth of a child is a burden for American families and a continued barrier to female leadership.

In contrast to the United States' *FMLA*, Finland's maternity leave act offers broader and more comprehensive protection to the family. Under the *Finnish Employment Contracts Act*, employees have a statutory right to maternity, special maternity, paternity, parental, and certain child-care leaves, all referred to as 'family leaves' (Kela.fi, 2016). Even for those that have had no income from work, there is still a payment made at the minimum rate (Kela.fi, 2016).

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived relationship between female leadership and the paid and unpaid maternity policies from the perspectives of leaders who are mothers in the United States and Finland. I sought to explore experiences of a few women in leadership positions in both countries and perceived relationship between maternity leave policies and female leadership. The significance of this research is that both female leadership and motherhood are important issues in women's lives and one should not have to choose one over the other. This dissertation uses qualitative methodology to include

focus groups and individual interviews with mothers in leadership positions who had access to paid and unpaid maternity leave in two countries.

As a result of my data analysis, very different findings emerged in Finland and the United States. What is similar in both contexts is that motherhood was found to lead to substantial changes in each woman's life on both personal and professional levels. In general, Finnish women reported that motherhood affected their leadership roles in a positive manner. They reported feeling more connected to their children and supported by their country due to the paid time off. They felt better able to relate to their employees and reported that their leadership experiences were only enhanced by the addition of children and the use of paid time off. In contrast, women in the United States reported feelings of struggling, issues with balancing work and childcare needs, and a sense of inadequacy and guilt when it came to taking time off after the birth of their children. The fact that the leave was not paid was an added stressor.

Outline and Brief Summary of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized/structured into six chapters. In the first chapter, background information on the topic at hand is presented. The history of the *FMLA* and *The Finnish Employment Contracts Act* as well as a discussion on the benefits provided by each act will be explored. Additionally, historic barriers to female leadership will be reviewed as traditionally leadership has been defined by the idea of maleness; there still exists the common belief that men make better leaders than women. While there are various issues that restrict women's potential to seek positions of leadership, there is no denying that motherhood makes an economic and practical dent in the shape and solidity of their careers.

This chapter also explores some policy remedies that have been implemented by each country to address some of these burdens.

I will discuss pertinent theories in chapter two. These theories include feminist, social role and leadership theories as they relate to the topic of this dissertation. When considering feminist theories, which fights for women to have equal rights and roles in society, women have had to compete at every level to be seen as viable candidates for jobs, jobs that were typically reserved for men. Perhaps this categorization of jobs can be explained by social role theories and what our expected norms are. The ideas of which gender should fill each job role continue to keep women categorized into certain positions within the business world. However, research into leadership theory, which offers insight into aspects of a person that are believed to best define a leader, has shown time after time that there is no one gender that is reserved for leadership and in fact characteristics of each gender lead well with a leadership role. Using these theories as lens for review, current literature is examined in chapter three. I review past research on gender roles and leadership styles and comment on what is notably missing in regards to how women succeed within the work environment. While work place discrimination was given attention (Crosby, Williams, & Biernat, 2004) as well as work-family conflict (e.g., Loerch, Russell, & Rush, 1989), little merit was given to how women can be successful in their chosen careers. Organizational policies that could influence stress and a shift to a more positive work-family balance was the focus of many articles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), but no notable articles with advice on how to tackle the corporate ladder for women were documented. Most notably previous research has missed how the nexus of motherhood and leadership intersect. While

much report has been given on barriers in each topic, little research has been published on both and their profound affect each other.

Chapter four includes a detailed methodology of the research. Through the use of focus groups and face-to-face individual interviews, data was collected in both Finland and the United States with 31 respondents in total. Participants in this study were employed women in self-identified leadership positions (or women who were employed in such positions, at the time of their maternity leave) of child birthing age who had at least one child. Each participant had either utilized paid maternity leave in Finland or had experienced the lack of paid maternity leave in the United States and took unpaid time off after the birth of their child.

Data was audio-recorded and transcriptions of the interviews in Finland were done by a transcription service, while the data in the United States was transcribed by this researcher using a word document. I used an open coding (Barbour, 2005) as part of the data analysis process resulting in a codebook that contained definitions of themes and sub-themes of the research and allowed me to keep track of the references that were made by the participants within their narratives and to more easily explore the themes that emerged.

Presentation of the data findings will be offered in chapter five. The research conducted in Helsinki, Finland yielded four main themes: 1) family values and time off, 2) skills gained and developed through motherhood, 3) motherhood-related changes and career choices, and 4) motherhood and leadership downfalls. The research conducted in Pennsylvania, United States yielded five main themes: 1) policy falling short, 2) choice between career and maternity leave, 3) gender barriers to leadership positions, 4) choice and

balance of work and motherhood, and 5) good enough mom vs. good enough leader. Each of these themes is discussed in detail in chapter seven.

Discussion of the themes presented in the findings chapter will take place in chapter six. I explore their implications to social work and discuss why this study is important to the larger context of mothers in leadership positions. In conclusion, by answering the research questions posed by this study, showing how these answers are supported by the experiences of the participants, and discussing what the existing body of literature has said on the topic, suggestions for improvements for women in leadership positions are presented as they relate to maternity leave.

Paid maternity leave can be a critical factor in empowering women by enabling new mothers to support themselves while raising children. The results of this research show that women in Finland who have access to this benefit report an increase to their skills and competencies as results of having extended paid time off after the birth of a child. Unfortunately, women in the United States do not have this luxury and continue to combat a myriad of issues to include the lack of protections for pregnant workers and the way we talk about work-life balance; women who choose to have children reported that they are often penalized in the workplace in ways men typically are not. While this is, in part, due to parenting double standards that persist on a larger scale, federally mandated paid maternity leave would set a precedent for the way the United States value working mothers and further reduce barriers to female leadership by supporting women in the transition to motherhood without the added financial stress.

Chapter 2: Background

The *Family and Medical Leave Act* is a United States federal law that requires that

employees that meet specific definitions be provided with job protection and unpaid leave for

qualified family and medical reasons (Pyle & Pelletier, 2003). Finland has similar policies

that offer standard benefits to its citizens in similar instances. This chapter will explore the

different policies that affect maternity leave in both the United States and in Finland as well

as offer information on current barriers to female leadership.

The *FMLA* sets minimum standards and allows that individual states or corporations

can provide additional coverage that extends the provisions. The *FMLA* grants up to 12

weeks of unpaid leave, during any 12-month period for the following events: the birth or

adoption of one's own child, the arrival of a foster child in the family, for one's own

seriously health condition or to care for an immediate family member with a serious health

condition of their own. An employee, either male or female, is guaranteed to return to their

previous position or a similar one upon returning to work (Pyle & Pelletier, 2003).

Signed into law on February 5, 1993, by President Bill Clinton, during his first term of

presidency with the intention of allowing families "to balance the demands of the workplace

with the needs of families" ("Findings and purposes," 1993). With the idea that leave

policies help to productively incorporate workers into the paid workforce and increase their

retention while supporting worker's family obligations that are necessary for a vibrant,

healthy, and stable society, the *FMLA* was an effort by the administration to provide support

at the national level for families balancing the multiple demands set forth when faced with

these situations (Pyle & Pelletier, 2003). In order to be eligible for *FMLA* leave, an

employee must have been working for at least 12 months at the same place of employment

and worked at least 1,250 hours over the past year. The *FMLA* covers both public- and private-sector employees, but certain categories of employees are excluded, including elected officials and their personal staff members (Pyle & Pelletier, 2003).

In contrast to the United States' laws, Finland's maternity leave laws offer broader and more comprehensive protection to the family. Under the *Finnish Employment Contracts Act*, employees have a statutory right to maternity, special maternity, paternity, parental and certain child-care leaves, all referred to as 'family leaves' (Kela.fi, 2016). Women are entitled not only to take time prior to the birth of their child, but also time after. The maternity leave can begin 50-30 working days before the expected due date, with the mother choosing when to start the time. Maternity allowance is also paid for 105 working days during the maternity leave with the option to extend up to an additional 158 days, paid. Even for those that have had no income from work, there is still a payment made at the minimum rate (Kela.fi, 2016

Resulting from a number of compromises from different groups over a series of time, the country's universal family policy was replaced by a universal child allowance system in 1948. While Finland as a whole recognized the need to support children and women during these years, the country noted a shift in the family policy realm away from an emphasis on poverty relief and towards the social rights (Forssén, 1998). During that time and into the early 1960's, the female labor market participation expanded. While an earnings-related maternity allowance system was introduced in 1964, its economic significance was minor. Relatively few family policy innovations were made in these decades. Instead, the emphasis in public policy was on developing sickness insurance and pensions. (Forssén, 1998; Hiilamo, 2002). Finally, in the early 1970's there was a fundamental change, due to the

emergence of a broad social movement supporting women's employment, the *Child Day Care Act* was passed in 1973. It granted the right to day care for all children who needed it, and led to a significant increase in public funding for day care. The reform was noted to be defeat for the supporters of home care; i.e., for the Centre Party and the Conservatives (Hiilamo, 2000).

While in theory, the idea of providing day care to all of the children who needed care was great, it was found to be too expensive. Many municipalities started to pay supplementary allowances to parents who did not use their right to enroll their children in public day care. Reflecting the strong influence of the Centre Party, a national child home care allowance system was established in 1985 and took full effect in 1990 (Hiilamo 2002). Since then, families have basically had the freedom to choose between enrolling their children in day care or caring for them at home, as both options are publicly supported.

The hope and justification of all of these policies was to give each Finnish family the flexibly to arrange childcare to suit their individual and employment needs. Of note is the fact that while Finnish mothers usually work full time, this act has led to a decrease in the female labor force and has not shown an increase in part time work among women as was initially expected (Hiilamo 2002). Thus, the primary goals of parental leave policies have been to promote the sharing of childcare responsibilities within the family, to support fatherhood, and to minimize the damage that long periods of absence from the workforce may have on a woman's career. However, mothers are still far more likely than fathers to care for children under age three at home during the parental leave period. (Hillamo, 2002). As the current parental leave system appears to place higher cost burdens on female-dominated sectors, there have been calls for a more equal distribution of family leave costs

(Hiilamo, 2002). In 2013, the government decided to divide the child home care allowance period between parents so that each parent could use no more than half of the total allowance of 832 days (STM, 2014).

Much of the financing for these benefits come from health insurance and are counted as taxable income in Finland (STM, 2014). The family allowance system has four main components: tax deductions, maternity benefits, child allowance, and housing allowance. Since 1948, all families with children have been entitled to maternity benefits, which may be claimed as a "maternity package" (childcare items) or as a non-recurring cash grant. In 2009, 94% of families expecting their first child claimed the maternity benefit as a maternity package. The package contains children's clothes and other necessary items, such as bedding, cloth diapers, and childcare products. The alternative tax-free lump sum of 140 euros was chosen by 36% of all families (kela.fi.).

The Child Allowance Act went into effect in 1949. The allowance was universal from the beginning, but in 1962, the amount of the allowance was scaled so that subsequent children received a higher allowance. This can be seen as a pro-natal initiative, as a higher child allowance is a concrete incentive to have multiple children. In 1994, the level of child allowance was raised significantly, and the family policy tax deduction system was practically abolished. With this reform, even greater emphasis was placed on the child allowance system (Hiilamo, 2002).

In 2014, the monthly child allowance was 104 euros for the first child, 115 euros for the second child, 147 euros for the third child, 168 euros for the fourth child, and 190 euros for subsequent children. Single parents are entitled to a supplement of 49 euros per child. The allowance is tax-free and is paid until the child turns age 17. A single parent may also

receive a child maintenance allowance if the parent liable to pay maintenance does not do so (kela.fi.).

Of all of the family allowances (housing allowance not included) paid by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland in 2013, 48% consisted of child allowance payments and 0.3% consisted of maternity benefit payments (Hiilamo, 2002). A total of 1.5 billion euros were paid in child allowances in 2013. In an effort to lower national debt levels, the government decided in 2014 to cut child allowance expenditures by 110 million euros. There was, however, strong opposition to the decision. In response to the outcry, the government introduced a tax deduction for low-income and middle-income families with children for the years 2015-2017 (Hiilamo, 2002). Further comparisons between the United States and Finland's social welfare policies as they relate to maternity leave are presented below.

Policy Comparison

Country	Policy	Benefit	Notes

United States
 	
Values:
• Equality
• Self-Help
• Competition
• Free Enterprise
• Action/Work Orientation
• Practicality/ Efficiency
	FMLA	• 12 weeks of unpaid leave, during any 12-month period for the following events:
		  o the birth or adoption of one's own child
		  o the arrival of a foster child in the family
		• An employee is guaranteed to return to their previous position or a similar one upon returning to work.
			• Not Paid
			• Gender Neutral

Finland Values: • Individualistic • Social conscience • Egalitarian society • Very modest • Employs gender-neutral words • Downplay their own accomplishments	Finnish Employment Contracts Act	• Maternity allowance is paid for 105 working days during the maternity leave with the option to extend up to an additional 158 days, paid. • Even for those that have had no income from work, there is still a payment made at the minimum rate. • Child home care allowance- which allows day care costs to be subsidized.	• Women are entitled not only to take time prior to the birth of their child, but also time after. • The maternity leave can begin 50-30 working days

		• Maternity Package- a welcome baby kit including a mattress, clothing, bedding, diapers and more.	before the expected due date, with the mother choosing when to start the time. • Gender Neutral • Paid

Barriers to Female Leadership

Traditionally leadership has been defined by the idea of maleness; there still exists the common belief that men make better leaders than women. Although the percentage of female leaders has increased in respect to the whole, they are often named as an afterthought. Traits commonly connected with leadership are, as noted by De la Rey (2005), "effective communication skills, task completion, responsibility, problem solving, originality, decision making, action taking vision, self-awareness, confidence, experience and power" (p.12). Note none of these terms are gender encapsulating; however, the typical characterization of a leader remains with the male role. As we currently exist in a male dominated society, despite the fact that it is possible to develop these traits in any individual, the typical idea of male leadership continues to be regarded as the accepted form of leadership.

Various issues restrict women's potential to seek positions of leadership. Sadie (2005) notes that one of the largest constraints that women face is the patriarchal system within which we reside. The decision-making powers continue to fall into the hands of men, and traditional beliefs about roles continue to endow modern day beliefs. The woman's role, despite leaps in education and entries into the job markets, remains as the homemaker. The man, head of the household, is still the breadwinner (Sadie, 2005). This historical definition

of gender roles, where women's identities are confined to the domestic sphere continues to be just one of the many barriers to women's leadership.

Currently, 47 percent of the global workforce population is women and of that 47 percent, 70 percent are mothers. Many of these mothers have made great strides into leadership positions within their companies. At current report, women are earning 78.3 percent pay of their male counterparts; the gender pay gap continues to be an on-going obstacle as well. Many women express satisfaction in their overall lives, citing many sources of enjoyment and fulfillment. However, juggling multiple demands such as retaining primary care-giving responsibility for children, coupled with performing the bulk of household chores leads them to feel overworked (Milkie & Peltola 1997). They often feel "overwhelmed by multiple responsibilities" especially given the growing numbers of dual-earner and single parent households (Hochschild, 1997, p 17). As such, it is little wonder that many women are hesitant to take up positions of leadership because of the stress involved and multiple barriers to overcome.

In the United States during the 1970's, the average woman had her first child by the age of 21.4; by 2012, that number had jumped to age 26 by which time most women are well into their jobs or careers. Around 15 percent of first births are now to women over the age of 35, compared with just 1 percent back in 1970 (Miller, 2008). What this means is that women are currently having children right in the middle of their peak earning periods of their lives. Add to this the fact that many do not have change to spare and one can see that their earnings are crucial to the economic stability of their families.

Miller (2008) has found that, on average, an American woman's earnings decrease by 4 percent for every child that she bears, a figure that sounds even more brutal when compared

to the fact that after men have kids, their earnings increase, on average, by 6 percent. Researchers have also found that fathers are more likely to be hired and to be regarded as more competent employees than mothers.

As mentioned previously, these gendered discrepancies in post-childbirth careers can be understood via a host of historical assumptions about mothers and fathers; hoary ideas about providers versus nurturers, masculine responsibility versus feminine pliability. There is also, of course, the enormous cost of unsubsidized American childcare, a factor that leads many more women than men to drop out of the workforce or cut back on their professional commitments. These realities are abhorrent, but they are, at least, studied. What goes less noticed is the way pregnancy and immediate postpartum life itself plays a serious role in slowing professional momentum for women for whom the simple and celebrated act of having a baby turns out to be a stunningly precarious economic and professional choice (Miller, 2008).

For the majority of new parents, whose penniless postpartum months, or weeks, or days, or whatever they can afford to take without pay, which is often nothing, are simply the result of the way things are in a country that venerates motherhood but in practice accords it zero economic value, the situation is far more dire. It makes parenting a privileged pursuit, takes women out of the workforce, and ultimately affirms public and professional life as being built for men.

Of recent, certain companies within the United States, such as Google, Facebook, Apple, and Reddit have begun to offer enhances benefits packages that include at least 12 weeks of paid leave for mothers and fathers as well as other bonuses. Some of these also include a baby bonus, childcare credits and fertility treatments. The CEO of Google recently

released a statement reporting that when Google increased their paid leave time from 12 to 18 weeks, the rate at which mothers quit their jobs at the company decreased by half (Greenfield, 2017). The company reports that it is interested in narrowing the gap and wants to do a better job of keeping women who already are in the pipeline from leaving it. According to a 2008 Harvard Business Review report, 52% of women in science, engineering, and technology jobs ultimately depart from their respective fields. Ultimately, quitting a job to focus on motherhood or to take up a less-demanding career might come down to the mother's own choice. However, companies might be wise to make sure the decision is not so easy (Greenfield, 2017).

Mothers, on average have lower wages than non-mothers even after controlling for fixed effects might be explained in several ways, ranging from discrimination to unmeasured differences not captured by fixed effects. An alternative story is that wage declines do not occur instantaneously after childbirth, but rather that wage growth is heavily dependent on perceived effort expended. Promotions may go to people who are devoted to the job, who rearrange schedules to deal with immediate crises at work, who seem focused almost entirely on work (Amuedo-Dorantes & Kimmel, 2005). Parents, and probably disproportionately mothers, could face conflicting commitments and thus see far slower wage growth. Thus, a more plausible account of the effect of childbearing on wages may be that wage growth, not current pay, is dependent on effort. In addition, if actual effort is hard to monitor, employers may rightly or wrongly perceive mothers as less committed to their jobs and move them off the fast track (Anderson, Binder, & Krause, 2002).

Several hypotheses have been suggested to explain the impact of childbearing on earnings. First, immediate pay and long-term wage growth may diminish in response to a

move to part-time work by new mothers (Anderson, et. al, 2002). Second, new mothers may withdraw from the labor force for several years or longer, and this interruption may knock them onto a slower career track. One might anticipate that patterns of withdrawal or moves to part-time status would be more common among low-skill than high-skill women, and indeed low-skill mothers are more likely to be outside the labor force than are higher skill mothers (Anderson, et. al, 2002). However, in fact the changes in work behavior after the birth of child are actually somewhat greater for high-skill women, especially with respect to part-time work. Higher scoring women work full-time all year much more than lower skill women do prior to their first birth, 70-75% versus 55-60%. However, after birth roughly 35% of each group is working fully in the labor market in any of the 5 years after birth (Amuedo-Dorantes & Kimmel, 2005). Where the groups differ is on part-time work, with high-skill women being far more likely to be working part-time and low-skill women more likely to withdraw from the labor force altogether (Amuedo-Dorantes & Kimmel, 2005).

A third possibility is that wages decline, as presented in Amuedo-Dorantes and Kimmel (2005) is that mothers are leaving their previous employer when they give birth. This is either by choice or because they cannot get back their previous job. Women who make such a change give up any benefits they were gaining from firm specific human capital and presumably lose their returns to tenure. Finally, it is possible that mothers are perceived, as discussed previously and noted again by Amuedo-Dorantes and Kimmel (2005), whether rationally or irrationally as less willing or able to spend the extra hour that superiors may use as a signal of commitment to the enterprise, and are thus less likely to gain promotions.

Dramatic changes in the 1960s in the United States, such as the women's movement, access to contraception, the expansion in work opportunities for women, and altered attitudes

about maternal work and premarital sexual activity, all gave women a new ability to control fertility and potential incentives to do so (Anderson, et. al, 2002). In effect, these social and economic changes allowed economic forces to play a much stronger role in decisions about fertility. However, as we see, even today, the economic reasons to postpone or avoid childbearing appear vastly stronger for high-skill women than for low-skilled ones (Anderson, et. al, 2002). Thus, it is the behavior of high skill women that has changed radically and perhaps where child bearing and leadership potential collide.

Kinnunen and Mauno (1998) explored gender differences in experiencing the two types of work family conflict in Finland and evaluated to what extend they existed. They hypothesized that it would be either low or nonexistent, based on the fact that due to the history of female employment in Finland it is self-evident that women participate in working life equally with men. The roles of women and men are not different in this regard. The high level of social services available in Finland, such as day-care and school meals, has meant that even women with preschool children can participate in full-time employment. Consequently, social expectations concerning male and female employment are similar, and therefore interference from work to family would also be at the same level between the sexes (Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998). They found that there were no differences between the sexes in the experience of either family work or work family conflict: the level of each type of conflict was the same for both men and women. Although this finding was in line with the hypothesis, it was contrary to the results of some earlier studies (Frone et al., 1992b; Gutek et al., 1991; Duxbury et al., 1994) which have shown that women report interference from work to family more than men. However, based on the hypothesis, this result can be understood by considering the multiple roles of women in Finland. Because Finnish women are

expected to participate in working life equally with men, it is quite natural that there are no gender differences in experiencing work family conflict. This possibility of combining multiple roles is made easier by Finland's societal structures.

Policy Interventions to Remedy the Double Burden

The *FMLA* was a big step for the U.S. in acknowledging the importance of providing protection to employees. It showed that the idea of helping workers to achieve a balance between the workplace and home was on the radar of politicians at a national level. However, there remain serious issues of accessibility and equity within the law; for the purpose of this study, the researcher will consider the inequities in regards to gender as it relates to the *FMLA* (Pyle & Pelletier, 2003).

While the act attempted to offer a gender-neutral policy, gender differences are still prevalent (Pyle & Pelletier, 2003). Many feminists raised the argument that within the pursuit of gender equality, it is quite possible that the act failed to meet the standard of gender equity. They posited that the act did not take into account the unbalanced reality between genders as it relates to the current day division of labor. "It appears to put a one size fits all policy in place for all genders" (Pyle & Pelletier, 2003, p 34). Anthony (2008) states that this ignores that woman may have a greater share of the burden of caregiving in reality. It also calls into play the idea that by creating legislation that caters to the female's greater role in childcare, the legislation, in essence, reinforces typical gender stereotypes. She goes on to report that the act also suggests that by mandating various forms of leave that are typically taken utilized by women, the Act, like *the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978*, makes women more costly to employ than men (Anthony, 2008). She suggests that this puts women at an unfair disadvantage even within the hiring process, as employers will engage in

subtle discrimination; discrimination which is much less obvious to detect than pregnancy discrimination against the already hired (Anthony, 2008). Another argument noted regarding the Act itself, is the idea of who is the Act really helping? Many questioned if the policy has value at all as the vast majority of employees that are eligible for *FMLA*, could most likely not afford to take any time off of work unpaid (Mory & Pistilli, 2001).

Both the *FMLA* and the *Finnish Employment Acts* provide support to mothers in different ways after the birth of their children. While there are arguments on both sides as to the amount of support given by both, it is apparent there are barriers to female leadership that may be able to be addressed by policy remedies.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

The following chapter will serve to provide three theoretical frameworks that inform this study. Feminist theory, social role theory and leadership theory will be explored in detail below. While there are certainly any number of other theories that would fit within this vast topic, these theories were chosen due to their specific relevance to the topic as the research emerged and was evaluated.

Feminist Theory

Tong (1998) writes that feminist thought typically resists categorization, especially categorization based on 'fathers'' labels." Yet the history of feminist thought has provided its own labels (liberal, radical, Marxist-socialist. etc.), which, however, "signal to the broader public that feminism is not a monolithic ideology, that all feminists do not think alike, and that, like all time-honored modes of thinking, feminist thought has a past as well as a present and a future" (Tong, 1998, p.1).

Sheryl Bowen and Nancy Wyatt (1993) suggested that there is no precise definition of feminism or feminist because by nature these concepts resist definitive statements (p. 2). Bowen and Wyatt noted that there are a number of statements that might ease the understanding, such as: feminism is concerned with women's lives; theories about humans; the nature of knowledge; the way in which knowledge is generated and legitimated; the "canon" of traditional knowledge; and process and connection (pp. 2–6).

There is a number of feminist theory perspectives frequently cited in the literature, they will be briefly summarized here. The first, liberal feminist theory (e.g., Friedan, 1974; Rossi, 1970; Wollstonecraft, 1792/1975) is developed out of liberal political philosophy, arguing that through legal and political avenues of the mainstream, women can change laws

and politics and therefore achieve gender justice. While liberal thought is also multifaceted, a central theme underlying much of its historical development is that of the attention to personhood and agency. There is a focus on the centrality of an ideal state that respects all its citizens, thereby granting and protecting equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men. Here, the point is not to change or throw out the out systems, but to reform existing norms and systems so as to include women.

Marxist-socialist feminists (e.g. Gimenez, 2005; Holmstrom, 1982; Jaggar, 1983; Malos, 1980; Young, 1980) focus on class division as the major factor in women's oppression, paying attention to the intersections between women's work and women's self-perception. Structural conditions and macro level processes that exploit one's labor are based on the gendered division of labor and are combined with gender oppression and constitute the basis of patriarchal capitalism. Marxist-socialist thought recognizes women's agency as laborers, activists and political agents of change, although within conditions not of their own making. For Marxist-feminist thought, the focus is on the overhauling of capitalism and patriarchy as systems inherently exploitative and the change towards a different society.

Radical feminists (e.g., Daly, 1973; Frye, 1983; Hoagland, 1988) describe women's oppression as being grounded in reproduction, mothering, gender, and sexuality. They call for women to absent themselves emotionally and sexually from men so they may realize their full and whole selves as women.

Psychoanalytic feminists (e.g., Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1993) theorize that women's nature is not biologically determined, but socially constructed. Women's oppression is based on childhood experiences where masculinities and femininities are constructed and communicated, leading to the ways

of thinking about oneself. Gender (or cultural) feminists stress that values traditionally

associated with women (gentleness, modesty, supportiveness, empathy) are morally better

values than those associated with men (Tong, 1998, p. 131). These lines of thought

emphasize the internal ways of thinking: for psychoanalytic feminism, women must fight not

only for their rights as citizens but also to free themselves from the "father within" and allow

the space to think for themselves (Tong, 1998, p. 171).

Cultural feminists (e.g., Faderman, 1981; Gilligan, 1982) propose women should

provide ways of being, thinking, and speaking that allow for openness, diversity, and

difference. In addition, postmodernist theory has moved feminist debates significantly

forward in recent decades. Postmodern feminists (e.g., Bonner, Goodman, Allen, Jones, &

King, 1992; Butler, 1990; Radway, 1984) focus on questions of meaning and identity,

contending that these categories are fluid rather than fixed, and proposing that men and

women may perform characteristics of either gender, or even slide between gender identities.

Claiming that reality can never be fully known, they challenge universal notions of History

(with a capital H) or Theory (with a capital T). As Tong observes: "although postmodern

feminists' refusal to develop one overarching explanation and solution for women's

oppression poses major problems for feminist theory, this refusal also adds needed fuel to the

feminist fuel of plurality, multiplicity, and difference" (1998, p. 193).

The historical development of the feminist movement is also expressed and identified

in "waves" which have prioritized specific social demands in different socioeconomic

historical periods. If, in simple terms, the first wave has demanded a civic, legal entity for

women as proprietors and voters, with the suffragette movement, the second wave, working

with and from the civil rights movement, has focused on expanding the agenda of legal

recognition into women's equality in work, pay, welfare, control over one's body and access to child care and abortion, eradication of violence against women and generally extend full human rights for women (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003, p. 9). Some cultural critics (Walker, 1992) observe that there was a major tidal shift when more voices by women of color and global women began to be incorporated. The, current, Third Wave highlights differences between and among women, often making visible the positive aspects of woman as "other." For example, with increasing globalization, women around the world have looked for ways to come together across national borders, mobilizing the universal category "woman" in order to fight for such common goals as human rights, poverty or illiteracy, while remaining loyal to locally specific (or national) struggles. This framework, emerging out of international feminist movements, is called global feminisms (Mohanty, 2003; Rupp, 1997; Smith, 2000), invoking the plural form to signal that these activists constantly strive for multiplicity of perspectives.

This brief overview of the plurality of feminist theoretical frameworks demonstrates the complexity and sophistication of feminist thought, but also its flexibility and responsiveness to the real world of lived, material or other, experience.

By defining research as feminist, either directly or indirectly, it automatically supports the goal of attaining equality between women and men. Indeed, the concept of gender equality is the core definition of feminism as "belief in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes" and "the movement organized around this belief" (Feminism, 2007). It is important to note that most authors have not labeled their research as feminist, nor have they taken the time to address the idea of gender equality. However, the gender-equality goals of feminism have clearly led many researchers to investigate topics

such as sexism, sexual harassment, and violence against women that implicitly or explicitly relate to feminist goals.

What is notably missing is how women succeed within the work environment. While work place discrimination was given attention (Crosby, Williams, & Biernat, 2004) as well as work-family conflict (e.g., Loerch, Russell, & Rush, 1989), little merit was given to how women can be successful in their chosen careers. Organizational policies that could influence stress and a shift to a more positive work-family balance was the focus of many articles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), but no notable articles with advice on how to tackle the corporate ladder for women were documented.

Leadership Theory

Since at least the 1930s, the definition of leadership has been a topic of scholarly and popular debate, yet a generally agreed-on definition has yet to emerge (Northouse, 2015). Warren Bennis and Burton Nanus identified 850 different definitions of leadership in *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (1985). The dimensions of leadership defy simple categorization. Leadership can take place among friends, families, colleagues, and communities; in formal hierarchies and informal groups; within or outside organizations; and with or without management responsibilities. Leadership can emerge in an instant, such as in an emergency, or it can be exercised over a long period of time. Leadership can arise in a broad range of situations, and it can be responsive to change and adapt over time (Keohane, 2012).

Burns (1978) concluded that ''leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth'' (p. 3). In an attempt to understand leadership, a copious amount of research has been produced. We first saw ''leadership'' written about in the early

1800's in reference to political influence and control of the British Parliament during the first half of the 19th century (Bass, 1990). During this time, leadership was ''based on inheritance, usurpation or appointment'' (Bass, 1990, p. 11). Early definitions of leadership symbolized the prominence of the capacity to affect others, for example, ''any act of influence on a matter of organizational relevance'' (Katz and Kahn, 1966, p. 334). Tannenbaum, Weschler and Massarik (1961) wrote on the significance of influence and defined leadership ''as an interpersonal influence, exercised in situations and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals" (p. 24). Michener, DeLamater and Schwartz (1990) described leadership ''as a process that takes place in groups in which one member influences and controls the behavior of the other members towards some common goal'' suggesting that the control of employees was an essential component of effective leadership (p.47). Currently, the most documented definition of leadership appears to come from the GLOBE Study of 62 societies, which describes leadership as ''the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members'' (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004, p. 56). Note that here the focus extends beyond influence and includes the idea of motivation and enabling of others to help achieve the goals of the organization.

More currently, Eagly and Johannesen-Schimidt (2001) presented new data concerning transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles using meta-analysis and the framework of Social Role Theory. Transformational style includes motivating workers to feel respect and pride, because of their association with the leader. Transactional style includes strategies of rewards and self-interests, while laissez-faire style

uses a passive form of management until there is a problem. Results indicated that leadership style findings from experimental settings tend to be gender-stereotypic. Female leaders exceeded male leaders on the female-stereotypic transformational dimensions of motivating their workers to feel respect and pride because of their association with them, showing optimism and excitement about future goals, and tending to mentor and attend to individual needs. Females also exceeded males in the transactional dimension of contingent rewards. However, male leaders exceeded females on active and passive management- by-exception and laissez-faire styles, which means that males tend to pay attention to workers' problems and mistakes, wait until problems become severe before attempting to solve them, and become absent and uninvolved at critical times. The authors indicated that the greater effectiveness of females reflected the negative relationships of the passive management- by-exception and laissez-faire styles to the positive relationships of transformational and contingent reward styles (Eagly& Johannesen-Schimidt, 2001).

There are multiple leadership theories that lend a hand to describing how leaders lead and what makes a great leader. In the 18th and 19th century philosophers coined the term "Great Man" theory which assumed that personal attributes of the great man ''determined the course of history'' (Denmark, 1993, p. 344). Of note is the word man, not woman. Jogulu and Woods (2006) state that within this body of literature women were not taken into account as possible leaders. Given the name of this theory, they note it is clear that women were not perceived as leaders in any capacity at this time, and leadership research during this period related solely to males. Jogulu and Wood write that the "Great Man theory cannot be claimed to have contributed anything towards raising the profile of women in management" (p.26);

the theory was constructed as a male model at a time when women were not visible in paid employment (Jogulu & Woods, 2006)

Trait theory followed Great Man theory, based on the belief that certain characteristics or traits distinguished leaders from non-leaders (Bass, 1990). Within the theory, long lists of desired traits were published, listing characteristics such as self-confidence, need for achievement, the ability to have motives to carry out an action, and self-monitoring (Ellis, 1988). Once again, these traits were thought to be inborn and unique to leaders. Of importance is that trait theories generally described traits that were considered masculine and while considered vital for leadership roles, ignored the women who were successfully serving in leadership roles at the time (Jogulu & Woods, 2006).

In the late 1940's research in the arena of leadership theory began to shift and no longer was there thought that traits of successful leaders were inborn (McGregor, 1976). Researchers began to propose a shift in ideas. The idea that characteristics or traits only made an effective leader was put to rest. Conversely, other key components such as the type of interaction that took place between leaders and followers, as well as other situational factors, were starting to be evident as a significant factor in effective leadership. The focus at this time shifted to the idea that leaders where people who simply had behaviors that were either learned or acquired (McGregor, 1976).

Learned behaviors and the shift in thinking within the literature was extended in 1964, when Blake and Mouton proposed a Managerial Grid, using dimensions which included ''concern for people'' and ''concern for production'' as the two dimensions of assessing leadership behaviors (Blake & Mouton, 1964). The authors stated that it was possible having both concern for people and concern for production, may actually be the

most effective way to lead (Blake & Mouton, 1964). Jogulu and Woods (2006) again state that all these behavioral theories of leadership were proposed in the 1930s, but achieved prominence in the 1960s at a time when the number of women in positions of power or authority in organizations were still low. They note that once again, these theories can be viewed as limited in regards to raising the profile of women in leadership as little consideration was given to gender at the time. However, during this period of research, there did begin to be an emerging recognition of the importance of a concern for people in the behavioral theories as being an effective leadership quality. This slight shift can be seen as the start of recognizing women's role in leadership as a concern for people is typical behavior associated with feminine characteristics (Jogulu & Woods, 2006).

All of the theories reviewed portrayed leadership directly or indirectly as a male entitlement. Adding to this was the minimal numbers of women in leadership roles at the time, perpetuating the myth that leadership roles were for men and only men (Jogulu & Woods, 2006). The other factor to take into account was that researchers studying leadership between the 1940's and 1980's were all men therefore these years reflect a male dominance and only showcased the male perspective (Jogulu & Woods, 2006). The first edition of Stodgill's Handbook of Leadership in 1974 accentuates this view, by ignoring any gender theme in its review of leadership; women were ultimately overlooked as having any potential as leaders (Denmark, 1993). Denmark (1993), who did not miss the omission, reflected that ''by ignoring gender as a variable in studying leadership, researchers created many blanks in theoretical and research design'' (Denmark, 1993, p. 345).

Women have served as leaders in social movements; for example, prominent women such as Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman campaigned fearlessly for the liberation of

African Americans (Ngunjiri et al., 2012). In the early 1900s, Native American women led

their own women's clubs to teach subjects that they had been denied access to because of

their gender and ethnicity (Tetzloff, 2007). More recently, women have led efforts to

improve sanitation and health care, develop public education, establish public libraries, and

create a social welfare system. They have led social change in such diverse settings as the

peace movement, consumer unions, education reform and the civil rights movement

(Keohane, 2012; Barnett, 1993). Although often invisible to the larger society, women have

helped build important institutions through their volunteer leadership, which in turn created

pathways for women's leadership in the paid sector. Notably, female leadership is nothing

new.

Social Role Theory

Social Role Theory developed, as a gender-related theory in the 1980's. While studies

during the 1970's that had examined the differences between sexes were strongly criticized,

Eagly (1987) devoted considerable time to the topic and felt that "explanations based on the

social roles that regulate behavior in adult life (p. 4)" had not been explored and proceeded to

show how a theory of sex-typed behavior could explain differences in men and women. She

set out to answer the age-old question: nature or nurture and while what she found was that,

there is not a straight answer to the either/or question, but she did determine that sex roles or

social roles are indeed influenced by the culture and society in which we live.

Social Role Theory uses a structural approach to sex differences, rather than a cultural

approach, in that structural pressures, i.e. family, organizations, and communities, have

caused men and women to behave in different ways. The perception is that people have a

social role based solely on their gender. These stereotypic gender roles are formed by social

norms that apply to people of a certain category or social position. Social norms, according to social psychologists, are shared expectations about appropriate qualities or behaviors (Eagly, 1987, p. 13). According to Eagly, "Social Role Theory of sex differences promotes a view of social life as fundamentally gendered, given current social arrangements (p. 31)". In other words, society has shared expectations about women, and these expectations form female gender roles, and shared expectations about men form male gender roles. Surprisingly, people tend to do what is expected of them or act the way that these roles imply and, as a result, men and women learn different skills, thus perpetuating sex differences.

Eagly and Wood's (2012) social role theory of gender differences describes that the intrinsic physical differences between men and women led to a division of labor in society. While many can refer to physical differences, such as the fact that men can be physically larger and stronger than women, Eagly and Wood cite these distinctive differences as contributory reasons in the development of gender roles for men and women (2012). Ultimately, social role theory provides a "comprehensive framework for understanding how labor division leads to gender role beliefs in terms of shared assumptions about gender-specific attributes; we expected that women would serve as primary caregivers for their children, while men served as breadwinners for the family (Eagly & Woods, 2012, p 45)." Not only does role incongruity causes prejudice toward female leaders, but it continues to reinforce stereotype-confirming behaviors (Elprana, Felfe, Stiehl, & Gatka, 2015). Social and cultural expectations, or gender stereotypes, add to the incorrect notion that there are gender-specific careers. Because of this perception, the female gender role and leader roles are perceived as incongruent.

In applying social role, theory to account for the content of a wide range of stereotypes recent research tested the proposition that observations of groups' roles determine stereotype content (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Conducting research on the topic, Koenig and Eagly (2014) documented participants beliefs about occupational roles in which they thought genders were assigned. For example, a historical belief about a police officer would be that they were male, which is reinforced by the fact that this occupational role is overrepresented relative to the numbers of men in the general population. These beliefs about groups' typical occupational roles demonstrated that participant's thoughts were largely correct when evaluated in relation to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Investigators additionally correlated participants' stereotypes of social groups from the characteristics assigned to group members' typical occupational roles, the behaviors related to those roles and the occupational interest profile of the roles. As assumed by social role theory, beliefs about the attributes of groups' typical roles were strongly related to group stereotypes competence (Koenig, & Eagly, 2014).

Considering the implications of these findings for the female gender stereotype, which has remained highly communal despite massive changes in women's roles in the 20th century, most of the movement of women out of the home and into employment has put them in occupational roles that are looked at as not especially physically demanding but highly demanding in ways that require nurturing, caring and service. The result being that women are extremely underrepresented in higher level leadership roles, missing in roles that society typically defines as jobs belonging to men and are relegated to jobs that are more communal in nature (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Cejka & Eagly, 1999). The ranks of women's occupations are apparent in their employment in the expanding service, educational, and healthcare sectors of

the economy. Specifically, the six most common occupations for women in the US are secretary, nurse, teacher, cashier, nursing, and retail salespersons (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). In addition to holding down careers, women still perform the bulk of domestic work. Taking all this into account, the idea that women are confined to occupational roles that society views as "women's work," they perform most of the jobs that are viewed as service type work and then they are required to also be responsible for all the domestic duties at home, it is little wonder that that the limited assessments of gender stereotyping piloted so far have yielded no significant evidence of decreased gender stereotyping on women, let alone produced women in leadership positions (Lueptow, Garovich-Szabo, & Lueptow, 2001).

Stereotypes about mothers can negatively affect women pursuing leadership roles. Employers may assume that women's caregiving commitments make them inappropriate candidates for demanding jobs. According to one researcher, "Motherhood triggers powerful negative competence and commitment assumptions" that can result in a "maternal wall" of bias that is an "order of magnitude" more powerful than other biases (Williams, 2004). Fatherhood, on the other hand, seems to have the opposite effect. After becoming fathers, men see an average of a 6 percent increase in earnings even after controlling for factors such as hours worked and marital status, while new mothers see a four percent decrease per child (Budig, 2014).

Eagly, Karua, and Makhijani (1995) conducted an extensive meta-analysis on gender and the effectiveness of leaders. They found that, generally, male and female leaders were equally effective, which can be interpreted as a good thing. However, there was evidence that showed that male leaders were rated as more effective than females when the leadership role was defined in masculine terms, such as ability to direct and control people, and women were

more effective when the roles were defined in less masculine roles, such as ability to get along with other people.

Elprana, et al. (2015) recently reviewed how social role theory affects women in leadership. Documenting that sex differences in student's careers early on can already be noted from both a resource- and a deficit-oriented perspective, it is necessary to study the underlying processes of how women attain leadership positions in order to derive new strategies to improve gender equality. In general, strategies may be associated with three factors which are necessary for leadership careers: (a) ''Permission-and-support-to factors,'' (b) ''can-do-factors,'' and (c) ''want-to-factors'' (Campbell, 1990). Chan and Drasgow (2015) introduced the concept of Motivation to Lead (MTL), which is the specific motivation to assume leadership responsibilities. MTL is predicted by personality, sociocultural values, leadership experience, and self-efficacy and predicts leadership potential with an incremental validity over, for example, general cognitive ability and personality. The affective component of MTL refers to the motivation which is elicited by positive emotions associated with leadership. Several recent studies have shown than women have a lower component than men, meaning that on the aspect of "want to" they fall short (Chan & Drasgow, 2015).

Role incongruity plays a crucial role in social role theory. It is caused by outdated gender role beliefs which plainly distinguish between men's and women's competencies and role. It increases the practice of incongruity and causes negative emotions for women seeking leadership, mitigating their pleasure in fulfilling leadership roles if offered. Elprana et al., (2015) therefore reports that traditional gender role beliefs have a negative influence on women's want to lead and a reverse effect on men.

Social role theory also states that gender role beliefs are affected by our interpretations of men and women's usual roles. Same sex role models are especially influential on the desirability of career options (Wiese & Freund, 2011). As a consequence of women's underrepresentation in leadership positions, women have fewer same sex role models than men, further increasing role incongruity and their lack of motivation to find enjoyment in a leadership position (Elprana et al., 2015). While the authors believe that traditional gender role beliefs mitigate women's affective component of MTL, the consciousness of gender disparity may diminish or even reverse this result, because women may more fiercely question the incompatibility between their gender role and leader roles (Elprana et al., 2015).

Eagly's research on Social Role Theory implies that conformity to gender role expectations is a major source of the sexes' differing behavior (1987, p. 126). Eagly's intent was to introduce another facet to the mystery surrounding sex differences, to narrow the idea to a simple idea so that it would be possible to produce a "coherent conceptual representation" (p. 4) of a theory about sex differences. The intent was, not so much to solve the mystery, but to open up another avenue for study on this topic. She hoped that the theory would induce others to test the theory; upholding her beliefs or dispelling them. Her goal was to increase the knowledge of sex-typed behavior, using this theory and other interrelated theories to start a dialogue on the topic.

Dulin (2007) notes that an important tactic to strengthen Social Role Theory would be to find better measurements of constructs, such as aggression, helping behavior, and others that are difficult to measure accurately for both males and females. The research would be more salient if instruments measured what they were intended to measure.

Being cognizant that stereotypes and social roles are powerful tools that most people tend to conform to, whether they realize it or not, is pertinent to all aspects of our lives—our families, our work, and our community. The most powerful tool of this theory is to help us know there should be a continuum of role styles. Until we get away from agentic equaling masculine and communal equaling female and lean more towards a continuum of agency to communality, stereotypes will not lessen or diminish. As seen in the research by Conway, Pizzamiglio, and Mount (1996), communal qualities are perceived to be characteristic of low status jobs. In other words, there cannot be a continuum if one dimension is perceived as better than another.

Summary

Statics point to the statement that women are underrepresented at every level on the totem pole. When considering Feminist Theories, which resists categorization, women have had to fight at every level to be seen as viable candidates for jobs; these jobs that were typically reserved for men, or seen as masculine roles. Perhaps this categorization of jobs can be explained by social role theories and what our expected norms are, however research into leadership theory has shown time after time that there is no one gender that is reserved for leadership.

To achieve gender parity, we need women willing and able to take up leadership positions. Utilizing the teachings of feminist and social role theory, we need men willing and able to take on more domestic responsibilities so that more women have the opportunity to pursue demanding fields. We need employers to embrace a more flexible workplace, allowing women and men to move in and out of the workforce as they balance careers, family, and personal goals, while recognizing that in leadership theory, tasks can be

performed by both sexes with flexibility and still be successful. In essence, we all need to intentionally engage in making diversity and inclusion work on a daily basis and utilize theories to help guide the way.

Chapter 4: Literature Review

Women aspire to leadership positions throughout the world, however continue to face barriers. A few of these barriers include gender roles and societal expectations, bias and historical expectations of leadership, and the lack of a fair division of labor when it comes to child rearing. The following chapter will explore recent literature that is relevant to the topic at hand, offering insight into what has been studied in the past as well as evaluating gaps in the literature that should be explored in the future.

So the question remains, why are there so few women at the top of the corporate structure? Literature points to the explanations stemming from sex differences in preferences and productivity. For example, certain studies show that women may shy away from competition for promotions (Niederle & Vesterlund, 2009) or choose to avoid the stress and work-life imbalance associated with occupying the executive office suite. Another possible explanation according to the literature is that career interruptions due to childbearing may also limit women's ultimate professional advancement (Miller, 2010; Bertrand, Goldin & Katz, 2010). At the same time, there may also remain systematic demand-based or institutional barriers that present a "glass ceiling" blocking women's progress to the highest corporate levels, despite their continued gains at lower levels and in middle management. Current top executives and corporate directors, who are primarily male, may tacitly discriminate or stereotype by sex, and the historic absence of women in top positions may lead to hysteresis, preventing women from overcoming decade long barriers that keep them from reaching their full potential (Athey, Avery & Zemsky, 2000).

Leadership Defined

Burns (1978) concluded that ''leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth'' (p. 3). In an attempt to understand leadership, a copious amount of research has been produced. First writings about leadership date back to the early 1800's in reference to political influence and control of the British Parliament during the first half of the 19th century (Bass, 1990). During this time, leadership was ''based on inheritance, usurpation or appointment'' (Bass, 1990, p. 11). Early definitions of leadership symbolized the prominence of the capacity to affect others, for example, ''any act of influence on a matter of organizational relevance'' (Katz and Kahn, 1966, p. 334). Tannenbaum, Weschler and Massarik (1961) wrote on the significance of influence and defined leadership ''as an interpersonal influence, exercised in situations and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals" (p. 24). Michener, DeLamater and Schwartz (1990) described leadership ''as a process that takes place in groups in which one member influences and controls the behavior of the other members towards some common goal'' suggesting that the control of employees was an essential component of effective leadership (p.47). Currently, the most documented definition of leadership appears to come from the GLOBE Study of 62 societies, which describes leadership as ''the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members'' (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004, p. 56). Note that here the focus extends beyond influence and includes the idea of motivation and enabling of others to help achieve the goals of the organization. Going forward this will be the definition used for the purpose of this paper.

Although the leadership literature in recent years has begun to include studies on women and leadership, historically, the preponderance of work in the field neither addressed

gender as an important concern nor looked to the experiences of women in framing the research. The result was that the dominant representations of leadership were articulated by men and based on men's experiences. The male ideology of leadership is visible in two critical ways: (1) the lack of representation of women in leadership positions in the U.S., and (2) the construction of leadership as comprising masculine characteristics.

Gender Roles and Division of Labor

Eagly and Wood's (2012) social role theory of gender differences describes that the intrinsic physical differences between men and women led to a division of labor in society. While many can refer to physical differences, such as the fact that men can be physically larger and stronger than women, Eagly and Wood cite these distinctive differences as contributory reasons and perpetuation in the development of gender roles for men and women (2012). Not only does role incongruity cause prejudice toward female leaders, but it continues to reinforce stereotype behaviors (Elprana, Felfe, Stiehl, & Gatka, 2015). Social and cultural expectations, or gender stereotypes, add to the incorrect notion that there are gender-specific careers. Because of this perception, the female gender role and leader roles are perceived as incongruent.

In applying social role theory to account for the content of a wide range of stereotypes, recent research tested the proposition that observations of groups' roles determine stereotype content (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Using a methodology that involved a test, Koenig and Eagly (2014) documented participants' beliefs about occupational roles in which they thought genders were assigned. For example, a historical belief about a police officer would be that they were male, which is reinforced by the fact that this occupational role is overrepresented relative to the numbers of men in the general population. These

beliefs about groups' typical occupational roles demonstrated that participants' thoughts were

largely correct when evaluated in relation to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Investigators additionally correlated participants' stereotypes of social groups from the

characteristics assigned to group members' typical occupational roles, the behaviors related

to those roles and the belief about what gender should be preforming those roles. As assumed

by social role theory, beliefs about the attributes of groups' typical roles were strongly

related to group stereotypes on both communion and agency competency, meaning that

participants "saw" a certain gender in each role based on stereotypes (Koenig, & Eagly,

2014).

The research on women's ways of leading, whether based on self-reports or actual

behavior, cannot be accepted at face value, however. Research's role in the discourse about

women and leadership is problematic. First, focusing on how women and men lead

necessarily forces one to take an essentialist position, perpetuating the belief and the doctrine

that things have a set of characteristics that make them what they are and that is that.

Second, it forces the conception of leadership into a set of binary characteristics. Third, some

of the research in this area, by contextualizing the descriptions of women's ways of leading

within a larger organizational discourse about managerial and leadership characteristics

necessary in the new economy, reinscribes existing gender roles in organizations. That

contextualization values women for their unique contributions to organizations. For example,

Greenberg and Sweeney (2005) posit that women's leadership characteristics are "much more

conducive to today's diverse workplace, where information is shared freely, collaboration is

vital and teamwork distinguishes the best companies (p. 36)." Trinidad and Normore (2005)

posit that women have been socialized to value the behaviors encompassed within

transformational leadership. They argue that women are, therefore, more suited to managing

the diverse workforce that increasingly characterizes organizations around the globe.

Paradoxically, the focus on women's special abilities' genders certain skills and reinforces the

gendering of women's place in organizations (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). While

women are valued for the new skills they bring to organizations, they are placed in the

position of being unable to use those skills that have traditionally been seen as male.

Considering the implications of these findings for the female gender stereotype,

despite massive changes in women's roles in the 20th century, most of the movement of

women out of the home and into employment has put them in occupational roles that are

perceived as not especially physically demanding but highly demanding in ways that require

nurturing, caring and service. The result being that women are extremely underrepresented in

higher level leadership roles, missing in roles that society typically defines as jobs belonging

to men and are relegated to jobs that are more communal in nature (Eagly & Carli, 2007;

Cejka & Eagly, 1999).

Gender Roles, Bias, and Leadership

Elprana, et al. (2015) recently reviewed how social role theory affects women in

leadership. Documenting that sex differences in student's careers early on can already be

noted from both a resource- and a deficit-oriented perspective, it is necessary to study the

underlying processes of how women attain leadership positions in order to derive new

strategies to improve gender equality. In general, strategies may be associated with three

factors which are necessary for leadership careers: (a) ''Permission-and-support-to factors,''

or being willing to provide support to those lead (b) ''can-do-factors,'' or having the skills

and knowledge to lead and (c) ''want-to-factors', or not only having the skills and knowledge

to lead, but wanting to as well' (Campbell, 1990). Chan and Drasgow (2015) introduced the concept of Motivation to Lead (MTL), which is the specific motivation to assume leadership responsibilities. MTL is predicted by personality, sociocultural values, leadership experience, and self-efficacy and predicts leadership potential with an incremental validity over, for example, general cognitive ability and personality. The affective component of MTL refers to the motivation which is elicited by positive emotions associated with leadership. Several recent studies have shown than women have a lower component than men, meaning that on the aspect of "want to" or wanting to be a leader, they fall short (Chan & Drasgow, 2015). This may be related to, as previously suggested the role that family responsibilities and motherhood add to a women's plate.

Role incongruity plays a crucial role in social role theory. It is caused by outdated gender role beliefs which plainly distinguish between men's and women's competencies and roles. Role incongruity increases the practice of incongruity and causes negative emotions for women seeking leadership, mitigating their pleasure in fulfilling leadership roles if offered. Elprana et al. (2015) therefore report that traditional gender role beliefs have a negative influence on women's want to lead and a reverse effect on men.

Social role theory also states that gender role beliefs are affected by our interpretations of men and women's usual roles. Same sex role models are especially influential on the desirability of career options (Wiese & Freund, 2011). As a consequence of women's underrepresentation in leadership positions, women have fewer same sex role models than men, further increasing role incongruity and their lack of motivation to find enjoyment in a leadership position (Elprana et al., 2015). While the authors believe that traditional gender role beliefs mitigate women's affective component of MTL, the

consciousness of gender disparity may diminish or even reverse this result, because women may more fiercely question the incompatibility between their gender role and leader roles (Elprana et al., 2015).

Leadership studies generally pay little attention to gender concerns. The literature that does attend to issues related to women and leadership focuses primarily on identifying differences in how women and men lead. The research findings here are mixed, with some studies that suggest the existence of a unique women's leadership style, and others that conclude there are few, if any, real differences in how women and men lead.

Gender was not noted in the literature until the late 1970s. This gender-focused research began to report on the differences in behavior, attitudes, and skills between males and females in general and was subsequently extended to consider abilities such as leadership. Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) focused mainly on children in their early work on gender differences. On the topics of social behavior, cognition, and temperament, sex differences were reviewed and very few gender differences actually existed between these groups of children. Where the differences were noted were in the areas of verbal ability, in that girls performed better than boys, and boys were found to be superior in tasks requiring visual-spatial and mathematical ability. In the sphere of physical ability, boys also dominated in aggressiveness, both verbally and physically. In addition, some findings were reported to be ambiguous; in areas of tactile sensitivity, fear and anxiety, levels of activity, competitiveness, dominance, compliance and maternal behavior, the results were mixed (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974).

When comparing the characteristics of men and women as related to leadership skills and talents, a large-scale meta-analytical review of 162 studies on gender and leadership style

compared the leadership styles of women and men. It was concluded that some differences existed (Eagly and Johnson, 1990). Eagly and Johnson (1990) found little difference in genders between both men and women in interpersonally oriented and task-oriented styles in studies. Noting that women were found to be equally capable of leading in a task oriented fashion, and men were equally capable of leading in an interpersonal manner. Researchers did note that women showed a more participative or democratic style and men displayed a more directive, autocratic style (Eagly and Johnson, 1990). In addition to this work, a meta-analysis of 54 studies on gender and the emergence of leaders was conducted (Eagly and Karau, 1991). Eagly and Karau (1991) studied how leadership emerged in groups that were without formal leadership. They found that men typically emerged as task-oriented leaders. While they note that the this research looked at events that were unlikely to occur because of the superficial level of social interaction and the fact that this was a short term social experiment, they still noted that in these situations women were found to emerge as social leaders more so than men. Meaning that the women, while in forced situations, were still able to engage and use leadership behavior that was more in line with a democratic style and often exhibited leadership behavior which showed agreement with other members and solidarity of views. Therefore, gender differences in leadership styles were now at the forefront of leadership theories and the ideas that men lead differently than women were perpetuated.

It was concluded that there is an accepted belief that because of men's tendency to specialize in task-oriented behaviors, men typically take on roles of leadership. According to Eagly and Karau (1991), ''men's specialization relative to women in strictly task-oriented behaviors is one key to their emergence as group leaders'' (p. 705). In terms of gender differences in leadership capabilities, the qualities that could be presumed to have impact on

a manager's performance are primarily task-oriented leadership and males were seen as exhibiting this style of leadership more than women. One can conclude then, that the behaviors demonstrated by males appear to equip them more comfortably to fill the role of a leader. According to Fielden and Davidson (1999), the ''successful manager is aggressive, competitive, independent and self-reliant'' (p. 74). Characteristics which include acting non-aggressively, being concerned for others welfare and having artistic qualities – attributes more readily associated with females – are seen as ''non-related management traits'' (Orser, 1994, p. 11).

Many theoretical perspectives point to socially constructed nature that DeRue & Ashford, (2010) report on. It is the idea that individual internalization pertains to whether or not and the extent to which an individual has incorporated the concept of leader into his or her self-concept, .i.e. do you think you fit the role? Relational recognition refers to the nature of the role-based assumptions and beliefs that people bring into their interactions regarding who should exercise influence. Sandberg cites the idea of "imposter syndrome" or the idea that one is worthy of their current position and references that while both men and women are susceptible to the phenomenon, women experience it in a greater degree (2013). She reports that as society humans have spent countless years focused on fighting for a women's right to work inside or outside of the home. In that time of supporting personal choice, we have failed to encourage women to aspire to leadership roles.

It should be noted that women's leadership experiences are most definitely affected and influenced by gender, race, class, and sexuality among other social markers. However when examining the role of these characteristics within the leadership arena, Debebe and Reinert (2014) apply Sen's (2006) idea of miniaturization to argue that internal identity-

based conflicts are an everyday occurrence within organizations. This conflict creates an enormous pressure on individuals and calls on them to choose between identities and labels rather than make choices based on their values and the needs of the situation. This statement shows that when the interaction of multiple identities is taken into account, the full complexity of women's leadership experiences and dilemmas can be revealed. Not only do women within the leadership realm experience situations differently based on their own difference, but they add an extra layer of complexity by having to contend with not just how their leadership is influenced by gender, but other subordinate identities as well as dominant ones (Debebe, Anderson, Bilimoria and Vinicombe, 2016).

The existing literature on women's leadership tends to focus on certain leadership traits as feminine and allude to styles and characteristics of women leaders, especially in business (Murphy, 2017). This data has created stereotypical, individualistic interpretations of women leaders and given rise to archetypes such as the "queen bee," "iron maiden" or "selfless heroine" (Stead & Elliott, 2009).

Female Leadership

The ranks of women's occupations are apparent in their employment in the expanding service, educational, and healthcare sectors of the economy. Specifically, the six most common occupations for women in the US are secretary, nurse, teacher, cashier, nursing, and retail salespersons (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). In addition to holding down careers, women still perform the bulk of domestic work. Taking all this into account, the idea that women are confined to occupational roles that society views as "women's work," they perform most of the jobs that are viewed as service type work and then they are required to also be responsible for all the domestic duties at home, it is little wonder that that the limited

assessments of gender stereotyping piloted so far have yielded no significant evidence of decreased gender stereotyping on women, let alone produced women in leadership positions (Lueptow, Garovich-Szabo, & Lueptow, 2001).

As stated in the previous paragraph, there is a lack of representation of women in leadership positions in the U.S. However this is not only true of the U. S, but statistics point to the statement that women are underrepresented in every level of the corporate totem pole, but the gap is nowhere more evident than in leadership positions throughout the world. McKinsley notes that this is not because they are leaving companies or taking breaks to have children, but because "they simply face greater barriers to advancement and a steeper path to senior leadership than men" (Sandberg, 2013, p 128). In a 2012 study, conducted by the Lean In Organization, 118 organizations with the United States were analyzed to include over 30, 000 employees. Within those corporations, women held 45 percent of entry-level jobs, 32 percent of senior level roles, and 17 percent of chief officer positions (Sandberg, 2013). The author notes that despite the fact that women are not leaving their organizations at any faster rate than men, women are not moving up as fast as men are (Sandberg, 2013). Across all levels of leadership, women hold 15 percent less of the position, which suggests that women, on average, face greater barriers to leadership roles (Sandberg, 2013). There are multiple barriers to women's leadership positions as identified by the research. The two this author will focus on are: gender bias and the division of labor at home.

Organizational Structures and Motherhood

Aydin, Graupmann, Fischer, Frey, and Fischer (2011) conducted research revolving around the idea that when women feel excluded at work they tend to prioritize family over work and their sense of meaning in a professional manner dissipates. The researchers found

that in the first study, female participants were asked to discuss either a time in which they felt excluded or included. They were then asked to read an article that maintains that many educated women, over recent years, have decided to prioritize family over work. In conclusion, they were asked to questions that gauged their attitudes towards this trend. What was found was that initially if these women chose to discuss a time when they felt excluded, they were more likely to endorse the trend of valuing family over work. What this adds to this conversation is the idea that when women return to work after the birth of a child and perhaps feel excluded, they may retreat and return to family as opposed to pushing forward and enhancing their career and professional goals.

For many women, satisfaction is gleaned not only from their roles within their family, but also from their position within the professional world. However, this calls into play a need to balance these multiple roles, often creating great concern and hardship. Utilizing a sample of women from the National Longitudinal Survey cohort Young Women in 1997, Campione (2008) developed a model which delineates global well-being, measured as life satisfaction and daily well-being, depression, and tests the impact of personal, family, and work variables. These variables where specifically chosen for each well-being measure notes that personal/ family variables, union membership, supervisory capacity, recent promotion, and government employment are all significant correlates of global life satisfaction for women. While on the other side, irregular shifts and unpaid maternity leave are significant correlates of daily depression. It is well noted that certain employment practices can make it very difficult for employees to balance multiple roles leading to added stress and diminished well-being. The potential for stress, however, engendered by the need to balance multiple roles, is of great concern to a wide array of researchers and employers (Damiano-Teixeira,

2006). Research has shown that commitment to the company and job is often measured by employers as the number of hours on the job and for non-managerial employees', commitment may be registered as a willingness to work odd hours or shifts and take on additional responsibilities (Maume and Houston, 2001). Parenting is often more closely associated with mothers than fathers, and the responsibility of parenting is assumed to prevent the long hours which often indicate appropriate effort and loyalty in the eyes of the employer. Therefore mothers may be perceived as less of a match to the image of an ideal employee and particularly to that of a leader (Kugelburg, 2006).

Kinnunen and Mauno (1998) looked at the gender differences in experiencing the two types of work family conflict in Finland and evaluated to what extend they existed. They hypothesized that family conflict would be either low or nonexistent, based on the fact that due to the history of female employment in Finland it is self-evident that women participate in working life equally with men. The roles of women and men are not different in this regard. The high level of social services available in Finland, such as day-care and school meals, has meant that even women with preschool children can participate in full-time employment. Consequently, social expectations concerning male and female employment are similar, and therefore interference from work to family would also be at the same level between the sexes (Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998). They found that there were no differences between the sexes in the experience of either family work or work family conflict: the level of each type of conflict was the same for both men and women. Although this finding was in line with the hypothesis, it was contrary to the results of some earlier studies (Frone et al., 1992b; Gutek et al., 1991; Duxbury et al., 1994) which have shown that women report interference from work to family more than men. However, on the basis of the hypothesis,

this result can be understood by considering the multiple roles of women in Finland. Because Finnish women are expected to participate in working life equally with men, it is quite natural that there are no gender differences in experiencing work family conflict. This possibility of combining multiple roles is made easier by Finland's societal structures.

The differences between women in each countries experience in with family and work responsibilities are evident. While the literature addresses some reasons for this difference the experiences that women have with paid maternity leave and leadership are not addressed. This study will focus on that gap.

Nearly 70% of all women in the world are employed with over half this statistic being mothers, with the majority of middle-aged women having lifelong attachments to the workforce. Many of these women have made great strides into management and supervisory positions and in full-time positions earn nearly the equivalent of their male counterparts providing them with current and future financial and professional security. The potential for stress, however, engendered by the need to balance multiple roles, is of great concern to a wide array of researchers and employers (Damiano-Teixeira 2006). Balancing work and family has nearly become a cliché´ with individuals, families, employers, and governments attempting to create schedules, task sharing, family-friendly fringe benefits, and work-life policies and programs to ensure this balance. Determining whether these policies and programs effectively safeguard women's well-being and actually help them achieve balance in their lives is critically important to families, communities, and employers as well as determining how to assist women with the task of tackling these issues and ascending the corporate ladder on top of it all.

What the literature has shown is that there are a great many barriers to female leadership. The idea of gender roles and bias continue to be a large hurdle to overcome. Add that to the fact that women carry the brunt of the responsibility for child rearing and there is little wonder that the female population continues to struggle to meet the criteria for leadership in many circles.

There are many gaps as identified above as well. While research exists on how to be a leader and the differences in leading between both genders, literature does not specifically address the differences in women who lead that are mothers. Research also exists on the fact that women carry the burden of the domestic responsibilities in our society; however, again little research exists on how to overcome that. Finally, literature does exist on creating a work life balance; however, the research does not give very much direction on the other issue of motherhood and navigating the corporate ladder. Some countries have begun to address this particular need by offering paid maternity leave. As a way to address the gap in the literature noted, this study will compare women's leadership experience in a country where paid leave is offered to women's experience in a country where no paid maternity leave is offered.

Chapter 5: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine the general relationship between female

leadership in the workplace and the presence of paid and unpaid parental leave policies in

Finland and the United States respectively. In this chapter, I describe my research

methodology. I conducted focus groups and qualitative in-depth interviews to explore the

experiences of women who took paid versus unpaid parental leave and their perceived impact

on leadership participation and leadership in the workforce in Finland and respectively in the

United States. This study seeks to reveal perceived effects of paid parental leave policies on

female leadership from the perspectives of working mothers, and thus whether a paid

parental leave policy and an equitable division of labor has any effects on female leadership

in the US as compared to women in similar situations in Finland. This study explored the

connection between longer maternity leave periods and higher wages paid during that time in

conjunction with a more equitable division of labor at home will possibly affect the total

number of female leaders in the workforce due to the decrease in barriers that are historically

present for women.

Qualitative Research Approach

As qualitative designs are often distinguished by their recursiveness and flexibility,

this writer used a formulaic approach utilizing focus groups and individual interviews, with

an emphasis on minimizing external noise and threats to validity as much as possible.

However, keeping in mind that this study focused on women who have birthed at least one

child, it is inevitable that some child were present during the interviewing process. This

provided a welcome opportunity of observation as well, that inevitability is part of

naturalistic studies (Padgett, 2008).

The purpose of using a qualitative method of data collection is that qualitative research is a form of inquiry that analyzes information conveyed through language and behavior in natural settings. It is used to capture expressive information not conveyed in quantitative data about beliefs, values, feelings, and motivations that underlie behaviors. My hope in gathering information in this manner is that the topics of parenting, work, leadership and the guilt involved in those topic, especially for women can be extensive. Qualitative interviews allow for a conversation and an oral history to unfold.

Recruitment Process

Respondents were invited to participate in the study through an outreach from the researcher. All participants were selected from a group of mothers that belong to a Mother/Toddler on Facebook, one group based in the state of Pennsylvania in the United States and one other group based in Helsinki, Finland. Homogeneous sampling methods were employed and respondents were specifically chosen based on their ability to provide the needed information (Creswell, 2009).   Including certain subjects was done for conceptual and theoretical reasons, not to represent a larger universe. The respondent must- have at least one child and that they are currently employed, employed prior to the birth of the child or during pregnancy, or employed after the birth of the child (ren). The final inclusion criterion was that they must have an active, live in partner who shares the parenting duties (to whatever extend they have decided). They were all aware that no incentives will be paid.

The participants of the study where only women, due to the focus on motherhood and gender gaps in leadership, who took maternity leave in the Unites States and Finland. There was no exclusion for race, ethnicity, sexuality, religious affiliation, marital status or so on. The other requirement was that the women are or were employed at the time of the maternity

leave and returned to work for any amount of time. For the purpose of this study I excluded anyone who was not a mother and those mothers who did not take advantage of maternity policies; the definition of mother will be left up to the participants however their definition must meet the countries definition for eligibly for taking paid maternity leave.

Respondents understood that this study served to examine the perceived relationship between female leadership in the workplace and the presence of paid and unpaid parental leave policies in Finland and the United States respectively. The research questions explored were: 1) how does motherhood effect women's leadership competency? 2) how does motherhood affect women's leadership careers? And 3) how does access to paid maternity leave affect leadership? These questions were considered to allow for the exploration of the connection between longer maternity leave periods and higher wages paid during that time in conjunction with a more equitable division of labor at home and their effects on female leaders in the workforce due to the decrease in barriers that are historically present for women.

Participants

Participants in this study were employed women (or women who were employed at the time of their maternity leave) of child birthing age who have had at least one child and utilized paid maternity leave in Finland and those in the United States who had at least one child and utilized *FMLA*, without paid maternity leave. Within the participants in Finland, there were five individual interviews conducted and a focus group consisting of eight participants. These participants ranged in age from 27-38 years old, had between one and three children and reported being in their current leadership position on average six years. Their positions included two partners at a corporate law firm, a manager of a small family

run business, a supervisor at a government run social agency, the head of a human resources

department, a student in a Ph.D. program who used to manage a laboratory, a manager of a

bank and a local shop owner.

Data collected in the United States amounted to a focus group consisting of 18

women. The women from this group ranged in age from 29-39 years old, had between one

and three children and reported being in their current leadership position, on average four

years. The leadership positions held by these participants included two principals, two head

teachers at a local charter school, the manager of a bank, a social work supervisor, the

manager of a small business, the head of the data analytics department at a local hospital, the

lead teacher at a public school, one supervisor of a phlebotomy lab, the supervisor of a small

insurance company, one team lead at an advertising firm, a supervisor at a pharmacy, a chief

of police, a head nurse and three supervisors at a bank.

Data Collection

There were two steps of data collection: a focus group and individual qualitative

interviews. For the focus group, this researcher reached out to the leader of a Facebook

group for mothers and toddlers in Helsinki, Finland and explained her research agenda in

both country contexts. The leader reported that she was happy to assist in setting up and

recruiting for the focus group. The women were selected by willingness to participate in a

focus group that explores the connection between social programs, specifically paid

maternity leave and leadership potential. Contact was made with the women by the leader

and consent was given at the time of the focus group. The focus group took place during a

scheduled play date and both mothers and toddlers were in attendance. The use of a

recording device was used to capture the answers to the questions as well.

The structure for arraigning the United States focus group was similar. This researcher searched mother/toddler groups in Pennsylvania on Facebook and made contact with one within access standards of the researcher. Again, I made contact with the leader and explained my research agenda in both country contexts. This specific group met every Tuesday morning; therefore the leader invited me to join and gave permission to use the group time as a focus group. The leader also assisted in setting up and recruiting for the focus group. The women were selected by willingness to participate in a focus group that explores the connection between social programs, specifically paid maternity leave and leadership potential. Again, the focus group took place during a scheduled play date and both mothers and toddlers were in attendance. The use of an audio recording device was used to capture the answers to the questions as well in line with the method completed in Finland.

In regards to the individual qualitative interviews, the researcher gained permission from the leader in both parenting groups to post in the Facebook groups and explain the study and area of interest. The researcher let the parents know that she was to attend their parenting group on a specific date and asked that anyone willing to participate in the focus group, do so. For those women that expressed interest, but were not able to attend the group, individual interviews were set up. There were no women that could not participate in the focus group within the United States, however five women in Finland contacted this researcher and individual interviews were set up. Consent and study procedures and expectations were reviewed in person with the women of the group the day of the visit/ interviews.

Data Collection Tools

Data collected, in the form of in-depth interviews, pertained to women's experience with paid maternity leave in Finland and their subsequent return to work. The interviews were audio recorded and translated verbatim upon completion. While the focus of the comparative study was women in the United States who do not have access to paid maternity leave and their experience returning to work versus women in Finland who do have access to paid maternity leave, other social programs were explored as they come up in conversation; however the focus was on whether or not there was a difference in work experience after returning from an extended leave. Exploration also surrounded the idea of whether or not there was a barrier to leadership positions because of the extended leave in the perception of the participants. Please see below for a complete list of the study questions.

1. How do you define leadership?

2. Who makes the best leaders?

3. What qualities do you look for in a leader?

4. Do you feel the balance of male to female leaders is equal?

5. Describe your thoughts or experiences female leaders?

6. Is the road to leadership the same for men and women?

   a. If no, what are the differences?

   b. If no, why is this, in your opinion?

7. Prior to having children, what sort of work did you do outside of the home?

   a. What were you main responsibilities?

   b. Did you role or responsibilities at work change after returning from family leave?

    c.   Had you considered any type of leadership position at your place of employment prior to having children?

    d.   Did you have any changes to that thought after having children?

    e.   If so, why?

8.   Who does most of the housework in your home?

    a.   How did that division occur?

    b.   Was it different prior to or after having children?

9.   While on family leave did the division of labor change at home?

10.   What policies or practices, if any, need to be implemented surrounding the idea of women, leadership and family leave?

Interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. All participants signed consent forms and were made aware that their information was being recorded. This researcher found that in other projects, while the recording device was a hindrance at first, it actually ended up being very helpful in many ways and will be used again. It allowed one to concentrate on what was being said instead of taking notes or trying to transcribe. Padgett notes that often times a recording device is useful for the capture of laughter, signs and sarcasm, which can be missed when just transcribing (2008).

Transcription

Transcriptions of the interviews in Finland were done by a transcription service. The data in the United States was transcribed by this researcher using a word document. The process, while mechanical, allowed this researcher to revisit the material and examine where theme naturally emerged. Padgett notes that doing so oneself also allows for the ability to fill in any unclear passages, insert explanations or clarifications and obtain timely feedback,

which I found all to be true (2008). Some logistics of the coding process included displaying

the questions in bold, which this researcher felt aided in the coding process. I also was able

to leave some notes in areas where the conversation was unclear or hard to understand.

Data Coding and Analysis

This researcher engaged in open coding. Open coding is the part of the analysis

concerned with identifying, naming, categorizing and describing phenomena found in the

text. Essentially, each line, sentence, paragraph etc. is read in search of the answer to the

repeated question "what is this about? What is being referenced here?" (Padgett, 2008)

These questions sustain the researcher's theoretical sensitivity, transcend descriptive details,

and encourage a focus on patterns among incidents that yield codes. Line-by-line coding

forces the researcher to verify and saturate categories, minimizes missing an important

category, and ensures relevance by generating codes with emergent fit to the substantive area

under study. It also ensures relevance of the emerging theory by enabling the researcher to

see which direction to take in theoretically sampling before becoming too selective and

focused on a particular problem. The result is a rich, dense theory with the feeling that

nothing has been left out (Glaser & Holton, 2004). By reading the initial text and jotting

down notes into categories related to feelings, experiences and decisions, in keeping with my

original research questions, themes began to emerge. Once those categories were established,

I returned to the data a second time and really clarified what each was and how it pertained to

the overall subject at hand. The goal was to move from a literal interpretation to a more

conceptual one that allowed me to draw conclusions. Using the highlighting option in Word,

I was also able to color code sections related to different codes and themes.

The actual coding process involves using a label to tag a concept or value that emerges in the data in a codebook (Glaser & Holton, 2004). My code book also contained definitions of themes and sub-themes of the research and allowed me to keep track of the references that were made by the participants within their narratives. Themes that were directly quoted by the participants were noted but there were also themes that emerged that were inferred by the researcher as well. It should be noted that each theme and sub theme was assigned a number which assisted in sorting the data later on. This also allowed for a notation if further analysis was required. Coding in this manner improves reliability in that it creates structure and agreement about important definitions, constructs, and themes (Padgett, 2008).

The act of creating, defining and refining conceptual categories to allow one to make tentative links between the concepts and the data seems easy in theory; therefore memo writing was also utilized (Glaser & Holton, 2004). It was a process that this researcher has struggled with in the past though. I found myself not wanting to slow down and wanting to just get to the part where the data is analyzed and I can see what I came up with. I found that I had to continually remind myself that the process of memo writing was about asking questions, posing hypotheses, and seeking answers grounded in theory, not just getting to the end of the study (Padgett, 2008). I also came to realize as well that memo writing was a way of verifying the trustworthiness of the research (Padgett, 2008). However, my hope was that by evaluating and asking questions about my findings, I was also able to address any human cognitive bias towards confirmation (Padgett, 2008). The idea of rushing to the end to be able to tell the story, forced me to stop and question if what I was reporting was what was actually being told to me.

Ethical Considerations

Respondents were informed that this study was approved by the IRB at Kutztown University and that every effort was made to ensure that the identities of the participants will never be revealed or linked to the information that they provide without their permission. They were also informed that the researcher is a Pennsylvania State licensed social worker and as such is also a mandated reporter. Legal requirements governing mandating reporting in the state were covered considering the research involves parenting techniques. The participants were also informed that understandably participating in this type of narrative research design may elicit intense discussions of life events. We discussed that these topics are not introduced gratuitously and that they will be handled carefully and empathetically with a list of community resources available if needed.

Prior to the international trip, the hosting agencies were provided with copies of the informed consent forms for their review. This researcher met with each individual participant prior to start of the focus group or the individual study to review informed consent and explain the process to the participant. The researcher also provided the informed consent to the participant and answered any questions about the process before the study began and any research questions are asked.

Potential risks to the respondents include the loss of time which may be a discomfort for many individuals. The time needed to participate was identified and conveyed to the respondent letting them know that the estimate was based on a pilot study of individuals actually involved in the process. Another risk could be that the narrative approach used may bring up traumatic or distressing events which could cause some level of suffering for participants. The relatively short-term suffering involved within the specific time frame of

the study may be followed, for some participants, by an extended period of flashbacks, nightmares, reactivation of fears, or unhappy rumination. As stated previously, if topics of a sensitive nature should be brought up, the researcher would have addressed them in an appropriate and ethical manner in line with her social work values. A third risk noted was that there could be the possibility of impairing the subjects' relationships with others. In line with that a fourth potential risk would be that this research may constitute an invasion of privacy asking about income, health habits, morals and personal ethics, etc. that may cause unnecessary discomfort to subjects. Every effort was made to control for these instances.

Whenever people express their opinions in a group setting, there is the possibility of anxiety (i.e. a psychological risk) as some people have a fear of expressing themselves in this situation. This anxiety may be related to the perception of being a poor speaker and being judged by other persons, or related to the possibility of others disagreeing with them in a group situation. There is also a possibility of a social risk if others disagree with them, or think less highly of them because of their opinions. Discussing very personal experiences or thoughts, particularly those related to motherhood, work, and associated guilt may elicit strong emotions, such as anger, or sadness. The outpouring of such emotion may be not only uncomfortable to the individual member, but also confronting to other group members. The risks of this are low given the nature of the topic at hand, however taking this risk is necessary due to the benefits of the research outweighing the low risks. However it should be noted that this researcher is a licensed social worker and was prepared to handle such a situation. I did not anticipate the need for debriefing forms or lists of resources to turn to as the subject matter of the research did not lend itself to such need.

This researcher also had a well written Participant Information Sheet outlining what the focus group was about which helped to ensure participants made an informed judgment about whether they are happy to disclose personal information. The use of everyday language to explain what a focus group is, and what a group member might reasonably be expected to talk about was employed. The participants were provided with the "Guidelines" for the administration of the focus group prior to when participation was scheduled. This researcher also allowed sufficient time for participants to read through the guidelines and make a decision about whether they wish to participate. When designing the questions of the focus group and individual questions the 'reasonable person' test was used. That is, would a reasonable person feel uncomfortable with discussing or providing a response to this question? Thought was also given to where the researcher will be hosting the group discussions. There was an appropriate space for a member to take a break from the group and the group would have suspended the discussion until the member is able to re-join the group if it had been necessary.

The benefits of this study allowed for participants to explore their feelings on the topic of female leadership, motherhood and paid maternity leave. I looked deeper into their parenting behaviors and allowed analysis of their attitudes, feelings and behaviors. I also created an openness about the topic; encouraged people to expand on their responses can open up new topic areas not initially considered. The study also gave a detailed picture which can be built up about why the respondents act in certain ways and their feelings about these actions.

In regards to protecting respondent's privacy every attempt will be made to ensure that there is no breach of confidentiality. While there were audio recordings of the

respondent's interviews, such recordings are stored in a safe location and will be destroyed upon completion of this study.

Data was recorded via an audio file using a recording device. The principal investigator is the only person who has access to that raw data. When presented or published, the researcher will use only the assigned number of the participants and no other identifying information will be used. Demographics of the group as a whole may be reported as part of a dissertation or presentation but it will be in the aggregate form with no one single participant identified. If direct participant quotes are used, they will be de-identified.

Digital files containing human subject's research data were stored in password protected files on a password-protected computer. Tapes and other media-supporting devices used for audio and/or video recordings were stored in the same secure manner as paper records and erased as soon as information has been transcribed or coded and is no longer needed for research. At the conclusion of the study, the destruction of human subject's research records was performed in a fashion that protected the confidentiality of the research subjects. Any paper records were shredded, physical tapes (audio) were erased and physically destroyed, and any electronic media used to store data were scrubbed after the files were deleted. No real names of the participants appeared on any of the documents.

Validation Strategies

Validity within a qualitative method does not carry the same connotations as with quantitative method. However, validity, from the standpoint of qualitative research, is based on determining whether or not findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants or the readers of an account (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In this study the

researcher relied on the following methods to check validity: member checking, clarifying the bias, and peer debriefing.

Member checking was used to check the validity of a study by taking the final report back to the participants and determining whether or not the participants feel that the themes reflect their input. This was conducted electronically for the participants in Finland and via email as well for the participants in the United States, which allowed them to comment on the findings.

Self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative that will always resonate well with readers, per Creswell (2009). As reflectivity is a core characteristic of good qualitative research, comments by this researcher on how my own interpretation of the findings is shaped by my background, gender, culture, history and socioeconomic origin will speak to the validity of the study.

As a third and final component of validity, this researcher completed her research in the field in Finland alongside a peer. By using peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of the accounts heard, I can ensure a more accuracy write up. Creswell (2009) also suggests doing so to allow the peer debriefer to review and ask questions about the study so that the account can resonate with people other than the researcher.

Positionality Statement

I acknowledge that the interviews were conducted in two different countries with members of a community who ultimately share similar beliefs and practices regarding child rearing and leadership. It is also acknowledged that in this setting the researcher comes to the respondents in a different position in regards to professional background, experiences and prior assumptions as well as someone who is a part of an academic clinical background. I

gave and continue to give considerable consideration to the fact that my bias and ideas about female leadership and mothering may have had an impact on both the willingness of the respondents to participate and could have either helped or hindered in their ability to share certain aspects of their story. I also think it important to acknowledge that as a mother, I found myself in the very same situation as the topic of this study and chose to work and care for my child at the same time with no paid maternity leave available to me. The fact that my thoughts, values and feelings on the topic align very closely with the decision making process and ultimately the behaviors of the respondents continue to give me cause for my own continued reflexivity on the research and the information I present going forward.

Limitations

As with any research study, there are limitation to design and outcomes. The first is that with a qualitative design it difficult to investigate causality between different research phenomena. Qualitative research is a little too complex to explain the difference in the quality and quantity of information obtained from different respondents and arriving at non-consistent conclusions (Barbour 2000). Qualitative studies require thoughtful planning to ensure the obtained results are accurate. There is no way to analyze the qualitative data mathematically; this type of research is based more on the opinion and judgment of the participants rather than the results. In this case, despite the interviews and the research gathered prior to the groups, there will be no way to definitively state at the end of the process that having access to paid maternity leave guarantees an improvement to female leadership participation. However we can certainly gain some common themes and insight from hearing the participant's experiences and stories.

Another limitation of the research quality is sample size. This research resulted in a sample size of 31 participants between the two countries. With a small sample size and the methodology, there is no way to state that the results are generalizable to entire population. What this research will reveal is a few women's stories and experiences with the topic at hand.

A final limitation is where this study was conducted. The first issue being between two countries; there were many other options that this researcher could have chosen from to include other European countries as well. In addition to that, respondents were selected from groups of mothers and toddlers; there is most definitely a larger group of women that do not access playgroups that could have been pulled from. Again, while this research is not generalizable to the population as a whole, it is a few women's stories and experiences with the topic at hand.

Through the use of a qualitative research design using participants in both the United States and Finland, focus groups and individual interviews were conducted to examine women's experiences with paid and unpaid maternity leave and their perceived effect on leadership. The following chapter will explore the findings of the study in depth and the themes that emerged in both countries.

Chapter 6: Findings

In this chapter, core themes from the data will be presented. The findings in the data collected from Finland will be presented first, followed by data collected in the United States. The research questions explored where; 1) how does motherhood effect women's leadership competency? 2) how does motherhood affect women's leadership careers? and 3) how does access to paid maternity leave affect female leadership? 4) How do these two countries compare to each other?

Except as indicated, themes that emerged below reflect commonalities found among most of the participants whether collected via an individual interview or a focus group. The themes that emerged where delineated as they related to policy, leadership, motherhood and their intersections. In the experiences shared by Finnish women, three main themes emerged: family values, skills gained, and motherhood and choice. In the experiences shared by the women in the United States, the three main themes were bias to motherhood, feelings of inadequacy, and impending choice. Each of these themes will be defined and further clarified with direct, verbatim quotes from participants to illustrate their points. Where there is a broad range within the themes, the range is illuminated with appropriate examples as well.

Brief Comparison of Two Contexts

The findings from both Finland and the United States painted very different experiences. The changes that occurred after becoming a mother in both countries at the persona and professional level were evident. In each country these changes were either for the better or at times for the worse. In general all the women reported that motherhood affected their leadership roles in the same manner, both for the better and the worst. Where the difference arose was that both groups of women noted that

motherhood affected their leadership experience, it seemed to be tied to their level of

social benefits, and the gender equality issues of the country.

Finland

The research conducted in Helsinki, Finland yielded four main themes: 1) family values

and time off, 2) skills gained and developed through motherhood, 3) motherhood-related

changes and career choices, and 4) motherhood and leadership downfalls. These themes will

be explored in detail below.

    Gender equality/family values and time off. The Finnish women that participated in

the study spoke largely of the Finnish value of family, which is evident in their policies and

laws. Equality and fairness are extremely important values for Finns and in society. The

study participants reported that they feel everyone must be treated the same and that

statement is evident when it comes to the way the country provides for its citizens and to the

extent that both men and women have responsibility for child rearing.

    All of the participants expressed that they were grateful for paid paternity leave that

was provided to them and their spouses. They spoke with pride about how their country

recognized the need for family time as well as other social services provided. These services

as they relate to the topic at hand range from the baby box to the time off with their babies to

bond that they were afforded after the birth of their children.

    One participant, a woman, aged 38 with two young children under the age of five

who held a leadership position within a Finnish-based company for the last nine years spoke

about the benefits of having children and utilizing the countries' benefits;

    Having a baby here is a wonderful experience; there is nothing but happiness

    from the time you find out you are expecting to the time the baby arrives. You

know, one of the greatest moments is when you sign up for Kela and get your

baby box. It is so exciting, like a rite of passage. I mean, you can go out and

get all the items in the box on your own from a baby store, but there is

something about the tradition of getting the box, from your government that

sends a message, like, hey we are all happy to have a new member of the

Finnish population!

It should be noted that Kela is the name of the Finnish government benefits that pays the

family while they are on family leave. It is viewed, by the women that were interviewed as a

rite of passage when you find out you are expecting to go and sign up for kela and then

receive your baby box. The baby box is also a Finnish custom that provides each family with

a welcome box meant to serve as a bassinet that also includes a mattress and a number of

other baby items to include clothing and diapers as well. One participant noted that the

pattern of the clothing in the box changes each year, therefore when you look at family

photographs you can tell based on the baby clothing patterns being worn by the children,

when they were born.

The paid time off that is given to both the women and men in the country was also a

topic of conversation during the focus groups and individual interviews. Many participants

reported that they understood that other countries do not offer as much time or any form of

payment while out on maternity leave. The women spoke of how appreciative of their

country they were for that time.

Another mother, aged 31 with a two-year-old daughter and a six-year-old son, who

had just returned to her leadership position at a small family run business spoke about how

her values changed after she had children and how grateful she was for the benefits provided by Finnish government.

> I cannot imagine having to rush back to work after having a baby. How do you do that? What do you tell your child? To me, that mentality is one that says to the worker, work is more important than your family. That would never be the case here. Here, while I take pride in my job, I am happy to be able to contribute to the company and do good work while I am here, but my children need me. I am their mom, their comfort, their support, that is more important than whether or not I get awarded that contract or deliver a product to a customer on time. Isn't it? And, you know, my boss recognizes that. He knows that family comes first, just like he puts his family first. I think that comes from the feeling here in Finland, that's just how we think.

The Finnish participants of this study not only spoke with pride about the value that their country placed on motherhood, but also how their own personal values changed after having children. Many spoke of how driven they had been in their leadership roles prior to the birth of their children and while that had not changed; they realized they shifted their focus from work to home. Prior to motherhood many would have defined success by how far they had ascended up the corporate ladder or how they measured in relation to their husband's jobs. However, after motherhood many experienced a change in their focus.

When asked about how success is defined in Finland the majority of respondents focused on salary. Interestingly, they all spoke about how after giving birth money amounts mattered so much less. They found themselves placing value on subjective things such as time and presence with their children.

One mother aged 27 with one child age four years who held a position within government described her changing values as follows:

> After I had my daughter all I wanted to do was be present. I wanted to be able
> to be with her for all of her important milestones and be the one who taught
> her everything she needed to know. Sure, having money to pay the bills is
> important and I definitely still find my job powerful and important to a cause
> greater than myself, however I have learned that while I still want challenges
> and success, my own personal definition of those challenges and successes
> have less to do with outward appearance and salary and more do now, with
> time and presence.

Work and diligence are held in high regard in Finland. It is common for both men and women to work, even when they have children. Indeed, workplace gender equality reverberated in the experiences shared by the study participants. In regards to work and family life balance, many themes emerged, but the overarching one was the focus on family and time together.

Finns are given five weeks of vacation each year that they are expected to take all together in one chunk of time, normally with their family during the summer time. This is time to go hiking, camping, exploring, or whatever they wish, however the intent is to spend time together with your family. For example, a partner at a law firm, with three years of leadership experience and two children, noted:

> Oh yes, everyone takes summer break together and we head up and out to the
> wilderness…it is not unusual for the entire company, to sort of just slow
> down. If people need you, they call you on your cell phone. If the CEO needs

to make a decision he can do so, while on holiday, just as easily as he can while at work. Everyone needs time to be with their families.

Another family focused benefit that participants spoke about was work times. Many workplaces have adopted flexible work times, usually allowing their employees to arrive between 7 and 10 am and leave eight hours later. This allows for mothers and fathers to participate in afterschool activities or just enjoy time with their families with a schedule that meets their needs. All of the study participants reported that they placed a great value on their roles as mothers. They noted that their pride as a Finnish citizen and sense of self-worth and value increased immensely with the birth of their children. Presumably the idea that raising responsible citizens may be considered by the women as their first leadership role; this is also echoed in how having children improved their leadership capabilities as reported by the participants. The values that the country placed on raising appropriate citizens and the duty and role of women in that task were evident. That, combined with their leadership roles and their successful integration of both motherhood and job responsibilities, as well as the well-developed Finnish social welfare system which plays an integral role, left many of the women feeling that having it all was perhaps not outside of the realm of possibility.

Skills and empathy gained/developed through motherhood. Relative to Finland's idea that a virtuous mother plays a key role in rearing decent citizens with high moral standards, many women reported feeling that as a manager, it was their role to encourage, support, and develop their teams into successful, productive employees, not different from raising children. Even in a highly egalitarian environment such as Finland, the characteristics of a mother still align well with the characteristics needed to build successful teams. Many of the study participants spoke about how becoming a mother made them, in

essence, a better leader when it came to being able to understand others. This change in status allowed the women to develop a better understanding of others' perspectives and it also helped them to be in a position that better supports their team. It also allowed them to develop empathy towards others and an appreciation for different people's viewpoints. A mother of three children, ranging in ages from seven to ten years old who was the head of the human resources department at her local hospital noted the following;

> I was extremely self-centered and immature in many ways before my children
>
> came along. In my current position I was often faced with dealing with
>
> employees personal problems and I could never understand why people do not
>
> just get over it, work harder or push themselves to succeed instead of rolling
>
> over and hoping that someone else pays for everything. Once I had my
>
> children, that all changed. Suddenly, I was softer. I recognized that people
>
> come from different places, I can't expect everyone to do it my way, and
>
> that's ok. I realize now, everyone is just doing the best they can and it is my
>
> job to help them to continue to do so.

They also reported that they were able to empathize with other employees who had children. Prior to having children many noted that the characteristics such as caring, nurturing, or supporting would not have entered their mind as ones to display at work. However, this all changed after having children. Women leaders noted that they felt more sensitive both morally and emotionally towards employees with parents after having their own children as they could understand the challenges that parents face. For example, a mother of one, aged five years old who is the manager of a bank noted:

It is much easier, now that I am a mother to understand when one of my

employees says in the middle of our busiest hour on our busiest day that she

has to leave to fetch her ill child from daycare. You learn to think differently,

you learn that this employee has a family and sometimes family things come

up- it all brings a certain type of humanity to work.

In a sense, many of the mothers felt that their self-confidence, their skills of empathy and

understanding, and their effectiveness of being a leader were all increased due to having

children. The skills that they learned that made them great mothers also translated over to

skills they could use to be great leaders as well. Whether that meant being able to understand

something another employee is going through or having to get really good at your ability to

organize things, all these were positive changes related to motherhood added to their

proverbial leadership tool belt.

Motherhood-related life changes and career choices. Choice related to career and

direction and motherhood is a major theme that emerged within the topic of motherhood.

Several of the women spoke about the value of having time off after birth to develop into

being a mother, to learn how to care for a child, and to bond. An interesting point emerged

from some of the interviews about changing jobs or roles as a result of having time off.

While some of the post-maternity leave career changes had to do with an amazing

opportunity to start their own business, a few were related to the idea that a different job

position was viewed as a better fit after returning to work since the birth of a child. Because

of the length of time that is afforded to Finnish women during maternity leave, it was viewed

as an opportunity to reflect and reconsider their values, their needs, and their wants. A few of

the women spoke of returning to school to finish an advanced degree or even a degree in a new field of study.

Many of the women stated that motherhood contributed to their own new understanding of professional expertise and expectation and how that all fit into their new life that involved a child. Motherhood was viewed as a significant change, and many women took a lot of time to consider how their careers would affect their children. The mother who has three children and is the head of HR explained her thought process as follows:

> I took a long time off after my first child. I really considered not going back. I wondered how all of it was going to work, how would I do well at my job and do well as a mother? I realized though that I am a business women, it's what I live for. I enjoy the challenges of that world and I knew to be happy I would just have to find a way to make it all work.

The women that were interviewed felt that motherhood lead to substantial personal reorientation and a behavioral reorganization in their lives. Having time off to think that process through allowed them to be successful in both roles.

Participants noted that anyone, regardless of gender, could be a leader when asked about their definition of leadership, and that those choices where supported within the employment arena. When discussing the personal choices of whether or not to pursue a leadership position, the majority of respondents suggested that it was not family life that held most back, but a different set of values, such as being content in their current position, not wanting to take on more responsibility or wanting more financial compensation for moving up within the company than the company afforded. A mother of three noted:

Sure, work is important. As a woman, I want to be able to take on any job that

I feel would make me happy. I have never been told, oh no, you cannot have

that job because you are women. However, I have made personal choices to

not pursue leadership roles because of other influences. I am happy to have a

job, I am happy to be able to take care of my children for as long as I feel that

I need to be home with them and I am happy to be able to leave my job and

learn a new skill if I wanted to. I am happy that my employer supports me in

all these choices. I am most happy to just be able to live the life I want to live.

Leadership in Finland was not relegated to the realm of men or women. With the many

benefits afforded to worker, leadership appears to be family focused, based on successes and

allow for choice above all.

One participant, who at the time of the interview identified herself as a student,

shared how she got to that identity as it related to motherhood. She stated she became

pregnant with her child, and after discussing it with her husband took the first six months off

with her. Her husband then took the next year off while the participant returned not to work,

but to school full time to pursue her doctorate degree.

Having paternity leave was really the push I needed to go back to school, sure

I loved my job, but managing people all day can be challenging. While out on

leave with my daughter, I realized that I wanted to go back to school and

become a research scientist, I had my master's degree in biochemistry, but

ended up managing a lab. It was not my idea of fulfillment. When I told my

professors what I was doing, they all encouraged me to take all the time I

needed with my dissertation. Though. I have stopped and started it back up

many times, including once to have my second child, there is no issue with
that here; they are happy for me and happy that I am growing my family. Plus
the parental leave policies cover students as well, so I still get my school
salary while home on leave.

A shop owner, who had owned her own business for three years prior to having
children, reported no issues with running her business and being a mother. She stated
that everyone knows that being a mother requires some extra responsibility,
customers just accept that.

Sure, sometimes when I first came back to work, I was a bit of a mess…
juggling getting the baby ready and to school on time and then myself here.
Many days I forgot to brush my hair. But no one said anything. They would
often just wait while I got myself together, and commiserate with my lack of
organization. But I never worried that it was not going to work out, I always
knew things would be fine.

Another woman who worked as a corporate lawyer, explained choice in the following
manner:

I never considered not having children and I never considered not being a
lawyer. Do people have to make that choice? What is there to think about?...of
course you and your partner have to work together, but that is at home stuff.
That should not interfere with your choice about your employment.

Another aspect of the theme of career choice arose, when the researcher added
a follow up question in regards to family planning and the choice of whether or not to
have more children or the timing of children due to financial constraints. This arose

due to the obvious known cultural differences between the researcher and the participants in Finland who were very curious about the parental leave policies in the United States. The women explained that their only thoughts on whether or not to have another child had to do with their own want/desire/need to have more children as well as space issues not financial issues or worry about missing work.

One participant, a woman who worked as a supervisor at a government run social agency that had two children, stated:

What do you mean, is money an issue when you decide to have another child? We don't really think of that. I mean you have, obviously an idea of your family budget and space in your home, but no… taking time off of work or how soon to have another baby is not a worry. There are many women that are out for a year or longer and then return to their jobs and you will hear of them falling pregnant again within a few months, and oh... There they are out for another year or so. It's fairly common…. There are no hard feelings. When you are at the age of starting a family, this is what goes on… and we are paid our salary for the most part while on leave, not the whole salary, but enough to get by. I don't know that I am answering your questions well as this is not really a consideration here.

The added responsibility of motherhood in Finland is not a stressful event. This and the ideas explained by the above quote were noted by almost all of the participants. The family values of Finns coupled with a supportive country atmosphere, with policies and programs that provide for their citizens, allow for a focus on togetherness, successfully raising happy, healthy adults, and a feeling that one does not have to choose between their

career and there motherhood status. Not one of the participants reported feeling like they had

to make a choice between having children and being in a leadership position. Most stated that

there was more than enough support to take on both roles successfully. Between what is

socially acceptable, what is expected, and the policies that are put in place to support this

post-birth time period, the decision as to whether or not or when to have children did not play

a role in any of their employment and leadership choices.

Motherhood and leadership downfalls. While parental policies allow for paid and

unpaid leave up to approximately three years, there was a discussion about the idea of

returning to work sooner than a year. A few women stated that they felt that by policy

directing that they were allowed to stay home for the first year, it created a stigma for those

women who wanted to return to work earlier. While daycare is provided at no cost, there are

reportedly no daycares that accept children less than one year of age, further perpetuating the

idea that they should be home with their parents. A mother of two who is a student in a Ph.D.

program

> I am an immigrant to Finland, from Korea. In my home country if I were to
>
> tell my family that I stayed home and didn't' work for a whole year, they
>
> would tell me I was lazy. I enjoy my job and I worked hard to get to the level
>
> that I am at. When I wanted to return to my job when the baby was six months
>
> old, I found it impossible. There were no daycare opening, I could not find a
>
> sitter and ultimately my husband and I had to flex our schedules so he would
>
> work nights and I would work during the day to make it work. I felt like there
>
> were very many barriers for me to return to work, just because I wanted to go
>
> earlier.

Another woman, who is a supervisor at a government run social agency reported:

> I am a shop owner, there is no one to replace me as I am the only employee,
> and therefore I had to come back to work sooner than expected. My family
> tried to run my business for me, but they know nothing about the industry. It
> was a really big struggle for me as I had to take my baby to work with me
> until he was a year old. I felt so unprofessional to my customers.

While the intent of the policies in Finland appears to fall in line with the values of the country, it also appears that there are times when individual situations are not accounted for. In these times, mothers reported feeling like they were either failing their children or failing their own personal employment situations.

Research took place in the United States using both individual interviews and a focus group, mirroring the data collection process in Finland. What follows are the themes that emerged as well. They all center on the main points of policy, leadership, motherhood and judgment.

The United States

The research conducted in Pennsylvania, United States yielded five main themes: 1) policy falling short, 2) choice between career and maternity leave, 3) gender barriers to leadership positions, 4) choice and balance of work and motherhood, and 5) good enough mom vs. good enough leader. These themes will be explored in detail below.

  Policy falling short. Women in the United States who participated in the study spoke unanimously about the lack of financial assistance that the *Family and Medical Leave Act* fall short of addressing. The main topic of conversation how disadvantaged it makes them feel; they spoke that the policy missed the mark when it

left out any economic protection or promise of pay. For example, a principal and mother of two children, ages eight and ten noted:

> Unless you are making six digits a year, married to a wealthy partner, have no school loans, mortgage on your house and save all of your money, there is little chance that anyone can afford to take 12 weeks off, unpaid after the birth of a baby. Now, I am not saying that women don't do it, sure we do it. I did it, but every two weeks when I missed my pay check, you can be sure that I had a mini anxiety attack about money. Oh and add to that that most of the time you are still responsible for your health insurance, which costs, oh like a million dollars.

Another participant who is a lead teacher at a public school shared her experiences and thoughts as well:

> When my husband and I decided to have another baby, we learned from our mistake the first time….for this one we saved up for my entire pregnancy, a couple of dollars a month just to make up for the time I was going to be out and not paid. It was horrible, not that we had the extra bucks each check, we basically live paycheck to paycheck so we not only were strapped before, but after too. Of course all the planning never works out, because we really couldn't afford to save much before. It was like this one thing that hung over my head throughout my whole pregnancy, can I afford to take time off? Should I just go back sooner, am I making a wrong financial decision?
>
> While the *FMLA* protects women from being fired while out on leave, there is

no clause that mandates employers to pay their workers during that time. It appears

that this weighed heavy on the women's mind and in many situations affected when and whether or not they had more children or how much time or leave they took, if any after giving birth. These women reported that they felt the policy fell short of the real financial protection they needed.

In connection with the theme of the policy falling short, the theme of inadequacy of the policy emerged. Many women used the specific word "inadequate" frequently when discussing *FMLA;* therefore this researcher felt it was important to specify it. They spoke not necessarily of their own situations of inadequacy with the policy, but thought of women in less fortunate situations and their own employees. Since the selection criteria for participation in the study required that the participants be employed and hold some position of leadership in their fields, many spoke of employees underneath them or in fictitious situations. The financial manager at a bank who has one child of her own, age nine stated:

> I had a girl who I supervise at the bank; she was a teller, making about $12 an hour. She was expecting her first child and told me she would be out for the full 12 weeks. About a month after she had her child, she was calling me to say she was going to return to work, despite not being medically cleared yet, even from her doctor, because they were falling behind on their bills and she needed the money. I remember her crying on the phone and being so upset, I felt awful as her manager- there was nothing I could do, we don't pay workers on maternity leave and the money she was getting from short term disability just wasn't cutting it.

A related question also arose from a principal and mother of young children:

> Pregnant women who work at McDonalds, I mean what do they do? No
>
> healthcare-no pay, probably not even any short term disability because you
>
> have to be full time to get benefits…we all know those places keep their
>
> workers under 40 hours (so they do not have to pay benefits.)

Having the ability to take the time off of work and the protection from being fired during this time was the intention of the *FMLA*, so in that aspect American workers are being protected. However, when it comes to the issue of financial support stipulated by the *FMLA,* that option remains inexistent.

Choice between career and maternity leave. As it relates to policy, the theme of choice emerged in regards to the idea that without an adequate policy that provides not only protection against termination but also pay, there will always be a choice that must be made by employed women when it comes to bearing children and the cost of doing so. Interestingly, the choice not only related to the financial aspects of not getting paid but the decision related to being able to afford taking time off at all.

A social worker manager, who has twins, aged four and a daughter aged 11 reported that when she interviewed for a position at a company that she really wanted to work for and found out she was pregnant, she really worried about how much time she would be afforded after giving birth. The assumption being that as a new employee, she worried what her boss would think.

> I was extremely worried. I interviewed for a position at a company that I
>
> really liked-my previous co-worker worked there and got me the interview. I
>
> was offered the job on the spot. It was awesome, that next morning, I wasn't

feeling right, decided to take a pregnancy test.. Bam, positive. My first

thought was crap, what am going to tell my new boss, is she going to let me

take the position, what are they going to think of me? Should I not tell her?

A participant who managed a small staff at a family run business noted that many of

her staff struggle with how much time they should take off and what their managers

would think of them:

I have had women come to my office with a look of terror when they tell me

they are pregnant. It's like they are expecting me to be mad or something, sure

it's a problem, and we are an office of six. I can't afford to have someone out

for three months, it's a load on the rest of the staff but that shouldn't be their

problem, that's my problem and it's so sad to see that look on these ladies

faces, like they are telling me they are here to ruin my day. You can tell they

perseverated over it for hours, the exact words and how they are going to say

it, I wish for them it was different, its happy news and they don't feel that.

In reference to the *FMLA*, the women shared that they worry that having the

protection from being terminated is a strike against them; they realized it takes time

away from their employer and adds more work to the other staff. Many women stated

they felt horrible even enacting the time off as they knew how burdensome it was to

their company.

Gender barriers to leadership positions. A theme that emerged when

discussing leadership in the United States with participants was the idea of bias and

preconceived notions about workers who are also mothers. They noted that in their

experience, most leaders were men. They felt that the balance of male leaders to

female leaders was not equal and that women, in general had a harder time making it

to the next level. They spoke about the fact that having a family was sometimes

frowned upon by both male leaders and by managers in positions higher than them. A

few had stated that they had outright been asked during the interview process if they

had children and how they were going to balance that with the workload of an

executive. A data analytics manager at a local hospital who has three girls under the

age of five reported:

> I have children, my boss knows I have children…I am the one that leaves
>
> early to take them to medical appointments or sport practices, so of course he
>
> knows. I also work hard, he knows that too. Recently there was an opportunity
>
> for business travel with the idea that whoever did this meeting was going to
>
> get the next promotion, my boss flat out told me that he did not invite me
>
> because he knew I had kids and it would be hard to find someone to watch
>
> them…. He didn't even let me make that choice; it was over, like that. My
>
> husband holds a leadership position in his company, never once has anyone
>
> ever asked him who was taking care of his kids while he traveled or was
>
> working late.

A teacher with three children in the group stated the following:

> I don't even try for promotions despite being told that I hold all the
>
> qualifications, even more than some who have gotten promotions,
>
> but...anyway, they aren't going to give it to me, they know I have the
>
> responsibilities outside of school of a family and would not be able to put in

the time that is required for the next level. It would be nice to be asked, just

once though. You know, like considered?

The women agreed that having a family has held them back on numerous occasions from

even being considered for the next level. They also spoke of their partners not having the

same experience, the idea that men, in the same situation where still available for promotion,

but not the women, came through loud and clear as a valid bias in female leadership and the

perception of women as potential and good leaders. For example, the manager of a bank with

two children stated:

Oh sure, there are women in my company who are leaders. They also do not have

children, or I should say small children. There are certainly no single mothers of

small children, like myself. The women who are supervisors are older, past that age

of starting family, I don't think they got there easily though, there are so few spots

for management and when they do open up, you have to exceed all the expectations

as a woman.

Participants spoke about few opportunities for women to rise to the top. They

noted that the women, who had made it, seemed to have been trying for that job for

years and had to have a skill level that far exceeded any of the men and certainly not

have the responsibilities of small children at home. They stated that they would not

even know how to go about getting the next leadership role in many instances. There

is little opportunity and few role models or mentors that they felt comfortable

working with and there are so many barriers to leadership that stand in their way.

While the women all spoke about the fact that they were prepared to utilize the kind

of leadership competencies that were appropriate for the jobs, they just never seemed

to get the chance to do so. While they were aware that on some level, motherhood had slowed down their career advancements, it did not hinder their aims or ambitions to invest or develop their careers. However, career progress after the birth of children seemed to be more complicated than it otherwise would have been. A mother and a supervisor at in a lab within a hospital who had one child, aged one year old talked about her experience with trying to climb the ladder:

> I wouldn't even know what I needed to do to become and executive in my company. I am a low level supervisor, but how to get further? I have no clue. My boss is a man and um, we discuss my "development plan" as they call it, but it never goes anywhere.

The idea that the upper level exists but participants did not have a clear path of how to get there or felt inadequately suited to get there was evident. Many of the study participants spoke of not having role models, not being able to access mentors and not having a current manager who supported their upward movement within the company despite knowing their wishes. It was the women participants conclusion that in their direct managers view point, the idea of motherhood and leadership co-existing was just not an option.

Choice and balance of work and motherhood. The theme of choice as it related to leadership emerged in my analysis of the data. The women spoke of having to balance their want and desire to succeed in their leadership positions with the realities of their current situations and responsibilities at home and what fell in line with their values and what was important to them It appeared that there was a constant inner battle of whether or not to take the next step and fight for their chance

to move up the ladder and what they could handle. A data analytics manager at a local hospital who has three girls under the age of five reported also:

> It's always a challenge, I want to do more at work, I know I have more to contribute and I could really dig in and do a great job here. I'd be a great manager, but I also can't be leaving work as a manager every time my kid needs to go to the doctor. I know that many of the managers here carry a cell phone to be on call, how am I supposed to take a call at night with a screaming baby in the background? And having another baby? Forget it, how do you stay out of work for a few months and just expect to return like nothing happened in the meantime. I really can't consider going for a promotion until my little ones are in school, at least.

This theme seemed to encapsulate a number of different topics as it pertained to choice. The idea of whether or not to pursue the next level in leadership was the main theme, but other points where brought up as well. It seemed that women not only considered if they had the time or commitment to take the next steps, but also planned for years down the road when having children. They also reported that their values were always at play. The idea that they were giving up on being a "good mom" if you dedicated yourself to your career; there was a perception and indeed a worry that as a leader, one had to only be dedicated to the job, and the appearance of having outside responsibilities did not appear professional. While none of the study participants could point to specific instances where they were out right told they should not pursue the next level, there was a shared feeling of needing to make a choice between having a family and devoting time being a leader or building your career.

Good enough mom vs. good enough leader. The theme of the so called "perfect mom" arose when speaking of leadership, but it also arose when discussing motherhood as well. Women conveyed feelings of constantly being judged at work for leaving early or going out on maternity leave, but they also stated they felt judged in general about being a mother. A manager at a bank with three children noted:

> I feel like I am constantly defending my choice to have children or have more children…whether I am being a good mom or not, whether I contributed enough to the bake sale or I have my kids in enough afterschool activities. Or if I even should be a mother. There is this bias towards being the perfect mom and when you fall short of that idea, it's just all crap.

That point was also echoed by a pharmacist with three children in elementary school and how she compared herself to other mothers at her children's school or other women she worked with:

> I don't really know what I am doing, like ever. If I spend too much time at work, then I have let my kids down and I am an awful mom. If I take off of work to spend time with them, then I am not holding up my end of the deal on being an awesome employee, it's like there is a woman out there that is doing it all and the rest of us are just not measuring up. Seriously, can she just stop? She's making the rest of us look bad.

The women spoke of an ideal image of a mother and the bias towards that image. They felt that anything short of that image was just not cutting it. What continued within that discussion was the idea that feelings of inadequacy surrounding the idea of a lack of support were felt by many of the women participants. This

support or lack of support came at them from all angles, whether it is their employers, employees or even their own families. Many of the mothers spoke about the idea that they just did not ever feel that they were fully meeting the ideal image of being a mom and worried that their values were slipping by choosing one over the other. They noted a lack of support as the main reason for feeling this way, which in turn made them feel like they had to do it all on their own, thus leading them to ultimately feel inadequate, as discussed below by data analytics manager:

> It is hard to feel like you are doing a good job when everything is a battle, when I told my boss at work that I was pregnant, her first response was how long are you going to be out? I felt like I let her down and by getting pregnant, I was no longer a good worker. Then my baby comes along and I have literally no clue as to what I am doing, so I feel like I am letting her down too. I just mainly feel in general like I am letting everyone down.

Another participant, who managed an insurance agency with a six month old noted:

> No one told me how hard this was going to be. I can't be a good mom and do all the other stuff I did before well, as well. It's like either or, I can either be really good at being a mom or I can be really good at my job, I don't have it in my wheelhouse to do both.

When discussing the idea of support in the workplace, whether this is more flexible job hours, daycare availability or even longer and paid maternity leave, the theme of policy inadequacy continued. It appeared that it was a constant struggle for the participants to decide where and how to best spend their time. They felt that no matter where they put their attention, they were always falling short of the expectations. The

issue of partner involvement arose as well and was discussed. Many of the women stated that they did have a partner at home that was also employed, however, they did not share the domestic duties and because of that, they continued to feel inadequate at times. For example, the principal of a school with two children noted:

> If he actually stepped in and helped out, I think I would fall over dead. Seriously, I would wonder where my husband was and who this man in his place was! All joking aside, it is never really a question. I mean my job is just as important as his, but when the kids get sick, I stay home, which is fine. I wouldn't want it any other way, but a small part of me feels like why does my job have to suffer, I feel like I am not being fair to my employer yet his employer never suffers from him being out due to a sick child. I just always feel that I am not doing enough for someone or something.

There was a feeling of constant judgement surrounding whatever choices these women made as mothers and as leaders. If they chose to take the entire maternity leave afforded by *FMLA*, they felt judged. If they left their children home with their husbands and went on a business trip, they felt judged. If they baked cookies for the bake sale at school or did not bake cookies for the bake sale at school, they felt judged. They noted that the country as a whole, in their opinion, did not set mothers up for success. With this regard, a mother of three, who manages a bank noted:

> I get a lot of support from my other mom friends, but that's about it. There's nothing in this country's laws or policies that says, we support you as a mom. I mean I can't get paid when I am out on maternity leave. My husband can't have any time off, because apparently he is not to be involved in the child

rearing. I can't do anything right, according to all the mommy shamers and I just overall am not supposed to have both a family and be successful in my career- those are juxtapose positions I guess.

While the women suggested that some of the judgement was felt and not overt, they raised a good point about the lack of support that United States maternity leave policies have for women and mothers. There is an idea with the feminist movement that women can have it all in the United States, but at the same time the idea of leadership and motherhood may not be included in that "all."

Motherhood is hard, and there is a huge bias towards the "correct" way of doing it. Women reported feeling like they were constantly being judged and were overall just not equipped to do it. The choices that they had to make daily when it came to how to be a good mother and a good leader at the same time seemed overwhelming. Most often the topic of a lack of support at their work place by employers, employees, fellow moms and their countries policies arose surrounding the major themes as well.

Conclusion

When reporting on the findings of both Finland and the United States, a picture with very stark differences in the experiences of female leadership and motherhood emerges, that will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. What is similar is that motherhood leads to substantial personal changes and behavioral reorganization in both personal and professional lives. In general all the women reported that motherhood affected their leadership roles in many ways for both the better and the worst. Where the difference arose was that both groups of women

noted that motherhood affected their leadership experience and vice versa. While both seemed to be inextricably intertwined, each country clearly has very different struggles. Some of these struggles were addressed and aided by parental leave policies in both country contexts, while some of the struggles were, unfortunately, left out. In the following chapter, I will explore the possible meanings of the findings presented as they relate to the research and their connection to previous literature and suggestions for improvements going forward.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of women in leadership who had access to paid maternity leave and those that did not. The study took place in two locations, Finland and the United States. Using qualitative research methodology, the data was collected by means of individual interviews and two focus groups in both countries. Viewing these experiences through the lens of feminist, leadership, and social role theories, this study explored the perceived relationships between barriers to female leadership and parental leave policies as it exists within the two countries.

This study was conducted in Helsinki, Finland and Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, United States. Data collected pertains to women's experiences using maternity leave in both countries, their subsequent return to work, and perceived effect on leadership roles. This comparative study includes women in the United States who do not have access to paid maternity leave and their experience returning to work and women in Finland who do have access to paid maternity leave and their experiences with female leadership.

It was hoped that this study would contribute to the larger body of literature that has neglected to address the issue of a lack of paid maternity leave and the effects it has on women, especially when it comes to those in leadership positions. Previous studies note that women's leadership experiences are affected and influenced by gender, race, class, sexuality, and motherhood (e.g., Chassin, et. al, 1985). Much of the literature on the topic points to the statement that women are underrepresented in every level of leadership. When considering previous studies on gender roles and inequality between sexes, women have had to fight at every level to be seen as viable candidates for jobs; these jobs that were typically reserved for men. While other articles note that this categorization of jobs can be explained by social role

theories and what our expected norms are, research into leadership theory has shown time after time that there is no one gender that is reserved for leadership (Crosby, et. al, 2004; Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). What is lacking in the research is the link between achieving gender parity and balancing domestic responsibilities so that more women have the opportunity to pursue leadership roles.

In this chapter, significant findings of the study are compared to existing literature reviewed in Chapter three. These finds as they relate to Finland surround themes of 1) family values and time off, 2) skills gained and developed through motherhood, 3) motherhood-related changes and career choices, and 4) motherhood and leadership downfalls. The United States research yielded the following themes: 1) policy falling short, 2) choice between career and maternity leave, 3) gender barriers to leadership positions, 4) choice and balance of work and motherhood, and 5) good enough mom vs. good enough leader. Policy implications will be addressed as well as the significance of findings for social work profession and recommendations for future research will be discussed.

In this chapter, I review the findings as presented in the previous chapter and summarize their implications to social work practice as a whole and discuss why this study is important to the larger context of women in leadership. By answering the research questions posed by this study, suggestions for improvements for women in leadership positions will be presented. In this chapter significant findings of the study will be compared to existing literature reviewed in chapter three and elaborated on. Policy implications will be addressed as well as the significance to social work and recommendations for future research.

According to research conducted within the United States, the ideal American worker is "perpetually available, has no outside responsibilities or interests, rarely gets sick and

prioritizes work over all else (Eagly & Woods, 2012). This looming ideal worker expectation makes it difficult to cultivate a life outside of work. For American women specifically, this ideal can be mired with complications. For those women who are planning on motherhood at some point, American women are expected to give everything they have to their jobs if they expect to ascend up the ranks and still somehow go through giving birth, recovering, and raising their children to only end up leading a life where their choices are constantly questioned and they fall short of all expectations around. Women in the United States, once they become mothers, are also seen as less promotable, less likely to be leadership material, and less committed (Eagly & Woods, 2012). Interestingly, men on the other hand are seen, when they become fathers as, more promotable, more committed and more capable (Eagly & Woods, 2012). As a country, the United States also believes that the best mothers are those that are available to their children, full time. This hopefully paints a clear picture of the problem that women faced when juggling leadership and motherhood and mirrors the findings of this research.

Perala-Littunen (2007) asserts that motherhood is a source of female power in Finland. Finns believe that a virtuous mother plays a key role in rearing decent citizens with high moral standards. While the majority of Finnish women work full time, though they are not regarded as the caretakers who carry the primary responsibility for children and the household; that duty is shared equally by both sexes. Finnish society has also adopted the egalitarian employment model, and while men in practice still have greater access to positions of power, social prestige, higher rewards and greater resources, expertise in general is considered crucial to the success of an organization and the society as whole (Perala-Littunen, 2007). It is within this role that organizations need leadership that inspires, supports

and develops employees who work together and learn from each other. The skills that support these types of activities such as building, nurturing, and caring are all characteristics of mothering. When seen from the viewpoint, women managers that have experience with motherhood have a huge advantage in fulfilling an effective role, and the Finns understand and embrace this. While Finnish women noted that barriers did exist for them prior to parenthood, it is interesting how after becoming a mother, their leadership careers seemed too improved. These mothers noted that with the paid time off, they felt better suited to maintain a positive work life balance and with the addition of children they were better able to relate to other mothers that where their employees when they returned. When this basic understanding of key characteristics is combined with the multiple public benefits afforded to Finnish citizens that support motherhood, the result is women who feel empowered with their choices to be both a mother and a leader.

Discussion of Findings: Finland

The focus of the research centers around three main topics: social policy, leadership, and motherhood. The overall experience with parental leave policy and the role that it plays in leadership and motherhood were reported consistent with the needs identified by the participants. Finnish participants spoke with pride about their country, their values, and their roles within society. The countries' commitment to caring for its citizens was evident, and the majority of study participants endorsed agreement with how their society values family.

Consistent with Kinnunen and Mauno's (1998) findings, who reviewed gender differences as it relates to work and family conflict in Finland, participants in my study stated that there was little to no conflict when it comes to the balancing of work and life between partners. The availability of social services available in Finland, such as day-care and school

meals, has meant that even women with preschool children can participate in full-time employment. Consequently, social expectations concerning male and female employment such as the expectation that women take more domestic type jobs and men take on more physical forms of employment, consistent with social role theory, are similar, as reported by subjects as well. Many of the participants reported because they did not have to worry about who was taking care of their children and where they were, they felt they could really concentrate on work duties when needed. It was also noted that since their children did not start daycare until age one, there was little guilt or turmoil over leaving them with care takers. It should also be noted that because there was no prescribed duties to men and women within the social roles, there was limited conflict when it came to work duties and home duties.

   None of the interviewed participants voiced any issues with their employers when they enacted their benefits. Many reported that the process was very smooth, with no negativity or bias noted on the part of their organization. It appeared that because this is such an accepted practice, in addition to the value that their country places on families and children, the system in general has worked to eliminate any prejudice or oppression that women in similar situations in other countries without access to such progressive policies and support may feel or be facing.

   Also, consistent with previous literature was the theme of gender equality and values. Hiilamo (2002) noted that with the creation of the Child Allowance, families were given more flexibility to arrange childcare needs to suit their individual employment situations. The primary goals of parental leave policies have been to promote the sharing of childcare responsibilities within the family, to support fatherhood, and to minimize the damage that

long periods of absence from the workforce may have on a woman's career by securing their spot in the leadership realm. Participants reported that in Finland and within their own families, both the mother and father share child rearing duties. Many noted that while mothers took more paid time off of work than the fathers, none of the participants stated that their male partner did not participate. As previously reviewed in chapter two, the action of the government in 2013 to divide the child home care allowance period between parents so that each parent could use no more than half of the total allowance of 832 days, appears to be working to its stated intention as was shared by the participants of this study (STM, 2014).

Economics always plays a role when deciding to expand a family. This was no different in the findings that emerged from the Finnish research. However, as reported by the mothers in this study, the discussion usually surrounds the idea of finances and the question of can the families afford to financially support another child long term rather than can we afford to take time off when the baby is born. Due to the paid family leave policies, not one respondent made note of worrying about the economic impact of having extended time off of employment on the families' expansion or financial stability.

When speaking of leadership and social roles in the country, many participants did not report any feelings that women were regarded less for leadership roles or that their childbearing played any significant role in negatively altering their chances for a promotion. Many respondents also revealed that the main child caring duties still fell on them. As women, they all took the majority of the time off, and fathers, while involved, did not equally utilize their full paid time off. Sadie's (2005) research supports the idea that this is one of the largest constraints that women face is the patriarchal system within which we continue to reside.

Worthy of note is that Hiilamo (2002) found that while Finland's social policies were put in place to effectively give women an equal playing field; they still have not fully addressed all the needs of mothers, as mothers are still far more likely than fathers to care for children under age three at home during the parental leave period. These findings are supported by other scholars as well (Haataja, 2004). While Finnish mothers usually work full time, the accessibility of social services and paid maternity leave has led to a decrease in the female labor force and has not shown an increase in part time work among women, as was initially expected (Hiilamo 2002). The mothers report that gaining access to public daycare continues to be an issue. Many daycares hold long waiting lists and often times mothers are forced to utilized daycare centers miles away from their home or work due to capacity issues. When faced with the idea of putting your child in a daycare that is not of your choice, or returning to work, many of the participates reported choosing to stay home longer with their children.

When considering that Miller (2008) found that, on average, women in the United States' earnings decrease by 4 percent for every child that she bears, a figure that sounds even more brutal when compared to the fact that after men have kids, their earnings increase, on average, by 6 percent, there is no denying that motherhood makes an economic and practical dent in the shape and solidity of their careers. Finnish women also reported discrepancies in their salaries as compared to their male counterparts. They stated this was not a surprise, when taking into account the amount of time they spend away from their jobs to care for their children.

What can be noted is that the Finnish women who participated in the study felt that in general, motherhood led to a change in how they viewed leadership and how they viewed their

roles as mother. This change in view is considered positive and important, with many of the participants describing how motherhood has made them better leaders. With an increase to their abilities regarding connections, as well as increases to their emotional, moral and social interactions with their staff as well, the addition of children to their lives was viewed as a positive when intertwined with leadership.

One interesting finding that is not previously addressed by the literature is this idea that when allowing women substantial subsidized time off after having their children, by their own report, their leadership skills and knowledge increased. The women in Finland noted a marked improvement in their ability to connect with others and felt that overall their leadership skills were enhanced by their new skills gained during the time they spent home caring for their children.

The study participants also reported that adding children to their lives allowed them to clarify their interests and purpose from a leadership perspective. While this idea has not been presented in the literature previously, the participants acknowledged that the paid time off gave them a chance to ponder their time and how it was best spent in regards to their work-life balance. The women also noted that having paid time off allowed them to return to work with a new sense of enrichment and satisfaction for their jobs and their families. This specific finding would benefit from future studies on the topic to gain a deeper understanding of the connection between paid time off and work-life balance.

Discussion of Findings: United States

The five themes that emerged in the analysis of the US date are 1) policy falling short, 2) choice between career and maternity leave, 3) gender barriers to leadership positions, 4) choice and balance of work and motherhood, and 5) good enough mom vs. good

enough leader. Consistent with literature reviewed in chapter three, all of these topics were

revealed and explored. The overall experience with maternity policy provisions and its

intersection with leadership and motherhood were reported to be dire, to say the least. In

general the discussion surrounding pregnancy and immediate postpartum life itself in the

United States has shown to play a serious role in slowing professional momentum for women

for whom the simple and celebrated act of having a baby turns out to be a stunningly

precarious economic and professional choice. Previous research in the United States

(Lueptow et al, 2001; Elprana, et al., 2015; Chan & Drasgow, 2015) has shown that these

gender inequalities in post-childbirth careers can be understood through a host of historical

assumptions about mothers and fathers; hoary ideas about providers versus nurturers,

masculine responsibility versus feminine pliability. There is also, of course, the enormous cost

of unsubsidized American childcare, a factor that leads many more women than men to drop

out of the workforce or cut back on their professional commitments. Of note is that all of these

statements above were fully supported and emerged in the research completed for this

dissertation.

The *Family and Medical Leave Act* as supported by previous research and current

reports by participants continues to fall short of offering much support or assistance to

women postpartum. Consistent with previous literature, in a study by Anthony (2008), *FMLA*

was reported to ignore that woman may have a greater share of the burden of caregiving in

reality. Participants in this study stated that while 12 weeks of job protection was helpful, it

was far from providing them with all the support needed when bearing a child. Miller (2008)

has noted that pregnancy and postpartum life plays a serious role in slowing professional

momentum for women as the act of carrying and birthing a baby often turns out to be a

stunningly precarious economic and professional choice. Many of the study respondents noted that one of their first thoughts after finding out they were pregnant, was how am I going to afford taking time off of work, in both a financial and professional way. A few noted that they immediately began to analyze their monthly budget to see where they could scrape up a little bit of savings before the birth to cover the lack of paychecks for three months. An added stressor was that many of these women were responsible for the family budgets, therefore got little support from their husband in figuring out this "mess" in one participant's words. Many had hoped for changes to allow to for a paid benefit in the near future.

Amuedo-Dorantes & Kimmel (2005) note that on average mothers around the world have lower wages than non-mothers even after controlling for fixed effects. Wage declines do not occur instantaneously after childbirth, but rather wage growth is heavily dependent on the work that is put in. Promotions may go to people who are devoted to the job, who rearrange schedules to deal with immediate crises at work, who seem focused almost entirely on work (Amuedo-Dorantes & Kimmel, 2005). Reportedly, women, who usually bear the brunt of the childrearing responsibilities, are not seen as people who are entirely focused on work, thereby putting them again at a disadvantage. Parents, and probably disproportionately mothers, could face conflicting job-family commitments and thus see far slower wage growth. Responses from many of the mothers who participated in this study were very consistent with the literature noted above. Mothers voiced that they felt that they had at one time or another been passed over for a promotion because of the simple fact that they were mothers. They felt that since their employers knew their family dynamics that it held them back from getting considered for leadership positions and raises. Campione (2008) cites that

parenting is often more closely associated with mothers than fathers, and the responsibility of parenting is assumed to prevent the long hours which often indicate appropriate effort and loyalty in the eyes of the employer. Therefore mothers may be perceived as less of a match to the image of an ideal employee and particularly to that of a leader, which is echoed also in Kugelburg (2006) and the results of this research.

Consistent with previous literature as well is the overwhelming theme of the traditional definition of leadership and how it is defined by maleness. As we currently exist in a male dominated society, despite the fact that it is possible to develop leadership traits in any individual, the typical idea of male leadership continues to be regarded as the accepted form of leadership (De la Rey, 2005). Respondents in this study echoed that the patriarchal system within which we reside continued to define for us the role of leader, and it is felt by women every day. Mothers in this study reported that while their skills, talents, and education were on par with men in their field, their typical role continued to be confined to the lower levels of the organization. They were often left to be the ones to leave work if a child was ill, or give up promotions as too time constraining, while their husbands faced none of these issues. Being thought of as a leader in their occupations meant that they also had to give up their families, per the participants in this study.

Also consistent with previous literature was the fact that mothers stated they often were not considered for or forfeit leadership positions after giving birth. Many reported not returning to their previous roles. Several participants of the study find that working is just not cost effective when compared to child care costs, considering that women still are earning 78.3 percent pay of their male counter parts (Milkie & Peltola, 1997). Others

reported that balancing the needs of family and work can be overwhelming. Anthony (2008) states that woman typically has a greater share of the burden of caregiving for children.

In addition to calling attention to the gender bias within the *FMLA*, respondents reported that *FMLA* falls extremely short in addressing the economic implications of bearing children by not providing any paid time off. Consistent with findings noted in Mory & Pistilli (2001), women noted that one of the hardest situations to deal with was funding their time off after having a child. As addressed in the literature, without allowing for a paid maternity benefit, what help really is the *FMLA,* as the vast majority of those eligible for it, cannot afford to live without pay for three months. Many of the women spoke not only of their own situations, but of those they supervised or knew and simply stated that without the guarantee of pay, most of them returned to work far earlier than even their own doctors recommended. Some ignored given medical advice and returned to work as early as two weeks due to being unable to afford staying out without pay longer. Respondents also spoke of the guilt they felt associated with leaving their very young babies to be cared for by daycares and sitters while they returned to a job in which they ultimately felt undervalued, underpaid, and unable to move up the career ladder. Many questioned if it was all worth it.

One of the themes that emerged was the idea of a good enough mother versus a good enough leader, which mirrors the concept of "good enough mother" that was developed by Donald Winnicott. In short, Winnicott (1953) states, that a mother is neither good nor bad nor the product of illusion, but is a separate and independent entity. The idea of good-enough mother starts off with an almost complete adaptation to her infant's needs, and as time proceeds she adapts less and less completely, gradually, according to the infant's growing ability to deal with her failure. Her failure to adapt to every need of the child helps

them adapt to external realities. The Finnish seem to embrace this idea as support given to the child is very focused in the begging with a time off allowed to ensure all babies' initial needs are met. The failure Winnicott (1989) refers to is not specific to bad things that mothers do that damage their children, but instead, the perception of the child as the child grows and develops that the mother is no longer able to "fix" everything or make it all better.

In addition to the guilt for returning to work early felt by the mothers in this study, they also noted a constant battle of wondering if they were committed enough to their employer. Hochschild (1997) discussed this same guilt, which was echoed by study participants and discussed many times during data collection, when reporting how women made decisions regarding taking the next steps within their organization. He noted that juggling multiple demands such as retaining primary care-giving responsibility for children, coupled with performing the bulk of household chores leads them to feel overworked and often question if they should be taking leadership positions because of the stress involved and multiple barriers to overcome.

All the participants noted that they felt this guilt. The idea of trying to balance both the needs of the children and the needs of their employers held many back from taking the next step. While on an individual level they felt that they could do well at caring for their children OR they could do well at their jobs. The idea of handling both roles seemed overwhelming to many.

Comparison of Findings in Finland and the United States

When comparing women in the two countries on their experiences with paid and unpaid family leave as it intersects with their leadership potential, there many differences and a few similarities. What is evident is that where a country places value in regards to family

and invests in that value, makes all the difference in the world as evident by the difference in answers regarding support from women in each country. While the women in Finland voiced that they felt supported, the policies that specifically support women and children are also there very evident as well. On the other hand, while the women in the United States felt somewhat supported in regards to the event of giving birth and job protection, the lack of financial support was overwhelming to them. What is also evident is that women, regardless of access to paid leave, continue to face barriers to leadership positions.

One specific gap in the literature that I identified was how to achieve gender parity and the impact that it has on women's leadership experiences. Findings of this study have shed light on that issue by revealing that gender parity is clearly a byproduct of the support systems and policies that exist where the mothers reside. Finland has recognized that policies that support gender parity help advance women's equal participation with men as decision makers in shaping sustainable development in their society. They also support women and girls the realization of their full human rights and most importantly reduce gender inequalities in access to resources and benefits. All of these objectives aim to not only make Finland a better society when it comes to gender equality, but it places Finland in a better position for sustainability and success overall. The country has placed a strong value on taking care of its own. They have realized that empowerment is about people, both women and men, taking control over their lives, setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems, and developing self-reliance. It is not only a collective, social and political process, but an individual one as well.

Finnish society has placed a strong value not only on family but on gender equality as well. Many of their polices are not gender specific and therefore go a long way in breaking

down the idea of gender roles.   As stated above, the idea of gender encompasses the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviors of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). These roles and expectations are learned, changeable over time, and variable within and between cultures. Finland has taken time to understand the different experiences between women and men. They have paid special attention to their policies and support systems to identify the varied roles played by women and men, girls and boys in the household, community, workplace, political processes, and economy and make sure the needs of both are being met equality (Milkie & Peltola, 1997). These different roles usually result in women having less access than men to resources and decision-making processes, and less control over them, however due to the special attention they have paid to achieving gender equality; they understand that every program and project affects women and men differently. Women and men have different perspectives, needs, interests, roles and resources and those differences may also be reinforced by class, race, ethnicity, or age (Milkie & Peltola, 1997). Policies, programs, and projects must address the differences in experiences and situations between and among women and men. This level of support and this attention to the different experiences of men and women is not felt by mothers in the United States, where more emphasis is placed on the individual as opposed to communal support.

Finnish society places a strong value on family. By having policy that relieves a number of burdens that women face when having children, constituents are in a better position to focus on raising their children to be the best they can be without worrying about whether or not they can meet their basic needs. Having access to policies and benefits such

as paid family leave, left the respondents feeling cared for, supported, and sustained by way

of financial support. None of the common arguments, like higher taxes, were a deterrent to

any of the participants in this study and many, in fact, were willing to pay more into a

government that took such good care of its members.

On the other hand, women in the United States painted a grim picture of being

pregnant and being woman in a leadership role. The country's only policy that addresses time

off due to childbirth does not include the benefits of economic assistance when on leave.

The first choice a woman (or man) must make is how much time to take off and how she is

going to afford that. While many of the participants were covered by the *FMLA*, very few can

actually afford to take unpaid time as reported by the participants in the study. While every

single one of them was covered by the act, not all of them took the allotted 12 weeks of

protected time due to financial reasons. This theme was voiced numerous times by the

respondents. Unfortunately, for the majority of new parents, whose penniless postpartum

months were simply the result of the way things are in a country that venerates motherhood

but in practice accords it zero economic value many choices had to be made when it came to

post-maternity time and when to return to work.

Women also reported that actually using the policy provisions was an issue many

times in their organization. While it protects a woman's position within her company while

she is recovering, it does not allow for a replacement and leaves companies with a reduced

workforce. This impact is felt by women when they have to juggle the feelings of guilt for

leaving their team short-staffed when taking the time off to care for their children with the

feelings of guilt of leaving their child to return to work. It is important to note that this is a

systemically induced pressure on women, something that the women in Finland did not

reveal worrying about as Finns have a system in place that utilizes a temporary workforce to fill the spots of those out on maternity leave. As reported by participants in my study, these temporary workers are usually brought on about a month prior to the mother leaving on her maternity time; they are hired and trained by the woman who is leaving and then when the woman's maternity leave is up, she returns to work and works side by side her replacement for about a month as well to get back in the swing of things. Respondents in this study spoke of how seamless and useful this process was.

Policy Context

The two countries' political, economic, and social contexts should not be underestimated in the discussion of my findings. Finland's social and economic model as well as political ideology differs from that of the United States. Finland's model is referred to as the "Nordic Model," otherwise known as social democracy (Eklund, Berggren, & Trägårdh, 2011). This model combines free market capitalism with a comprehensive welfare state and collective bargaining at the national level. Included in this model are: a high percentage of workers belonging to labor unions, the state provision of free education and free healthcare, as well as extensive pension payments for retirees funded by taxes. Support for a "universalist" welfare state, aimed specifically at enhancing individual autonomy and promoting social mobility, is a top priority in Finland. A corporatist system involving a tripartite arrangement where representatives of labor and employers negotiate wages and labor market policy mediated by the government and a commitment to widespread private ownership, free markets, and free trade rank high in importance to the country as well. In the context of the Nordic model, "social democracy" refers to a set of policies for promoting

economic security and opportunity within the framework of capitalism rather than a replacement for capitalism (Kenworthy, 2014).

Social democracy aims to create the conditions for capitalism to lead to greater democratic, egalitarian, and solidaristic outcomes. It is a political, social, and economic ideology that Finland has embraced that supports economic and social intervention to promote social justice within the framework of a liberal democratic and capitalist economy. Modern social democracy is characterized by a commitment to policies aimed at curbing inequality, oppression of underprivileged groups and poverty, including support for universally accessible public services such as care for the elderly, child care, education, health care, and workers' compensation (Hoefer, 2013*).*

The findings in Finland can, in part, be explained by the social democratic system as the Nordic model is known for its emphasis on maximizing labor force participation, promoting gender equality, egalitarian and extensive benefit levels, the large magnitude of income redistribution, and liberal use of expansionary fiscal policy (Esping-Andersen, 1991). The Finnish Employment Act was designed to promote three of the tenants listed above: labor force participation, promoting gender equality, egalitarian and extensive benefit levels. By allowing paid time off after the birth of children, women are encouraged not only to be a part of the workforce, but return to their positions after the maternity leave. Many of the benefits and the ways that the benefits are operationalized (i.e. the temporary workforce) have allowed for more women to take time off after having children and for the parental duties related to child bearing to be much more egalitarian. The fact that these benefits are accessible to both men and women alike goes a long way in promoting gender equality and a more fair division of labor.

When comparing the United States' system of democracy and capitalism to Finland, there has been much misunderstanding of alternative system in Finland. Lakey (2016) asserts that Americans "generally misunderstand the nature of the Nordic welfare state" (p.13). Americans imagine that "welfare state" means the U.S. welfare system to the extreme, where benefits are provided to all and no one has to work for them. Actually, the Nordics demolished their American-style welfare system at least 60 years ago and substituted it with universal services. This means everyone, rich or poor, gets free higher education, free medical services, free eldercare, and so on. Universal benefits can be seen as superior to the means-testing characteristic of their old welfare system that they discarded, and that the United States still has. While the amount of cash benefits that are paid out still depend on the prior salary earned, everyone is eligible for at least a living wage. The findings of this study also relate to this idea, where women in Finland felt cared for, while women in the United States still reported that they struggled with every aspect of their ambivalent society.

The current social, economic, and political system of the United States is founded on the principles of capitalism. Characteristics central to capitalism include private property, capital accumulation, wage labor, a price system, and competitive markets (Stillwell, 2022). In a capitalist market economy, decision-making and investment are determined by every owner of wealth, property or production ability in financial and capital markets, whereas prices and the distribution of goods and services are mainly determined by competition in goods and services markets (Stillwell, 2002). Because of the unequal distribution of wealth is this market, those in power are those with money. This dynamic reinforces the idea of individualism where everyone provides for themselves. Critics of capitalism argue that it establishes power in the hands of a minority capitalist class that exists through the

exploitation of the majority working class; prioritizes profit over social good, natural resources, and the environment; and is an engine of inequality and economic instabilities (Stillwell, 2002). Because the principles of capitalism favor the individual and the power of the market over the equal distribution of wealth, there is little protection afforded to the worker or the citizen. This difference in ideology about where the importance of power is (in people versus in the market) is evident in the *FMLA*. Limited protection is afforded to the workers; however, no means for financial assistance is available, thus again, protecting the market, not the people. By using this manner of market system, the United States has set themselves up to focus on the individual successes and experiences as opposed to the successes and experiences of their citizens as whole.

An additional component of the Finnish context is its pro-natal stance on child-bearing and rearing. Finland has a long tradition and history of defining and implementing pro-natal policy. Pronatalism is the belief in the support of human reproduction (McKeown, 2014). Policies that are seen as pronatal usually promote child-bearing and parenthood and see them as desirable for social cause and ultimately needed to ensure the continuance of humanity (McKeown, 2014). Pronatalism in public policy typically seeks to create financial and social incentives for populations to reproduce, such as providing tax incentives that reward having and supporting children. These types of policies result in a decrease to the cost and negative impact of parenthood on a country's citizens. As stated in Hiilamo (2002), one of the primary goals of parental leave policies is to promote the sharing of childcare responsibilities within the family, to support fatherhood, and to minimize the damage that long periods of absence from the workforce may do to a woman's career. By initiating a paid parental leave policy, available to both parents, supplying a baby box to expecting families, and offering

free daycare to ease the transition back to work for families; Finnish citizens enjoy the

benefits of adding to their families as opposed to the hardship it can be in the United States.

The governmental institution Väestöliitto has been promoting the successes of families in the

past 50 years by creating, implementing, and supporting policies that are family-oriented and

pro-natal. The main focuses of this organization are: public health, improving the living

conditions, welfare of children, and improving the financial situation of the families

(Hiilamo, 2002). The value of family and child-bearing and rearing support is evident in

Finland not only as a value but as policy. The lack thereof in the US on both accounts of

values and policy is a stark difference that would benefit from further research on the topic.

It is clearly evident that Finland takes a much more pro-natal stance to policy and

support than the United States. While there are a few states within the United States that have

begun to take a more pro-natal stance on the state level and are offering baby boxes and paid

parental leave, unless the overall opinion of the United States policy changes in regards to

our capitalist values and the way the United States society values reproduction, there is little

hope for changes to parental leave provisions on the federal level.

What is similar among the respondents in both countries that participated in this study

continues to be that women still face the same barrier to leadership. However, women in the

US noted that juggling multiple demands such as retaining primary care-giving responsibility

for children, coupled with performing the bulk of household chores leads them to feel

overworked, which was also echoed by previous research (Milkie & Peltola 1997). They

often feel "overwhelmed by multiple responsibilities" especially given the growing numbers

of dual-earner and single-parent households (Hochschild, 1997, p 17). As such, it is little

wonder that respondents in both countries reported that they were hesitant to take up positions of leadership because of the stress involved and multiple barriers to overcome.

While Finnish women noted that barriers did exist for them prior to parenthood, it is interesting how after becoming a mother, their leadership careers seemed to improve. These mothers noted that with the paid time off, they felt better suited to maintain a positive work-family life balance and with the addition of children they were better able to relate to other mothers that where their employees when they returned. On the other side, women in the United States spoke of barriers that were not diminished with the addition of children to their lives. In fact, taking unpaid time off after birth was a burden to them, and their work-life balance seemed to decrease as well overall.

Due to gender beliefs that differ in both countries, the typically defined role of a woman, despite leaps in education and entries into the job markets, remains as the homemaker. This was echoed in the literature and by the respondents as well (Miller, 2008). Much previous research, such as Sadie (2005) notes that one of the largest constraints that women face is the patriarchal system within which women reside. The decision making powers continue to fall into the hands of men, and traditional beliefs about roles continue to endow modern day beliefs in the United States. The man, head of the household, is still defined as the bread winner (Sadie, 2005). This historical division of gender roles where women's identities are confined to the domestic sphere continues to be one of similarities related to barriers to women's leadership in the US as echoed by the participants in this study as well.

Of note is that little information in previous literature noted how motherhood added to a women's career. While that is not the case for the women in the United States, it is

interesting to note that Finnish women felt that not only was their relatability to others increased but their satisfaction with their actual position as well since they had had time off paid to think about all their choices and bond with their babies prior to returning to work. It appears that that time off, paid makes a big difference.

Implications

Policy implications. Women experience leadership differently than men do. They are questioned on their abilities, they are questioned on their commitment, and they are questioned on their loyalty and their division of attention. As evident by this research, they continue to carry the burden of most of the housework and the responsibly for child rearing. What is also evident is that the first step in fixing these misconceptions in beliefs is a shift in the United States in support of paid family. However, even before that, a change of this nature will not occur until the attitudes towards gender roles in general become more egalitarian, an adjustment in pronatal values and beliefs occur and capitalist values are modified. This research shows that employers in both countries continue to hold ambivalent beliefs about the traditional gender division of labor, but specifically that idea is widespread here in the United States. Changes in legislation in the more gender egalitarian direction, although necessary, are not sufficient for making the shift toward beliefs and practices that are more gender equal. The addition of paid parental leave to the *FMLA* benefits would be a good start.

While highly unlikely to occur despite the citied benefits, there may be some merit in the shift from a capitalist society to that of a Nordic nature. While it may not be a possibility within the United States, it is certainly a topic that would benefit from further exploration. Critics of capitalism argue that it establishes power in the hands of a minority capitalist class

that exists through the exploitation of the majority working class; prioritizes profit over social good, natural resources and the environment; and is an engine of inequality and economic instabilities. While, supporters argue that it provides better products through competition, creates strong economic growth, yields productivity and prosperity that greatly benefits society, as well as is most efficient system known for allocation of resources (Hiilamo, 2002). There is a big difference in the way that the women in Finland noted their experience with their country's policy to be as opposed to the women in the United States.

Many believe that the *FMLA* is a barrier itself, as it is focused on leave after birth but does not offer any financial incentives for the time off. As the birth process itself only affects women, the care required for a newborn can be distributed between both parents. While the United States' gender beliefs favor the women caring for children, with a shift in gendered ideas about child rearing and responsibilities, this belief could be neutralized.   Beliefs about the division of parental leave and the division of labor are essential given that beliefs predict behavior. While the *FMLA* allows for time off for either parent, this burden normally falls to the mother. One conclusion that can be reached from this research is that what is also needed is the deconstruction of traditional gender-role beliefs in general, especially in the case of men. As shown in the research completed in Finland, the country believes that both parents are responsible for the rearing of children. Their policies allow for both maternity and paternity time off and both are paid the same. The fact that their family policies not only allow for time off for both parents after the birth of a child, but actually encourage it supports gender equality even more. The other supports that are in place represent the idea that parenthood does not just happen to women, but having a workforce that is ready to fill any role, it is not a big deal for either gender to take time off after the birth of a child. Some

respondents in the Finnish portion of this study spoke of the fact that neighboring Sweden now required fathers to take a certain amount of time off after the birth of their child and that Finland was also moving in that direction. The United States taking the outlook that parenthood happens to both mothers and fathers and enacting policies that encourage fathers to utilize their benefits provided by *FMLA* and time off as well, would be a great first step.

Some suggestions made by participants in the United States included the idea of gender equality as it relates to parenting. This idea seemed to be the first step in the remediation of many barriers that women face within leadership. By redesigning the idea of leadership as character or skills based as opposed to gender based, the first step is completed. With the addition of paid family leave, that is used by both men and women, so as not to single anyone out, the second step is completed. Finally to split the parenting responsibilities between both genders, as is more the case in Finland, the third and final step would be completed. While this will not solve all the barriers to female leadership, it is a good place to start.

The narratives in this study also suggest developing an approach to leadership development in the workplace that changes the dynamic between how leaders are viewed and takes into account the role of women in society and the demands placed on them both personally and professionally. Leadership development programs tend to focus on the characteristics of leaders, helping individuals to identify their personal leadership styles and preferences. The moral discourse of leadership directs attention to an analysis of organizations and strategies for developing organizational cultures in which ethical behavior, including ethical leadership, is appreciated and nourished (Miller, 2008). However, there is no one source that point to explaining to women how they can have it all or develop in to

leaders under the current societal conditions in which they exist. A suggestion would be a

shift in thinking that changes the belief that only men can be leaders; qualities of a good

leader should be defined by characteristics without regard to their sex.

Implications for Social Work. Social workers often pride themselves on the ability

to help others. They have a list of six core values to adhere to: competence, committing to the

value of others, social justice, protecting the dignity and worth of a person, valuing human

relationships and integrity (NASW, 2012). As a profession that is widely recognized as

being dedicated to recognizing human potential, social workers are morally opposed to

restrictions on gender and especially the restrictions on women. While this study has

identified a number of barriers, both internalized and systematic, it is the role of the

profession to find a way to support and rekindle commitment to women and to serve as role

models for women who reside within systems that put one gender at a disadvantage. The

challenge remains to find personal ways to realize these professional commitments and social

justice issues.

The first direction for the application of social justice as it relates to women's

inequalities within policy and leadership would be to raise awareness in our own profession

about the needs of the most vulnerable and oppressed women around their experiences with

unpaid parental leave in our twenty-first century society, both locally and globally. Butler,

Ford, and Tregaskis (2007) have written about the frequent silencing of women's voices in

social work practice. They posited that it is part of the human condition to "give shape to

personal experiences, seek coherence through the process of selection and synthesis, ascribe

consequence and value by such means, and make those accounts available to others" (p.285).

They went on to show that "human understanding operates through storytelling and identity,

indeed a sense of self is constructed through the interrelation of life events and the meaning ascribed to the life story (p.285)." Further education as it relates to these issues social work practice could then offer a means to bring storytelling and identity to the forefront of an understanding of women's experiences, giving a voice to the voiceless and a start to the conversation that sparks change.

Littlefield, McLane-Davison, and Vakalahi (2015) report "that mechanisms of oppression that serve to subordinate the strengths, knowledge, experiences, and needs of women in families, communities, and societies to those of men are at the root of gender inequality." Emerging from the strengths perspective of social work, the basic principle of the present conversation emphasizes gender equality as opposed to inequality. At the core of gender equality is the value of womanhood and the need to ensure the health and well-being of women and girls. Women's participation in "different societal domains including economic opportunities, political empowerment, educational attainment, health, and well-being are all impacted by their roles (Littlefield, et al, 2015). Thus, structural weaknesses are major barriers for reforming efforts on gender equality. Challenging traditional notions of gender, which is defined as behavioral, cultural, and social characteristics that are linked to womanhood, is the basis for achieving gender equality by attending to how these characteristics govern the relationship between women and men and the power differences that impact choices and agency to choose (Littlefield, et al, 2015). The argument for gender equality as a social work issue relates to the idea that broad outcomes of gender equality around the globe include decreased poverty, increased social and economic justice, and better well-being and empowerment among men and women. Gender equality is a smart tool for

economic development, and consequently leadership because it can remove barriers to access and enhance productivity gains in a competitive world (Littlefield, et al, 2015).

Adhering to fundamental principles and personal beliefs is easier in theory than in practice. Even in the current social climate, women are still disadvantaged if they elect to pursue the traditional masculine version of professional success as well as the feminine ideal of personal satisfaction. Seeing the two visions as intertwined rather than at odds is ultimately the responsibility of the individual. As members of a profession of informed helpers, social workers can encourage a broader definition of the career–life balance challenge of women moving forward in their career. By advocating for change at the policy level to afford mothers to take time off paid after giving birth and continuing to fight for gender equality within society, the implications of this research could be felt broad range. At the profession's very core is advocating for policies that improve the quality of life for families, children, and communities around the world, and working with them directly to build their capacity to fully participate in societal institutions and organizations (Miller, 2008).

What many of these findings point to are system issues; however, while there has been much time spent on generating ideas about how to tackle the gender divide in the United States, what has not been done are the creation of policies that create system level changes. It is also evident that if social workers want to change the problems with gender equality in the United States, they must also understand the thinking that leads to the ideas that we have today as well.

In order for women to get the policies needed, social workers must acknowledge the differences that exist, own the power in that difference, and demand what we need to take

care of the next generation as our value of social justice demands. The absence of child benefits, dearth of subsidized high-quality childcare, and costly access to healthcare, low-performing public schools and high tuition costs for tertiary education are evidence of a government that talks about supporting families while neglecting the policies that would do so. Current United States social welfare policies push poor women to work and yet social norms push middle class and wealthy women to stay home. Taking care of one's own child should not be an economic luxury. The United States economic and social policies recognize childcare as a 'job' only if someone other than a parent is taking care of a child. If a woman is taking care of her own child, her contribution to the economy and society is not 'officially' acknowledged by society at large.

As an example of what changes could provide, the country of Sweden offers a glimpse of what might be accomplished in the name of achieving gender equality. Since the 1970s the Swedish government has promoted women's rights at home and in the workplace including abolishing joint taxation for spouse to encourage more women to work outside of the home, banning gender discrimination, and toughening penalties for sexual harassment by implemented a number of laws and social changes that are directed at reducing gender inequalities. Abend (2013) reports that today, these policies have resulted in "near parity in political representation, a near leveling of the playing field in the workplace, and fathers who share if not equally, then at least significantly in the raising of their children" (p. 40). More recently the country has begun efforts to implement gender neutral language and de-emphasize gender distinctions between boys and girls in school yards and classrooms. The measures are not embraced by everyone, but they represent a bold attempt to push the envelope on gender equality and a start as to where social workers can intervene.

While Finland remains a very pro-natal country due to their commitment to mothers, children and family, it is clear that the United States is not. Structural weaknesses such as the lack of leadership and coordination, financial disparities, disadvantages supported by existing structures, and lack of operational capacity have been noted by advocates as major barriers for reforming efforts on global gender equality, all systems noted in the United States and not in Finland (Blanchfield, 2010; World Bank, 2012). This is where social workers can intervene. It is difficult to imagine that the United States would move instantly to a country where paid family leave was approved or significant changes to *FMLA* were made, it is more possible to imagine that large corporations would take a step in that direction and offer paid family leave to their employees as we have started to see in some company giants. Promotion of social and economic justice across systems levels, from micro to macro, as part of the core values of the profession of social work is at the heart of the global gender inequality debate. Changing the focus of the debate from gender inequality to a conversation promoting gender equality is a likely first step toward reform and transformation.

Given that leave taken by fathers in the United States is almost nonexistent and in Finland is lower than women, the practical implications of this research, if we want society to be more supportive of shared leave, we are to focus on deconstructing gender roles in general, and motherhood and fatherhood specifically, including early childcare. This could be done through public campaigns that would offer different representations of motherhood and fatherhood and inform the general population and parents about the benefits of the father's participation in leave and childcare for the children's socio-emotional and cognitive outcomes. There are a number of different add campaigns that are currently in place in the United States that speak to adoption and note that anyone can be a parent. Billboards are all

over many highways with catchy phrases noting that all parenting takes is time. Perhaps this is a first step in the process and could be merged to encourage both men and women to share the duties and split the responsibilities. Social media is a powerful outlet these days as well and encouragement and kind words on the topic of paid family leave continue to gain momentum as well.

Having role models and mentors is a useful support structure for women. Mentors can have a critical effect on the career paths of women in helping them to navigate the barriers and obstacles at the work place. Mentoring also helps to develop self-esteem and aggressive managerial personalities, and overall nurtures future leaders (Growe & Montgomery, 2000) but then women must avail themselves for mentorship. Networking is also important, and can take the place of the "old boys club." According to Growe & Montgomery (2000), networking, role models, and mentors allow women to get advice, moral support, and contacts for information which would start to assist women leaders in pursuing the next steps of leadership, figuring out a work/life balance, and attaining the level of success with children that they wish too.

Irene Moutlana (2001) also contends that "women in leadership positions should not be shy to project feminine traits such as being caring, empathetic, trusting, sharing, and empowering" (p. 13). Women should acknowledge these traits as strengths and not weaknesses. It is possible that a persistent display of such values can make them "core values" that will be embraced in future organizations as the normal culture. Women have to learn to be comfortable in leadership, and embrace it (Moutlana, 2001). Role models of women that show that one does not have to be supermom can help women feel less pressure to be both supermom and super-leader at the same time. By educating women that they are

good enough moms and good enough leaders and by achieving gender equality nationwide, women can begin to feel that they can have it all. Now what this suggests is a shift in national thinking and culture, but when comparing the United States to Finland in regards to cultural attitudes, it can be done. To achieve gender parity, which in turn will inform policy and societal changes, women need to be willing and able to take up leadership positions. Utilizing the teachings of feminist and social role theory we need men willing and able to take on more domestic responsibilities so that more women have the opportunity to pursue demanding fields. Employers to embrace a more flexible workplace, allowing women and men to move in and out of the workforce as they balance careers, family, and personal goals, while recognizing that in leadership theory, tasks can be performed by both sexes with flexibility and still be successful. In essence, the United States society needs to intentionally engage in making diversity and inclusion work on a daily basis and utilize theories to help guide the way.

Future Research

Further research on the topic should include the exploration of additional barriers to motherhood and leadership as well as what can be done to intentionally engage in making diversity and inclusion work on a daily basis. As an inclusion criterion in this study, the women were required to be in a leadership role within their organization. While the definition of leadership was left up to the respondents, an area of future research should be considered in regards to the implications of the definition of a leader versus a manager. For the purpose of this study, the differences between these two roles were not explored. However, management consists of "controlling a group or a set of entities to accomplish a goal" whereas leadership often refers to a person's ability to "influence, motivate and enable

others to contribute to organizational success" (Nayar, p.22, 2013). Influence and inspiration separate leaders from managers, not power and control. Because of this difference of adding value versus counting value, exploration into the distinction between the two roles could yield a different result based on the added responsibilities of one position as opposed to the other as they relate to women and motherhood.

In relation to future areas for research in social work education, the topic of emerging female leaders within the social work and human services field should be explored. One of the social work profession's best pedagogical pathways is field education. By providing the opportunity for a field practicum experience, the school and the community can work together to develop the leadership potential in social work students who are female in particular. Educating students through a structured leadership program exposes them to a wide variety of practice experiences that assure their competence and creativity as they enter the profession. Future research should surround how much exposure students are getting to leading organizations and the barriers that they face to do so, especially as women and mothers. While much of the field education experience centers on students obtaining the knowledge, tools, and techniques necessary to be prepared candidates for employment, there should be ongoing commitment and research to making sure that students are also exposed to the information they need to succeed as viable leaders. Since many of these female students will go on to be mothers in leadership positions, allowing these women to see successful leaders in the social work field now, will go a long way in the future. By establishing partnerships between schools of social work and the social work community, students are provided with the foundation to grow into leaders and leaders who are mothers. By researching this foundation to evaluate how well the students are utilizing and maximizing

supervision and mentorship from experienced social workers and interacting and networking with social work leaders, future knowledge can be gained on not only how well we are preparing leaders, but how well we are preparing female social work leaders who are mothers.

To this end as well, future research should consider utilizing additional theories. For the purpose of this study three theories were utilized: feminist, social role, and leadership theory. As the findings emerged and the discussion took shape, it is evident there are many other theories that could be evaluated against the material that could make sense. Two that come to mind are conflict theory (Marx,1971) and individualism (Locke, 1698). Both of these theories could contribute additional information to the topic at hand in regards to social movements and the idea that power is unequally divided as it relates to conflict theory. Many could argue that the lack of equality between men and women in the United States could be viewed as one group trying to advance their own interests over the other, as this theory draws attention to conflict, dominance and oppression in social life. The theory of individualism would be an interesting approach as it relates to the differences between how the countries view their citizens and political system is at play.

A final consideration for future research should be exploration of the connection and implications of a social democratic state versus a capitalist state. An interesting approach would be the establishment of the link between the political/economic status of a country and their policies and the effect on women, motherhood, and leadership. While this was explored in this research the addition of other countries or the implementation of other methodology such as a quantitative approach would be useful.

In conclusion, efforts must be doubled in terms of ongoing future research that informs cutting-edge, cross-cultural and innovative models for guaranteeing gender equality across locations, cultures, and evolving situations; policy practice that challenges and changes the global status quo; and social work education that produces competent advocates and experts who are fearless in fighting for and sustaining global gender equality.

Conclusion

The *FMLA* provides parental leave for the birth or adoption of a child. While the United States offers a gender-neutral policy unlike most other nations, the leave is not required to be paid. This can have enormous impacts on not only a mother's decision to return to work or to even take leave after the birth of a child, but her continued decision to pursue leadership roles within the workforce. In Finland, citizens have a statutory right to maternity, special maternity, paternity, parental and certain child-care leaves, all referred to as 'family leaves' (Kela.fi, 2016). Women are entitled not only to take time prior to the birth of their child, but also time after. Even for those that have had no income from work, there is still a payment made at the minimum rate (Kela.fi, 2016). The purpose of this study was to examine the experience of female leaders who are mothers and compare their experiences with paid and unpaid parental leave in the United States and Finland. Additionally, this study explored barriers to female leadership and the use and perceived utility of parental leave policies as it exists within the two countries.

In the summary the answers to the research questions explored are as follows: When exploring how motherhood affects women's leadership competency, the answer in Finland was that mothers felt that their self-confidence, their skills of empathy and understanding, and their effectiveness of being a leader were all increased due to having children. In the

United States, women spoke of added stress and pressure to meet the demands of both work and life. How does motherhood affect women's leadership careers? Many of the women stated that motherhood contributed to their own new understanding of professional expertise and expectation and how that all fit into their new life that involved a child. While the experiences of women in Finland were more positive in this manner than in the United States, both reported changes that were necessary to navigate the new waters. How does access to paid maternity leave affect female leadership? The values that the country placed on raising appropriate citizens and the duty and role of women in that task were evident. That, combined with their leadership roles and their successful integration of both motherhood and job responsibilities, as well as the paid maternity leave in Finland, which plays an integral role, left many of the women feeling that having it all was perhaps not outside of the realm of possibility. In the United States, participants spoke that the policy missed the mark when it left out any economic protection or promise of pay. It appears that this weighed heavy on the women's mind and in many situations affected when and whether or not they had more children or how much time or leave they took, if any after giving birth. These women reported that they felt the policy fell short of the real financial protection they needed. And finally, how do these experiences compare? What is similar is that motherhood leads to substantial personal changes and behavioral reorganization in both personal and professional lives. In general, all the women reported that motherhood affected their leadership roles in many ways for both the better and the worst. Where the difference arose was that both groups of women noted that motherhood affected their leadership experience and vice versa. While both seemed to be inextricably intertwined, each country clearly has very different struggles. Despite different experiences in each country, what is similar in

both contexts is that motherhood was found to lead to substantial changes in each woman's life on both personal and professional level. Finnish women reported a more positive overall experience with motherhood, leadership and paid leave. They reported that motherhood affected their leadership roles in that they felt better able to relate to their employees, felt more connected to their children, and supported by their country due to the paid time off and they reported that their leadership experiences were only enhanced by the addition of children and the use of paid time off. Women in the United States however reported very different experience to include feelings of struggling, issues with balancing work and child care needs and a feeling of inadequacy and guilt when it came to taking time off after the birth of their children. The fact that the time was not paid was an added stressor.

As stated previously, the ideal American worker is "perpetually available, has no outside responsibilities or interests, rarely gets sick and prioritizes work over all else" (Miller, 2008). This ideal worker expectation makes it difficult to cultivate a life outside of work. For American women specifically, this ideal can be mired with complications. Those women who are either mothers or planning on becoming mothers are expected to give everything they have to their jobs if they want to ascend up the ranks. At the same time they are still somehow expected go through giving birth, recovering, and raising their children to only end up leading a life where their choices are constantly questioned and they fall short of all expectations around. It is clear the struggle they undergo and their experiences were echoed by the respondents of this study as well.

Perala-Littunen (2007) asserts that motherhood is a source of female power in Finland. Finns believe that a virtuous mother plays a key role in rearing decent citizens with high moral standards. Finnish society has also adopted the egalitarian employment model,

where the value of the employee lies within their professional expertise, not in their sex

(Lehto, 2009). Taking both of these ideas into account, this paint a picture of a country that

values its citizens and values its mothers not only in policy but in practice as well, which is

what the respondents of this study reported as their overall experience.

This study has mirrored topics that occur frequently in the literature that surrounds

the experience of mothers and the connection to the political/economic model of the country

within which they reside. Findings support the idea that mothers in leadership positions in

countries that value the socialist aspects of democratic capitalism and provide extensive paid

time off, as opposed to individualism, report that they fair better in terms of mental health

(Eklund, et al, 2011), degree of comfort with their new role as a mother, and are more

confident in their leadership abilities. While it may seem like a common sense statement, it

would appear that the level of support that is afforded by the country in which the

respondents reside, play a larger role in their lives. Respondents in Finland echoed these

statements in their stories time and time again.

By exploring the experience of mothers in leadership positions in Finland and the

United States who had access to paid and unpaid parental leave, it is clear that improvements

for American women in regards to paid leave must be made to continue to reduce the barriers

to female leadership overall. There remains the issue of a need for a greater understanding

that the lack of paid parental leave puts mothers at a disadvantage, especially when it comes

to those in leadership positions. By addressing this need and adding paid parental leave

policies to the *FMLA*, the United States can begin to be headed toward a more egalitarian

society where women and men are both valued equally for their contributions and skills thus

starting a shift in a more gender neutral society that values leaders for their skills not their

sex.

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